Part 1:

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew

by

William Kelly

Part 2:

An Exposition of the Gospel of Mark

by

William Kelly

PTP

Present Truth Publishers

825 Harmony Road
Jackson NJ 08527 USA

Made and printed in the USA

presenttruthpublishers.com

Table of Contents

Table of Contents . . . iii
Preface to the Present Truth Publishers Edition . . . vi
The Suitability of the Evangelists . . . vi
The Inspiration of the Scriptures: Matthew . . . vii
Preface . . . x
Introduction . . . xi

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew

Matthew 1 . . . 1
Matthew 2 . . . 7
Chapter 3 . . . 12
Matthew 4 . . . 17
Matthew 5 . . . 27
Matthew 6 . . . 39
Matthew 7 . . . 44
Matthew 8 . . . 49
Matthew 9 . . . 55
Matthew 10 . . . 59
Matthew 11 . . . 63
Matthew 12 . . . 68
Matthew 13 . . . 72
Matthew 14 . . . 84
Matthew 15 . . . 86
Matthew 16 . . . 91
Matthew 17 . . . 98
Matthew 18 . . . 103
Matthew 19 . . . 109
Matthew 20, 21 . . . 114
Matthew 22 . . . 122
Matthew 23 . . . 125
Matthew 24 . . . 128
Matthew 25 . . . 138
Matthew 26 . . . 145
Matthew 27 . . . 147
Matthew 28 . . . 151

A Few Notes by J. N. Darby on the Commission of Matthew 28 . . . 155
Appendix 1 for Matthew: The Lord's Prayer . . . 157
Appendix 2 for Matthew: The Lord's Prophecy on Olivet in Matthew 24, 25 . . . 167
Appendix 3 for Matthew: The Lord's Great Prophecies in the Gospels Matthew 24, 25; Mark 14; Luke 21 . . . 187
Appendix 4 for Matthew: Matthew 18:20 . . . 189
"Unto My Name" Matt. 18:20 . . . 189
Scripture Queries and Answers Regarding Matt. 18:20 . . . 191
Appendix 5 for Matthew: On the Revised New Testament: Matthew . . . 193
Appendix 6 for Matthew: The Sermon on the Mount Matt. 5 -7 . . . 197
The Sermon on the Mount as a Whole Matt. 5 - 7 . . . 197

The Beatitudes Matt. 5:3-12 . . . 198
The Salt and the Light Matt. 5:13-16 . . . 199
The Salt of the Earth Matt. 5:13 . . . 200
The Light of the World Matt. 5:14-16 . . . 201
Christ Came Not to Make Void but Fulfil Matt. 5:17, 18 . . . 203
Christ, and the Law Matt. 5:18-20 . . . 204
Anger Matt. 5:21-22 . . . 205
Brotherly Reconciliation Matt. 23-26 . . . 206
Impurity Matt. 5:27-30 . . . 207
Purity in Divorce Matt. 5:31-32 . . . 208
Swear Not At All Matt. 5:33-37 . . . 209
Resist Not Evil Matt. 5:38-41 . . . 210
Grace in Practice Matt. 5:38-48 . . . 211
Giving Matt. 5:42 . . . 212
Love Your Enemies Matt. 5:43-45 . . . 213
Perfect as Your Heavenly Father is Perfect Matt. 5:46-48 . . . 214
Alms Matt. 6:1-4 . . . 215
Thy Father in Secret Matt. 6:1-18 . . . 216
Prayer Matt. 6:5-6 . . . 217
Vain Repetitions in Prayer Matt. 6:7-8 . . . 218
The Prayer for Disciples Matt. 6:9-13 . . . 219
A Forgiving Spirit Matt. 6:14-15 . . . 220
Fasting Matt. 6:16-18 . . . 221
Treasures on the Earth, or in Heaven? Matt. 6:19-21 . . . 222
The Treasure and the Heart Matt. 6:21 . . . 223
The Lamp of the Body is the Eye Matt. 6:22-23 . . . 224
The Eye Wicked Matt. 6:23 . . . 225
Two Masters Matt. 6:25 . . . 226
Be Not Anxious Matt. 6:25-32 . . . 227
The Birds of the Sky Matt. 6:26, 27 . . . 228
The Lilies of the Field Matt. 6:28-30 . . . 229
Your Heavenly Father Knoweth Matt. 6:31, 32 . . . 230
The Kingdom of God Matt. 6:33, 34 . . . 231
The Morrow Matt. 6:34 . . . 232
Judge Not That Ye Be Not Judged Matt. 7:1-6 . . . 232
Confidence in Our Father's Giving Matt. 7:7-12 . . . 234
The Narrow and the Wide Ways Matt. 7:13, 14 . . . 235
The Narrow Gate Matt. 7:13, 14 . . . 236
Bare Profession Worthless Matt. 7:21-23 . . . 237
The Prudent Builder, and the Foolish Matt. 7:24-27 . . . 238
As Having Authority Matt. 7:28, 29 . . . 239

Appendix 7 for Matthew: The Dealings of God with Peter

Matt. 17:1-8, 24-27; John 13:1-12; Luke 22:50-62; Acts 10 . . . 241

An Exposition of the Gospel of Mark . . . 271

Preface to the Present Truth Publishers Edition . . . 272

Foreword . . . 273

Introduction . . . 274

Mark 1 . . . 276

Mark 2 . . . 280

Mark 3 . . . 285

Mark 4 . . . 290

Mark 5 . . . 292

Mark 6 . . . 294

Mark 7 299
Mark 8 306
Mark 9 312
Mark 10 315
Mark 11 320
Mark 12 322
Mark 13 326
Mark 14 328
Mark 15 333
Mark 16 337
The Authenticity of Mark 16:9 - 20 340
Appendix 1 for Mark: *Miscellaneous Papers on Mark* 342
The Unclean Demon Cast Out Mark 1:23-28; Luke 4:33-36 342
The Jewish Leper Matt. 8, Mark 1, Luke 5 343
The Paralytic Healed Matt. 9, Mark 2, Luke 4 344
The Seed Left to Grow Mark 4:26-29 345
The Tempest, and Unbelief, Rebuked Matt. 8, Mark 4, Luke 8 346
The Demoniac Delivered Matt. 8, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8 347
The Woman Healed, and Sent Away in Peace Matt. 9, Mark 5, Luke 8 348
The Daughter of Jairus Raised Matt. 9, Mark 5, Luke 8 349
The Deaf and Stammering Man Mark 8:32-37 350
The Blind Man of Bethsaida Mark 8:22-26 351
The Lunatic Son Healed Mark 9:17-27 352
Blind Bartimaeus Mark 10:46-52 353
Appendix 2 for Mark: On the Revised New Testament: Mark 354

Preface to the Present Truth Publishers Edition

Notes and answers to questions by W. Kelly from *The Bible Treasury* and from the *Christian Annotator* have been added as footnotes to his *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew*. These notes are enclosed in the iconic symbol ◆ at the beginning and end of the added note. Notes enclosed in braces { } have been added by the editor.

The Appendices at the end of the *Lectures on Matthew* have also been added from the indicated sources, as well as several articles included in this Preface just below.

Scripture references have been added in braces. But also, "Matt." has been substituted for numerous references to chapters. This facilitates generating a more complete Scripture Index.

The text has not been changed. The Loizeaux edition of these *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew* has been seriously tampered with in the area of W. Kelly's remarks concerning Matt. 18:20. An older printing is used herein.

The reader will find text-critical notes on Matthew collected in *Two Nineteenth Century Versions of the New Testament*, pp. 452-460, complied by D. P. Ryan, available from Present Truth Publishers. Also, W. Kelly's comments on the Revised Version on Matthew are reproduced herein as image files (not searchable with Adobe Reader).

The Suitability of the Evangelists

As a preliminary to any detailed observations in the Gospels, allow me briefly to notice the wisdom of the Spirit in the choice of each work-man for his work.

"Matthew, the publican," was not one whom man would have selected as the Apostle and biographer of the Messiah. At first sight he might seem the least eligible for presenting the Lord to the Jews, for, as a class, none were in such disrepute as those Jews who consented to gather the taxes which the Romans imposed on their nation. But, regarded more closely, nothing could have been in more admirable keeping with the line of things which the Holy Ghost traces in his Gospel, for Jesus there is not the Messiah only, but the rejected Messiah. His rejection, with its grave and fruitful results, is just as much the theme as His intrinsic claims, with all God's external attestations. And who so fit a witness of the grace which would seek the least worthy, if those "that were bidden" would not come, as he who was called from the odious receipt of customs?

In the second Gospel the Spirit is evidently developing the perfectness of the Lord's ministry in word and deed. Now "John, whose surname was Mark," was just the right person for such a task, always bearing in mind that none was fit unless immediately inspired to write. But, among those who were so empowered of God, John Mark was precisely the one fitted by personal experience to appreciate, when the Spirit gave him to indite that Divine account of the gospel-service of Jesus; for he had bitterly known what it as to put his hand to the plough and look back, with its painful consequences on all sides (Acts 13, 15). But he had also learned, to his joy, and the blessing of others, that the Lord can restore and strengthen, giving us, through His grace to overcome wherein we have most broken down. This very Mark subsequently became a fellow-worker of St. Paul, and a comfort to him, as much as earlier he had been a sorrow (Col. 4). "Take Mark," says he, in his last letter to Timothy, "and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

For the writing of the third Gospel, again, Luke was manifestly the most appropriate instrument. From Col. 4 it would seem that he was a Gentile, and by profession a physician, both which particulars, as well as its dedication to Theophilus, wonderfully harmonize with the way in which our Lord is there depicted -- not so much the Messiah, nor the servant, but "the man, Christ Jesus," the Son of God born of the Virgin, in His largest human relations, in His obedience and prayerfulness, in His social sympathies, in miracles of healing and cleansing, in parables of special tenderness towards the lost. It is this prominence of our Lord's manhood, as brought out in Luke, which to me accounts for the emphatic statements of grace to Gentiles, as it falls in with the special form of his preface, which has been so frightfully abused by rationalists in general, English or Foreign. He lets us know his motives, and seeks to draw Theophilus by the cords of a man; but if there be thus a human side of the picture, there is another as Divine as in the other Gospels, where the thoughts and feelings of the heart are not so laid bare. The notion that such an opening, touchingly suited as it is to the way in which our Lord is throughout presented in this Gospel, should induce us to regard the writer as a mere faithful and honest compiler, without supernatural guidance in the arrangement of his subject matter, &c., is worthy only of an infidel. And it is only to cheat oneself or others with vain words to affirm that the occurrence of demonstrable mistakes in the Gospels does not in any way affect the inspiration of the Evangelists. The profanity of these statements scarcely exceeds their folly, nor should I have taken this opportunity to denounce them if they were not at this moment finding extensive acceptance, especially among young students, not, alas! without the sanction of those who ought to know better.

Lastly, that St. John was eminently the right instrument for his task is most apparent. Who could so fitly, if so it

pleased the Holy Ghost, set before us "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," as he who leaned on Jesus' bosom, the disciple whom Jesus loved?

CHOICE OF SCENE

It is the difference of design which, to me, solves the difficulty stated in Vol. II. pp. 3, 4. Matthew and Mark, in the body of their Gospels, are occupied with the Lord's sojourn and ministry in Galilee; Luke with not that only, but His gradual journey to Jerusalem (9:51; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28); and John with His ways and words in or near Jerusalem itself yet more than elsewhere, though Galilee and Samaria were assuredly not left out. What Matthew describes is the accomplishment of Jewish prophecy and the witness of Jerusalem's unbelief; while Mark's dwelling on the same arose, I think, from the fact that Galilee was the actual scene of our Lord's service, to which theme his Gospel is emphatically devoted. Luke, on the other hand, brings out the lingering of our Lord's love and pity: His face is steadfastly set on the place where He should accomplish His decease, but His slow steps attest the reluctance and the sorrow with which He visits Jerusalem for the last time, and affords the crowning proof of man's total ruin in His blood and cross. John, finally, regards every place and being in the light of His personal Divine glory. Jerusalem, therefore, is no longer, as in Matthew, styled "the holy city." He was the light, the true light; all outside, and everywhere else, was but darkness, and Jerusalem needed the Son of God as much as Galilee, and was no more to Him, in that point of view, than any other spot. He could, so far as Himself was concerned, freely speak and work there or anywhere. What was "this mountain," nay, what Jerusalem, to the Son of the Father? If there was nothing to attract, there was nothing, in one sense, which could repel. He, who was full of grace and truth, accepted His entire humiliation, and found objects on which to expend His love wherever He might move -- in the boastful city of holiness no less than in the barren wilderness. It is the design impressed by God upon the several Gospels which thus simply explains a fact which is seen by, but useless to, him who denies that design.

Guernsey, Nov. 1855. WILLIAM KELLY.

Christian Annotator, 1857, pp. 29-30.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: Matthew

A new language, the characteristically Gentile one i.e. the Greek, marks outwardly a still deeper inward distinction in what is commonly the New Testament. Its basis is the Son of God come, who has given all who believe, Jew or Greek, an understanding that we should know Him that is true. The gospel therefore goes out freely to every creature, and the children of God are gathered in one by the Holy Spirit; while the Lord, ascended to heaven, promises to come and receive His own, before the day of His appearing when the kingdom shall be set up over the earth in visible and indisputable glory, and Christ's supremacy be manifested over all creation heavenly and earthly which the church shall share as His bride. Hence God is revealed as He is in light and love; man is laid bare as wholly evil and lost; provisional dealing and probation yield to grace and truth come in Jesus Christ, Who, rejected of man and the Jews especially, accomplished redemption, and brings in the new things according to the hidden but eternal counsels of God, before He will resume His relations with Israel in fulfilment of His promises to the fathers and the blessing of all families of the earth in the restitution of all things, of which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began.

In the first Gospel the Holy Spirit has for the distinctive object, as shown in its contents, to set forth Jesus as the Christ or Messiah, according to promises and prophecy; Son of David, Son of Abraham, in an especial sense; yet rejected by the Jew no less but more than by the Gentile, and so proclaiming Himself Son of man to suffer for mankind, and be exalted to heavenly and universal glory. The mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens meanwhile are disclosed to faith, and the church, part of a mystery still greater, is built on Him, the Son of the living God, before He returns as Son of man in power and glory.

Hence Matt. 1 furnishes His genealogy in the Messianic point of view, down from the roots of promise and royalty in three series of fourteen generations, in which the few women named carry the manifest significance of grace to Gentiles and the grossest of sinners. It is Joseph's line from Solomon, which was legally essential; though due care is taken to mark His birth of "the virgin" of that house by the Holy Spirit, according to Isa. 7, Emmanuel, and Jehovah or Jah in His very name.

In Matt. 2 magi from the east are seen coming to pay homage to the born King of the Jews; but they learn Bethlehem to be the birthplace, as Micah had predicted long before. An Idumean under Roman authority then ruled Jerusalem; and king and people were troubled at the tidings. But the strangers are angelically warned as well as Joseph, to defeat the designs of Herod, and thus also to accomplish Hos. 11:1 and Jer. 31:15. The return to dwell at Nazareth, despised as it was, fell in with the prophecies that such was to be Messiah's lot.

Matt. 3 presents the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah. It is John the Baptist saying, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens hath drawn nigh: a

testimony to Christ's coming to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. But Jesus stoops to be baptized, and is owned as Son by the Father, while the Spirit descends on Him visibly. The Trinity now revealed.

In Matt. 4 we have Jesus tempted by the devil forty days and after that in three special ways, but victorious. Then when John was delivered up, the Lord's Galilean ministry begins, as in Isa. 9:1, 2, and the call of the earlier disciples, with a general summary of His teaching and preaching which attracts from far beyond that province, of His healing all sickness and disease, and of His power over demons.

Then in Matt. 5 - 7 He on the mount lays down authoritatively the principles of the kingdom in contrast to the law, with the manifestation of the Father's name and the suited word, concluding with the security of the obedient, but the sin and vanity and ruin of mere profession.

Matt. 8 displays the reality and character of Jehovah's presence in Christ here below: (1) the Jewish leper, (2) the Gentile centurion, (3) Peter's wife's mother, (4) the fulfilment of Isa. 53:4, (5) the scribes and the disciples, (6) the tempest rebuked, and (7) the demonized delivered. In Matt. 9 is shown the growth of unbelieving hatred and blasphemy brought out by (1) the paralytic forgiven, (2) the tax-gatherer called, (3) the question of fasting, (4) the ruler's child raised, (5) and on the way the flux of blood healed, (6) the two blind given to see, and (7) the dumb demoniac to speak.

Thereon, deeply pitying the distressed and scattered sheep of Israel, He bids His disciples pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers; and in Matt. 10 He sends forth the twelve with authority like His own over unclean spirits and diseases, but as yet only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (not to Gentiles or Samaritans), preaching the kingdom, as John had preached and Himself. He prepares them for enmity and tells them that their task will not close till the Son of man be come, while He assures them, not only of the Spirit's aid, but of honor and reward before His Father.

In Matt. 11 Christ testifies to John, instead of getting due testimony from him; shows that the kingdom calls for decision at all cost but is well worth while; reproves the caprice of "this generation"; and warns the cities unrepentant in the face of the powers displayed, but bows with gracious confession to the Father, Who did these things from wise and understanding men, yet revealed them to babes'. He not only sees but announces a higher glory and a deeper grace opening out than if Israel had received Him after the flesh.

After the rest given to faith, Matt. 12 opens with the lesson of the sabbaths perverted to deny His glory Who is Lord of the Sabbath as of all, and with the resolve of the Pharisee to destroy Him. The Lord retires, heals still, but charges them not to make Him known. He bows to His rejection. In another and deeper way would the divine counsel be made good, as Isa. 42 declared. So, when a blind and dumb demoniac was healed and the Pharisees attribute His power to Beelzebub, He warns of the blasphemy against the Spirit that shall not be forgiven, pronounces the last state of "this evil generation" to become worse than the first, and owns His true relationship henceforth to be, not with mother and brethren after the flesh, but whosoever shall do the will of His Father Who is in heaven.

Accordingly in Matt. 13 the Lord expounds in seven parables (beginning with His new work as the Sower of the word and in six following similitudes) the mysteries of the kingdom consequent on His rejection and going on high. The first took in His work before the kingdom was set up in the heavens, and was spoken outside like the next three. The interpretation of the wheatfield spoilt by darnel was given within the house like the last three. But, whatever His words or works, the Jews stumbled at the stumbling-stone, His person.

In Matt. 14 we see the state morally no better but rather worse. Yet if the Lord withdraws, His compassion to Israel is unabated. He heals their diseases, satisfies the poor with bread as the true and royal Son of David, dismisses the multitude, and goes up the mountain to pray, the picture of His present work on high. But when the disciples are tempest-tossed with the winds contrary, He rejoins them, and the wind ceases, and those in the ship pay Him homage as God's Son. And now He is recognized and welcomed in His beneficent power.

Matt. 15 is the Lord's judgment of earthly religion proud in the poverty of tradition, with an unclean condition inwardly, whatever the zeal in washing of hands. On the other hand, if a Canaanite under curse cried for mercy against a demon's oppression, would Jesus deny her? He vindicates her faith, while He renews His labor of love in despised Galilee, and abundantly blesses the provision of the poor as the true Son of David.

In Matt. 16 none the less does the Lord denounce the hypocrisy of a generation seeking after a sign, while blind to all set before them so fully. No sign should be given but that of Jonah's death and resurrection, opening the door to Gentiles. If men said this or that, Simon Peter confesses Him Christ, the Son of the living God, as revealed of the Father. And the Son also gives him a new name, declares that on this rock He will build His church, and confers on him the keys of the kingdom: two distinct, yet connected, systems of blessing to replace Israel. Thereon He announces His suffering, death, and resurrection, and calls on the one that owns Him to deny self, take up his Gross, and follow Him.

Matt. 17 is a miniature though divine display of the kingdom, but Christ meanwhile declared Son of God, Who is to be heard, not law and prophets. Yet here below the disciples fail through unbelief; whereas Christ, proving Himself Lord of all, takes as yet no glory here, but associates His own with Himself in grace.

Next in Matt. 18 He enforces humiliation in love as befitting His own in the kingdom; and in the church grace to win the wrong-doer with the sanction of heaven on their acts rightly done. The parable from v. 23 teaches that such as professedly had forgiveness, but outraged its spirit, have all their guilt renewed to their ruin.

Matt. 19 shows that, while God's constitution of man is right, grace reveals better things to those that share Christ's rejection, and that God encourages fidelity by due reward. It ought to be plain that there are no thrones for the apostles till

the regeneration when the Lord comes in glory. Those "enthroned" meanwhile are not their true successors, but affect Gentile grandeur.

Matt. 20 begins with the other side of God's rights in a parable maintaining His sovereignty. But the Son of man's path lies through shame and death, and there is no other way to glory, though the disposal is His Father's. The danger is from a fleshly mind, which is no better than a Gentile's: the Son of man on the contrary came to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

The Lord had now entered on His last journey to Jerusalem; and the healing of the two blind men near Jericho begins the final presentation of Himself Who knew the end before He began (Matt. 20:29-34). In Matt. 21 He accomplishes Zech.9:9, purges the temple, and defends the children's Hosannas with Psa. 8. The curse on the fig-tree was the sentence on the people, full of show but without fruit; and when the religious chiefs ask for His authority, He puts a question to their conscience. When they shirk the answer, He sets out one parable that shows them to be worse than the tax-gatherers and the harlots; and in another He describes God's dealings with the rebellious people, even to His own rejection in death. They themselves must own (v. 41) their just destruction; on which He cites Psa. 118:22, and connects with it not only the removal of the kingdom of God from them but the effect of both His advents, now their stumbling on Him to be broken, by-and-by His falling on them to be scattered as duet. They knew what He meant, but as yet feared to do their will.

So in Matt. 22 the Lord adds in a parable what grace has done and is doing, with the effects for the unbelieving, not only providential judgment which fell on Jerusalem, but that for each at the end and for ever. Then come the Pharisees with the Herodians about the tribute, and the Sadducees about the resurrection, and the lawyer about the commandments, all answered to their confusion; after which the Lord puts the question of questions for a Jew (as indeed for any). Faith alone answers; but they had none; and hero they are to this day.

In Matt. 23 the Lord, while owning the law's authority (spite of the falseness of those who administered it), calls Hie disciples to the lowly position He had taken as their pattern; and He Who began with "Blessed, blessed," now ends with "Woe, woe." How their evil did not cease with His cross but went on against His servants, we know too well. But even here in declaring the inevitable retribution, He cannot close without a door of hope in the last verse (39).

Matt. 24 and 25 are His great prophecy on the mount, beginning with the Jews, and ending with the Gentiles in Matt. 25:31 to the end. Between the two (from Matt. 24:45 to 25:30) is the part that deals with the Christian profession. This takes therefore the general unrestricted form of three parables, since the link is with Christ Himself, not with the land or the people of Israel: the house-bondman faithful or wise, or evil, respectively characterizing Christendom in comprehensive responsibility; the ten virgins, foolish or prudent, manifested by the reality or unreality of the hope when judgment falls; and the bondmen trading with His goods, good and faithful on the one hand, or wicked and slothful on the other, in individual responsibility. The sheep and the goats represent the true and the false, not in Christendom, but among all the nations in the end of the age, tested by the testimony of the King's "brethren" during that crisis, while the heavenly saints are with Christ on high before He appears, and they with Him, in the same glory.

In Matt. 26 and 27, we have the unutterably solemn and touching scenes of the Lord's earthly close. The Lord announces it; the chief priests and their associates plot; the last anointing is done for His burial; the traitor covenants; the Lord directs the paschal feast and eats it with the disciples;.He institutes His supper; He goes out to Olivet, and He enters on His agony in Gethsemane; and then becomes the willing Captive, as later the Victim. The mock trial before Caiaphas follows; and Peter denies, and Judas in remorse casts down his silver in the sanctuary and commits suicide. Pilate condemns the Holy One and releases Barabbas. Jesus is crucified, "the King of the Jews": for this alone is Pilate firm. All rail, even the robbers. He dismissed His spirit; and the veil of the temple was rent, and the earth quaked, and the rocks rent, as there had been supernatural darkness around the Dross when the Messiah made sin was abandoned by His God. But if men designed otherwise, He was with the rich in His death, as the prophet said so emphatically.

Matt. 28 tells of Him risen. What availed the keepers or the seal? And the angel, before whom the guard trembled, bade the women not fear, but tell the disciples He was risen and would meet them in Galilee, the familiar ground of His ministry. And so it was amid fear and joy and doubt: He Himself appeared and confirmed it, whatever lying Jews and bribed Gentiles pretended. There too He gave them His commission. "All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, disciple all the nations, baptizing them unto the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age." Here may be seen what supersedes Israel till the age is ended. When the new age comes, they will be owned and blessed as the head of the nations. The first dominion will be Zion's. Even during that period (for such is the consummation of the age, not a mere epoch) there will be a suited state of transition. Till then discipling proceeds; and disciples are to be baptized to the name, not of Jehovah, but of God fully revealed as now -- the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Observance of Christ's injunctions- follows, with the assurance of His constant presence: a condition quite distinct from His millennial reign in manifested power and glory.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:109-112.)

Preface

The book here offered to the reader consists of notes of lectures on the earliest Gospel. It has already appeared in short detached portions. Given now as a whole, and in a corrected form, the author trusts that the volume may prove a help to those who accept Scripture as the word of God, and have confidence in the gracious guidance of the Holy Ghost who is sent down from heaven to glorify our Lord Jesus. Critical questions have been sparingly discussed here: elsewhere they may be entered into more fully for truth has nothing to fear, much to gain, from the most thorough sifting, if it be but competent and candid. On the present occasion, however, direct interpretation has been the aim, and the practical profit of souls.

Guernsy, February, 1868.

The present edition is a reprint, with slight correction of form and of typographical errors, from the author's copy.

LONDON, May, 1896.

Introduction

That the Spirit of God, when inspiring Matthew, had in view the aspirations and wants of the Jews, the evidence of the Messiah-ship of Jesus, and the consequences of His rejection both for them and the Gentiles, is a truth which has forced itself on most Christians who have examined the Gospels with any discriminating care. So large and varied are the internal proofs of such a design, that the only wonder is, how an intelligent mind could dispute the facts or the inference. Yet we are told that, had a Jewish aim been steadily kept before the Evangelists, the visit of the Gentile Magi could not have been exclusively related by Matthew, any more than the circumcision of Jesus and His frequenting the passovers at Jerusalem could have been exclusively related by Luke if he had written for Gentiles. The objection has no force, when it is seen that the Spirit meant by Matthew to trace the alienation of the Jews from such a Messiah as their own Scriptures portray, not alone externally glorious, but first as a divine person, though a man, intimating in His very name that He was Jehovah, coming to save His people from their sins, and not merely from their enemies (Matt. 1). What a picture follows in ch. 2! Jerusalem troubled at the tidings of His birth, and distant Gentile Magi from the East coming up to do Him homage. Is this the refutation of special design in Matthew? What more beautiful illustration of it could be looked for? And if Luke gives us the most charming glimpses at the godly remnant of Israel, and the Lord Jesus presented first in their midst with the most exact heed to every requirement of the law, how does this set aside the testimony of a Gospel which teems with evidence that God gives us there Christ as traced up to "Adam, which was the son of God," not down from Abraham and David, the depository of promise and the stock of the kingdom in Israel? Did the objectors forget that the great apostle of the Gentiles regularly carried out the principle on which he insists -- "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"? Doubtless in either case the inspired writers reflected the richness of God's ways of grace, not the technicality of a human routine.

It is evident also that the apparent discrepancies in the concurrent accounts of the synoptic Gospels must spring, either from the infirmity of the human instruments, or from the far-reaching wisdom of the Spirit who impressed on each a special design, and so inserted, suppressed, or variously presented the same substantial fact, or truth, in pursuance of that design, never giving anything but truth, yet only thus giving the whole truth. Why does unbelief affirm that such a difference of design is an *à priori* theory? The habitual testimony of each Gospel must decide the question. What can be more manifestly *à priori* than to impute, on such a ground as this, "demonstrable historical inaccuracies" to the inspired historians of the weightiest matters ever given to man to record? If the sole method of writing a life were that of simple sequence, there might be some appearance of reason; if some of the most famous biographies among men, apart in general, or in part, from the mere order of occurrence. What would be thought of assailing their credit for such a reason as this? It is not so that scholars judge of Suetonius compared with Tacitus. The fault lies in those who object, not in Scripture.

It is to me certain that Matthew and Luke were led to follow an exact order, one dispensational, the other moral; that they are far more profoundly instructive than if one, or other, or both, had adhered to the very elementary manner of an annalist; and that it is a mere blunder, therefore, to characterize any resulting difference of arrangement (such as Matt. 8:28, &c., compared with Mark 5:1, &c., and Luke 8:26, &c.) as a real discrepancy. Let such defenders of the faith do their worst: the Christian has nothing to fear, but only to believe, and he shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of the truth. Undoubtedly a different arrangement consists with, and supposes the same incident variously placed, and with deliberate design, so as to bring out the truth more fully; but how does it prove a "*real*" discrepancy?

It is allowed on all hands that the Lord may have repeated the same truth, as He often repeated similar miracles. But a difference of design alone accounts for all the phenomena of the Gospels, and this not to the dishonor of the writers, but to the praise of their true and divine Author. Eye-witness and apostolicity fail to meet the case; for two out of the four Evangelists had neither. The foundation of the new building consists of prophets as well as apostles; and though God did supply eye-witnesses, He proved His supremacy by furnishing the most graphic details of our Lord's ministry by the very two who had not seen what they describe, and that with more life-like touches than are found in those two who describe what they saw. So false is this criterion, even in the two apostles, that John alone does not give either the scene of the agony, or that of the transfiguration, yet he alone of the Evangelists was among the nearest to both. He alone gives the fall of the armed band to the ground, yet Matthew beheld it equally with himself. And Matthew gives, with the greatest fulness, the prophetic discourse on Olivet; John not at all, though he is the only Evangelist who was present to hear it.

The Spirit's purpose is the true and only key in every instance. Thus, as to the inscription on the cross, nothing is simpler than the perfection of each report for each Gospel, while it may be that the actual writing contained John's, with the addition of Matthew's opening words, the Holy Spirit appropriating each form to His aim in the respective Gospels. Plenary inspiration in no way excludes special design. The true question is, Are we to attribute their differences of form to the wisdom of God, or to the weakness of man?

Again, difference of reading is a question of human copies, not of the inspired original.

Lastly, the apostle insists not merely that the men were inspired, but that the book -- yea, every scripture -- is divinely inspired.

There is the strongest evidence to prove that the Greek of Matthew is the original and not a version, though, possibly, the Evangelist may have also written it in Hebrew, for the early church in Judea. This might lapse, and what was permanently needed abide.

Lectures On The Gospel of Matthew

Matthew 1

I have thought it might be profitable to take up the first of the Gospels, and to trace, as simply as the Lord enables me, the general outline of the truth revealed there. It is my desire to point out the special object and design of the Holy Ghost, ascertainable from its own character and contents. This may furnish those who value God's word with such hints as tend to meet some of the difficulties that arise in the minds of many; and also may put in a clearer light great truths that are apt to be passed by too lightly. It seems but little to assume that the Spirit of God has not given us these accounts of our Lord liable to the mistakes of men, but that He has, on the contrary, kept his mighty unerring hand over these who wrote them, in themselves men of like passions with us. Assuredly, the Holy Ghost has inspired these accounts, in order that we might have full certainty that He is their author; inasmuch as they are the truth stamped with His own perfection. As He has been pleased to give us various accounts, so He has had a divine reason for each of them. In short, God has sought His own glory in this, and has secured it.

Now there can be no question, to anyone who reads the Gospels with the smallest discernment, that the first is beyond the rest remarkably adapted to meet the need of Jews; and that it brings out the Old Testament prophecies and other scriptures, which found their realization in Jesus. Consequently there are more citations of scripture, as applying to our Lord's life and death, in this Gospel, than in all the others put together. All this was not a thing left to Matthew's discretion. That the Holy Ghost used the mind of man in carrying out His own design is clear; ·but that He was pleased perfectly to guard and guide him in what he was to give out, is what is meant in saying that God inspired Matthew for the purpose.

Besides presenting our Lord in such a way as best to meet the right or wrong thoughts and feelings of a Jew; besides furnishing the proofs more particularly wanted to satisfy his mind, it is evident, from the character of the discourses and parables, that the rejection of the Messiah by Israel, and the consequences of it to the Gentiles, are here the prominent thoughts in the mind of the Holy Ghost. Hence there is no ascension scene in Matthew. The Jew, if he had understood the Old Testament prophecies, would have looked for a Messiah to come, suffer, die, and be raised again "according to the scriptures." In Matthew we have His death and resurrection, but there He is left; and we should scarcely know, from the facts related by him only, that Christ went up to heaven at all. We could know it was implied in some of the words he gives us to know that Christ spoke; but, in point of fact, Matthew leaves us with Christ Himself still upon the earth. The last chapter describes, not the ascension of Christ, nor His session at God's right hand, but His speaking to the disciples here below, and His ever-abiding presence with them sent on their great mission to all the Gentiles. Such a presentation of Christ was peculiarly that which the Jews needed to know. Needful for all, it was more appropriate to them than to any other people on the earth.

And who was the agent employed, and with what fitness? One of the twelve who companied with our Lord from the beginning of His ministry till He was taken up from them. So far, of course, he was an evidently competent witness for the Jew, and far more suitable than Mark or Luke would have been, who were not, as far as we know, personal companions of the Lord. Undoubtedly there was this peculiarity -- that Matthew was a publican, or tax-gatherer, by profession. Although a Jew, he was in the employment of the Gentiles, which position would make him especially odious to his countrymen. They would look upon him with more suspicion even than upon a stranger. This might make it appear, at first sight, the more extraordinary that the Holy Ghost should employ such a one to give the account of Jesus as the Messiah. But let us remember that there is another object all through the Gospel of Matthew. There is not only the inspired record of Jesus as the true Messiah with the amplest testimony to Israel; but throughout, it marks His rejection by Israel, and the consequences of their fatal unbelief: -- all the barriers which had hitherto existed between Jew and Gentile thrown down; and the mercy of God flowing out to bless the despised Gentile as readily and as fully as the Jew, during Israel's unbelief. Thus the admirable propriety of employing Matthew, the tax-gatherer, and its consistency with the scope of his task, are apparent.

These few remarks may help to evince that there was the utmost fitness in the employment of the first of the four Evangelists to execute the work appointed for him. If it were our object now to examine the rest, it could just as easily be made manifest that each had exactly the right work to do. As we proceed through this Gospel, you will be struck, I doubt not, by the wisdom which chose such a one to give the account of the suffering Messiah, rejected by His guilty brethren after the flesh. But I confine myself at present to stating with what propriety Matthew introduces such an account of the Messiah.

Many, no doubt, must have been more or less arrested by the prefatory record of names in ch. 1, and may, perhaps, have asked, What profit is there to be had from a list like this?' But let us never pass over anything in Scripture as a light, or even doubtful, matter. There is a depth of blessed meaning in the account Matthew gives us of the Lord's genealogy. Let me then expatiate a little on the perfectly beautiful manner in which the Spirit of God has here traced His lineage, and direct attention briefly to the way in which it harmonizes with this divine account of the Lord Jesus for the Jew, apt constantly to raise the question, whether Jesus was really the Messiah.

It will be observed that the genealogy here differs totally from what we have in Luke, where it is not given at the beginning, but at the end of Matt. 3. Thus, in the latter Gospel, we learn a great deal about the Lord Jesus before His genealogy appears. Why was this? Luke was writing to the Gentiles, who could not be supposed to be equally, or in the same way, interested in His Messianic relations. But when they had learned in some degree who and what Jesus was, it would be highly interesting to let them know His lineage as man, tracing Him up to Adam, the father of the whole human family. What more suitable than to link Him with the head of the race, if the object were to show the grace that now goes out toward all mankind, the salvation-bearing grace of God that appears unto all men? One might put that word in Titus 2, as a sort of frontispiece to Luke's Gospel. It is God's grace in the person of His Son, who had become man, connected as to humanity with the whole family of man, though that nature in Him was ever, only, and altogether holy, as of course the divine could not but be.

But here we find ourselves on a narrower ground, circumscribed to a certain family, the royal seed of a certain nation, God's chosen people. Abraham and David are mentioned in the very first verse. "Book of Jesus Christ's generation, son of David, son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). Why are these two names thus selected; and why put together here in this brief summary? Because all the hopes of Israel were bound up with what was revealed to these two persons. David was the anointed head of the kingdom, the one in whom the true line of Messiah's throne was founded. Saul was merely the fleshly king whom Israel sought passingly for themselves out of their own will. David was the king God chose, and he is here mentioned as the forefather of the Lord's Anointed -- "son of David." Abraham, again, was the depository of promise, in whom Jehovah said, all the families of the earth should be blessed. Thus the opening words prepare us for the Gospel as a whole. Christ came with all the reality of the kingdom promised to David's son. But if He were refused as son of David, still, as son of Abraham, there was blessing not merely for the Jew but for the Gentile. He is the true Messiah; but if Israel will not have Him, God will, during their unbelief, bring the nations, in many respects after an exceptional sort, to taste of His mercy.

Having given us this general view we come to particulars. We begin with Abraham, tracing Jesus not up to him, but down from him. Every Israelite would begin with Abraham, and would be interested to follow the stages of the line from him on whom they all hung.

> Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren (Matt. 1:2).

This comprehensive notice, "Judah and his brethren," seems to be of importance, and in more ways than one. It does not consist with the notion that our evangelist in this part of the chapter, or in others, simply copies the records kept by the Jews. We may be sure that men never register in this fashion. Yet it is evidently in the strictest harmony with this Gospel; for it gives prominence to the royal tribe of whom was the Messiah (Gen. 49:10), while it, reminds the most favored that others too long out of sight were not forgotten of God, now that He is giving the genealogy of His Messiah.

"And Judah begat Perez and Zerah of Tamar" (Matt. 1:3). What is the reason for bringing in a woman, and especially. for naming Tamar here? There were women of great note in the lineage of the Messiah -- persons whom the Jews naturally looked up to as holy and honorable. What Jewish heart would not naturally glow with strong feelings of respect in hearing of Sarah and Rebekah, and the other holy and well-known women recorded in Old Testament history? But there is no mention of them here. On the other hand, Tamar is mentioned. Why is it so? Grace lay underneath this, severely repulsive to self-righteousness, but most precious in its way. There are four women, and only four, who appear in the line, upon every one of whom there was a blot. It is not that all the sources of reproach, or shame, were of the same kind. But to a proud Jew, with all these women there was connected a very humbling story -- something that he would have kept in the dark. O wondrous way of God! What can He not do? How striking that the Holy Ghost does not here attract attention to those who brought honor in the eyes of Israel! nay, that He singles out these that a carnal Israelite would have held in contempt! The Messiah was to spring from a line in which there had been varied shame and dismal sin. And where all that is in man would try to hide this, that it might be forgotten, the Spirit of God brings it plainly out, so that as it stands in the eternal records of the Old Testament history, it shall here be rehearsed to all the world. These, on whom there were such foul blots in the judgment of men, are the only females brought specifically before us.

What is man? and what is God? What is man that such things should ever have taken place? And what is God that, instead of being ashamed to record it, He should have drawn the story out of obscurity and set it in full revealed light, emblazoned, if I may so say, on the genealogy of His own Son! Not at all as if the sin were not exceeding sinful; nor as if God thought lightly of the privileges of His people -- still less of the glory of His Son, or of what is due to Him. But God, feeling the sin of His own people to be the worst of all sin, yet having introduced in this very Messiah the only One who could save His people from their sins, does not hesitate to bring their iniquities or scandals into the presence of the grace that could, and would, put it all away. Did the Jew think that this was a dishonor done to the Messiah? From that same seed their Messiah must spring, and from no other line. It was narrowed to the house of David, and to the line of Solomon, they who beyond question were in the direct line of Judah's

son, Perez. No Jew could get out of the difficulty.

What are we not taught by this! If the Messiah deigns to link Himself with such a family -- if God is pleased so to order things, that, out of this stock, as concerning the flesh, His own Son, the Holy One of Israel, was to be born -- surely there could be none too bad to be received of Him. He came to "save his people from their sins," not to find a people that had no sins. He came with all power to save: He showed grace by the very family whereof He was pleased to be a -- or rather the -- Branch. God is never confounded; neither, through grace, is he that believes, because he rests upon what God in Christ is. to him. We never can be anything for God till we know that Christ is everything for us, and to us. But when we know such a God and Father as Jesus reveals to us, on one side full of goodness, and on the other, no darkness in Him at all, what may we not expect from Him? Who might not now be born of God? Who is there that such a God would reject? Such a hint in Matt. 1 opens the way for the wonders of grace which appear afterwards. In one sense, no man has such a position of ancient privileges as the Jew; yet, even as to the Messiah, this dark blot is of set purpose in the account that the Holy Ghost gives of His lineage. If no flesh shall glory in the presence of Jehovah, what evil unfits for His mercy?

But this is not all. "Perez begat Hezron . . . and Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab" (Matt. 1:3-5). And who was she? A Gentile, and once a harlot! But Rahab is taken out of all her belongings -- separated from everything that was her portion by nature. And here she is, in this Gospel of Messiah written for the Jew -- for the very people who despised and hated Him because he would look upon a Gentile. Rahab was named for heaven already, and no Jew could deny it. She was visited of God; she was delivered outwardly and inwardly by His mighty grace, brought into, and made a part of, Israel on earth -- yea, by sovereign grace, part of the royal line out of which the Messiah must come, and out of which, in point of fact, Jesus, who is over all God, blessed for ever, was born. O what marvels of grace dawn upon us, while we dwell even on the mere list of names that unbelief would disparage as a dry, if not incorrect, appendage to the word of God! But faith says, I cannot do without the wisdom of God.' Certainly His wisdom shines in all that He has written here. He that glories must glory in the Lord.

Might it be thought that Rahab was called in at some distant epoch? But no:

> Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab, and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth, and Obed begat Jesse. And Jesse begat David the king.

Ruth, faithful and loving as she was, came from a source peculiarly odious to a Jew. She was a Moabitess, and thus forbidden by the law to enter the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation. Even the Edomite, or the Egyptian, were held in less abhorrence, and their children might enter in the third generation (Deut. 23:3-8). Thus was given a still deeper testimony that grace would go out and bless the very worst of the Gentiles. Whether the Jews like it or not, God has Rahab, the once immoral Gentile, and Ruth, daughter of Moab, but meek and true, brought into, not the nation only, but the direct line from which the Messiah was to arise.

> And Jesse begat David the king, and David the king begat Solomon of her [that had been the wife] of Uriah (Matt. 1:6).

With only a few generations intervening, we have these three women, who would, for one reason or another, moral or ceremonial, have been utterly despised and excluded by the same spirit which rejected Jesus and the grace of God. It was then no new thought -- the divine mercy that was reaching out to gather in the outcast of the Gentiles, that would look upon the vile effectually to deliver and make them holy. It was God's way of old. They could not read the account He gives of their own Messiah's stock without seeing that there it is so. And that this was the divinely prescribed channel no Jew could deny. They must all own that the Messiah was to come in no other line than that of Solomon. O the grace to us who know what we have been as poor sinners of the Gentiles! what wretchedness was ours, and this because of guilt and sin!

> Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God {1 Cor. 6:11}.

Hence the first words which introduce the Messiah give the same blessed truth, if there was an ear to hear, or an eye to see, what God had in store and was now pointing to in them. In the case last mentioned there was something more humbling than in any other. For though, in early days, Tamar's story was evil and wretched enough, yet were there other features, false, and lustful, and violent, which met in her case that had belonged to Uriah. And this was so much the more dismal because the chief guilt was on that man's part whom God had delighted to honor, even "David the king." Who knows not that it has drawn out the deepest, and most touching, personal confession of sin ever inspired by the Spirit of God? {Psa. 51}. Yet here again we know that he who had to do with this complication of horrors, and whose utterance had been this psalm of sorrowful contrition, was the direct forefather of the Messiah. So that, if the Jew looked to those from whom the Messiah had sprung, such must He be according to His earthly ancestors. But God records the blessed display of His ways, both for the winning of the hardest, proudest, and most sinful, and for the unfailing comfort and refreshment of those who love Him, that no flesh should glory before God; but he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Need I enter particularly into the names that follow? We might see sin upon sin, stain upon stain, interwoven into their various histories. It was too continuous a tissue of that which would cause a Jew to blush -- what a man never would of himself have dared to bring out about a king that he honored. God, in His infinite goodness, would not permit these things to slumber. Not a word is said of women who came after the scripture record terminated; but what Jew could gainsay the lively oracles committed to them? To leave out what a Jew gloried in, and to bring in what he would have concealed through shame, and all in tender mercy to Israel, to sinners, was indeed divine. We may learn front this that the mention

of these four women is particularly instructive. Man could not have originated it: our place is to learn and adore. Every female that is named is one that nature would have studiously excluded from the record, but that grace has made most prominent in it. Thus the truth taught thereby ought never to be forgotten, and the Jew who wanted to know the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah, might learn here what would prepare his heart and conscience for such a Messiah as Jesus is. He is a Messiah come in quest of sinners, who would despise no needy one -- not even a poor publican, or a harlot. The Messiah so thoroughly reflected what God is in His holy love, and is so true to all the purposes of God, so perfect an expression of the grace that is in God, that there never was a thought, feeling, word of grace in His word, but what the Messiah was come now to make it good in His dealings with poor souls, with Jew first, and also with Greek.

This, then, is the genealogy of Christ as given us here. There are certain omissions in the list, and persons of some learning have been alike weak and daring enough to impute a mistake to St. Matthew, which no intelligent Sunday-scholar would have made. For a child could copy what was clearly written out before him: and certainly Matthew could easily have taken the Old Testament, and reproduced the list of names and generations given us in the Chronicles and elsewhere. But there was a divine reason for omitting the particular names of Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, from Matt. 1:8 -- three generations.

Why is it, we may be permitted to ask, that the Apostle Matthew drops, of course by inspiration, some of the links of the chain? The Spirit of God was pleased to arrange the ancestry of our Lord into three divisions of fourteen generations each. Now, as there were actually more than fourteen generations between David and the captivity, it was a matter of necessity that some should be discarded, in order to equalize the series; and fourteen only are therefore recorded. Indeed, anyone who examines the Old Testament scriptures, must perceive that it is not at all uncommon in genealogies to drop some of the links of the chain. More than twice as many as in our verse are omitted in one place (Ezra 7:3); and it was Ezra himself who wrote that book, who, of course, knew his own descent far more familiarly than we do. If any of us, by comparison with other parts, can find out the missing links, much more could he. Yet, in giving his own genealogy there, the Spirit of God is pleased by him to omit no less than seven generations. This is the more remarkable, as no- one could exercise his rights as a priest, unless he could trace his line up to Aaron without any question as to the succession. I have no doubt that there were special reasons for the omission elsewhere, no less than in our Gospel; but the motives for it are a very different question. One of them has been named. There were more than twice seven generations in at least the second division; and this may have been a reason why the writer should omit several of them.

But why omit these in particular? Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, king of Israel, and wife of Jehoram, had thus entered by marriage the royal house of David; and a sorrowful hour it was, indeed, for Judah. For Athaliah, enraged at the premature end of her son, king Ahaziah, was guilty of a too successful attempt to destroy the seed royal. But it could not be complete: for that family was selected out of all the families of God's people, never to be entirely extinguished till Shiloh came. There was but a single youthful scion whom Jehoshabeath saved by concealment in the house of Jehovah. The light was covered with a bushel for a time; but it was not put out. The then son of David appeared. It was a time when Judah had fallen into manifold and ever-deepening evil. But as surely as that young Joash was brought out of his concealment, no less truly the priest was there to anoint the king; and the union of the two things accomplished the then purpose of God. Just so it will be when the years of man's rebellion against God are full. He will come forth who has been long hidden and forgotten, and all the enemies shall be trampled down; and then will Judah flourish indeed under the King, the true Son of David. For all this was the type of the reappearing of the true Messiah by-and-by. My design, however, is not so much to dwell on this now, as to enquire, and suggest briefly, why it is that we have those few kings omitted. The answer seems enough, that they sprang from Athaliah. Hence they were completely passed over. We find God thus marking His resentment at the introduction of that wicked and idolatrous stock from the house of Ahab. Athaliah's descendants are not mentioned even to the third generation. This appears to be the moral reason why three persons were left out at this particular point.

Then in Matt. 1:11 we read,

> And Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren at the time of the removal to Babylon.

It is evident that the method is summary, Jehoahaz whom the people made king, and who reigned for but three months, not being specified, and Jehoiakim being often called by the same name as his son Jechoniah.

But the minuter features of the genealogy need not detain us now. The word of God is infinite; and, no matter what we may have learned, it only puts us in a position to find out our ignorance. When persons are altogether in the dark, they think they know all that is to be known. But as we make real progress, we acquire a deeper sense of how little we know; and, at the same tine, more patience with others who may know a little less -- or, very possibly, somewhat more. Spiritual intelligence, instead of puffing up the loving heart, produces an increased feeling of our own littleness. Where it is not so, we have reason to fear that the mind outruns the conscience, and that both are far from being subject to the Holy Ghost.

> And after the removal to Babylon, Jechoniah begat Shealtiel; and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel; and Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; and Eliud begat Eleazer; and Eleazer begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob (called James often elsewhere in the New Testament); and Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ [Messiah] (Matt. 1:12-16).

The generations, we have seen, are divided into three different sections (v. 17). The first is from Abraham to David, the

dawn of glory for the Jews. When "David the king" was there, it was noon-time in Israel -- sadly checkered, it is true, and clouded through sin; but still it was the noon of man's day in Israel. The second division is from thence till the deportation to Babylon. The third is from that captivity until "the Christ." This last was clearly the evening history of Israel's past. But that evening is not the close. It ends with the brightest light of all -- type of the day when at evening time there shall be light. Just as the prophet Haggai speaks of the house of God, as it then was, being as nothing in comparison with its first glory, and says,

> The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts {Hag. 2:9};

so a greater than Solomon was here. Although there had been the decline of the splendor of Israel, and Israel was now broken and subject to the Gentiles, the recorded decline ends in the birth of the true Messiah. Throughout the lingering on of the captivity no persecution could destroy that chosen family; because Jesus, the Messiah of God, was to be born of it. The moment that Jesus concludes His career here below, the chain may seem for ever broken as regards the earth, but it is only to be riveted to the throne of God in heaven. Jesus is there, the Living One, who became dead, but is alive for evermore. And Jesus comes again, and the Jews will see and weep, even those written in the book: and Jehovah their king, even Jesus, will reap in joy what He sowed in tears, yea, in His own blood.

But let us turn for a while to the remaining view given us of our Lord Jesus in this chapter. Joseph is made very prominent. The genealogy itself is that of Joseph, not of Mary. [1] On the other hand, Mary is the principal figure of the two in Luke, and there it is, beyond just doubt, her genealogy. Why is this? For a Jew, it was of necessity that Messiah should be the heir of Joseph. The reason is that Joseph was the direct lineal descendant of the royal branch of David's house. There were two lines that came down unbroken to these days; the house of Solomon and the house of Nathan. Mary was the representative of Nathan's family, as Joseph was of Solomon's. If Mary had been mother of Jesus without legal connection with Joseph as husband, there would not have been a right to the throne of David. It was necessary that the Messiah should be born, not merely of a virgin, nor of a virgin daughter of David, but of one legally united to Joseph, i.e. in the eye of the law really his wife. This is carefully recorded here for the special instruction of Israel; for an intelligent Jew would at once have asked that question; and everything must be fenced round with holy jealousy. Let people calumniate as they may, Mary must be espoused to Joseph; else the Lord Jesus could not have a proper title to the throne of David; and, therefore, the stress here is laid, not upon Mary, but upon Joseph, because the law would have always maintained the claim of Joseph. On the other hand, had Joseph been the real father, there could have been no Savior at all. [2] As it is, the wonder of divine wisdom shines most conspicuously, making Him legally the son of Joseph, really the son of Mary, who; in the truth of His nature, is God, being the Son of the Father. And all three met and merged in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He must be the undisputed heir of Joseph, according to the law; and Joseph was espoused to Mary. The child must be born before Joseph ever lived with Mary as his wife; and this we are carefully shown here.

---

1. ◆ Q. -- How is Matt. 1:16, taken in connection with Luke 3:23, to be explained? Matthew says, "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary"; and Luke, "being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, *which was of Heli,* which was of Matthat," &c. Matthew in v. 15 had said, "Matthan begat *Jacob.*"

In Luke 3, I presume, Mary's genealogy is given down to v. 31, "Nathan (who was) of David," while in Matt. 1:6 "David the king begat Solomon," and so on down to Joseph. But what explains the apparent discrepancy between Matt. 1:16 and Luke 3:23?

O. P.

A. -- The solution of the difficulty turns on the true marking of the parenthesis in Luke 3:23 "(being, as was supposed, son of Joseph)." The Revisers are no more right than was the A.V. in limiting it to "(as was supposed)." Christ's being considered son of Joseph is thus intimated to be outside the proper genealogical line which is here traced from Heli or Eli, Mary's father, up to Adam and God Himself. Jesus, reputedly son of Joseph, was really of Heli, &c. Even the unbelieving Jews did not question that Mary, the virgin mother of our Lord, was Heli's daughter; for the Talmud speaks of her thus, and as tormented in the unseen world. The fact is that there is a choice of ways which all remove the apparent discrepancy. On these we need not dwell here, but simply state the one which we believe to be the truth.

The internal evidence entirely sustains this view as intended of God. For as *υἱός* was expressed in the parenthetical clause as the reputed relationship, so by a purposely different construction the real natural succession through Mary is traced from her father up to the father of all (*τοῦ Ἡλι τοῦ Ματθάτ, κ. τ. λ.*), a grand fact characteristic of our Evangelist. In Matthew, on the other hand, where it was essential to trace the Messianic title of our Lord legally, we have "Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary." Again both Evangelists are equally careful to repudiate the actual fatherhood of Joseph, and to affirm the divine generation of our Savior, as well as His eternal being in the Godhead before the Incarnation.

But there is much more in corroboration, which goes along with the special design of each of the two Gospels. For it will be noticed that only Matthew records the apparitions of Jehovah's angel to Joseph (Matt. 1:20, 2:19); whereas in Luke 1:26-38 the angel Gabriel was sent by God not to Joseph but to Mary, even though Jehovah's angel appeared to Zachariah before (Luke 1:11), and to the shepherds after (Luke 2:9), the Child was born, the Son was given. Of course, His birth of Mary was of absolute moment for His person as now Man no less than God for ever, and for the infinite work He was about to accomplish. But so far was the legal position of Joseph as His reputed father from being unimportant, that He could not have been indisputably viewed as the promised Son and Heir of David's throne, till Joseph passed away. Hence not a word is said in any one of the four Gospels which supposes Joseph alive, when our Lord enters on His manifestation as the Messiah, though (as every believer knows) much more than the Messiah. This also disposes of the notion, cherished by not a few ancients and moderns, that Joseph had a family of sons and daughter, before Mary was betrothed to him. For in that case his eldest would have been legally the heir to David's throne. So completely was the law fulfilled, as well as the Prophets and the Psalms. Scripture cannot be broken (*The Bible Treasury* NS 1:351-352). ◆

2. ◆ Matt.1.19. I think that *δειγματισαι* (or παραδειγματισαι) was the exposure which must have resulted from Joseph's acting on Deut. 22. To which appearances, humanly, would have led, if God had not arrested this just man by the intervention of Gabriel, and enabled him, through the angel's blessed message, to judge righteous judgment. I doubt that his intention "to put her away privily" could be said to come under Deut. 24, which supposes the man to have already taken and owned his wife before he found some scandalous thing in her. W. KELLY.

(*Christian Annotator* 1856, p. 173.) ◆

> Now the birth of Jesus Christ [3] was thus: for his mother Mary being espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. And Joseph her husband, being righteous and unwilling to expose her, purposed to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, an angel of Jehovah appeared to him in a dream, &c. (Matt. 1:18-20).

Here the angel appears to Joseph in a dream. In Luke the angel appears to Mary. It is thus in Matthew, because Joseph was the important person in the eye of the law and yet the Messiah must not be, in point of fact, son of Joseph. All the wit of man could not have understood these ways beforehand: all his power could not have arranged the circumstances. if the law demanded that Jesus should be heir of Joseph, the prophet demanded that He should not be son of Joseph. God humbling Himself to save through the sacrifice of Himself, was the need of man; man exalted to glory on high was the counsel of God. How was this, and far more, to be united amid reconciled in one person? Jehovah Jesus is the answer.

> An angel of Jehovah appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto [thee] Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20).

God meets the scruples of the godly Israelite, and makes known that most distinguished honor which He had put upon Mary, under a guise which for a season had clouded her and distressed him. She was the very virgin God had predicted hundreds of years before --

> She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus (Matt. 1:21).

Here, again, Joseph was to be the one who publicly acts; while in Luke (ch. 1:31) Mary names. The difference arises from the point of view the Holy Ghost gives us of our Lord's person in the two Gospels. In Luke He is proving that Jesus, though divine, was very man; a partaker of humanity, apart from sin. In our case, it is sinful human nature -- in His case, it was holy. Accordingly, in speaking of Him simply as man, it is said in Luke,

> Therefore, also that holy thing; which shall be born [of thee] shall be called the Son of God {Luke 1:35}.

So He was most truly and properly a man -- the child of His virgin mother; and as such too He is called the Son of God. In that Gospel one great point was to prove His holy manhood; showing how fully and fitly He could be a Savior of men, and take up the woes and wretchedness, and on the cross suffer for the sinfulness, of others -- Himself the Holy One. He was the Son of God, who had actually taken human nature into His own person, Himself perfectly and really a man as much as any of us, but man absolutely without sin, holy, and not merely innocent. Adam was innocent, Jesus was holy. Holiness does not mean mere absence of evil, but inward power according to God, and so power to repel evil. When Adam was tempted, he fell. Jesus was tried by every temptation, and Satan exhausted his wiles in vain. All this, however, is most suitable to the Gospel of Luke; where it is accordingly seen that the proper humanity of Jesus flowed from His birth (i.e., from His mother). Even the Talmud acknowledges that Mary was daughter of Heli, as she was wife of Joseph, son of Jacob. His legal right to the throne of David was from Joseph to whom Mary was then betrothed; and Joseph accordingly is the prominent personage in the Gospel of Matthew.

But He had a title greater than any which Joseph could transmit even from David or Abraham; and this was to be attested in His name, His despised name of Jesus, Jehovah the Savior.

> Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

---

3. The true reading in Matt. 1:18 is a matter of considerable difficulty, *Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* is not only in the Elzevir or Rec. Text, but it is read by the Sinaitic, Wolfenbuttel (P), and the Dublin Rescript MSS., not to speak of the mass of cursives. The Vatican (1209) gives *X* before *Ἰ.* But Cod. Bezae Cant. (here defective in the Greek), if we may judge from its accompanying Latin version, must have read *X*, and so the Vulgate, It., Sax., Curetonian Syr., etc. What is more, Irenaeus expressly reasons (*contra Haer.* iii. c. xvi. § 2) on the phraseology of this verse against the Valentinian doctrine that Jesus was but the vessel for the Christ, who at His baptism was imagined to have descended into that human body born of the virgin. This falsehood, destructive of our Lord's person, the good bishop of Lyons confronts with the words of our Gospel. "Non, sicut ipsi dicunt; Iesum quidem ipsum esse, quii ex Maria sit natus, Christum vero qui desuper descendit. Caeterum potuerat dicere Matthaeus; Iesu vero generatio sic erat, sed praevidens Spiritus Sanctus depravatores et praemuniens contra fraudulentiam corirni per Matthaeum dit: Christi autem generatio sic erat." It is plain then, as the Benedictine note says, that Irenaués did not read in his copy *Ἰησοῦ* as in more modern manuscripts: but Massuet is mistaken in thinking that "Jesus," if added, would have increased the force of the argument. The first verse of the chapter had coupled them together already, and Irenaeus had referred to this in the beginning of the section. The emphatic fact he urges from the language of v. 18, as it stood in his manuscript, is the generation of the Christ or Messiah. This was inconsistent with, and destructive of, the Gnostic hypothesis.

I cannot but think this confirmed by the fact that *ὁ Ι. Χ.* is nowhere else found in genuine scripture. In the Received Text it occurs in Acts 8:12, 37; Heb. 10:10; 1 John 4:3; and Rev. 12:17. In every instance the proof fails.

Thus few even of the less important copies insert the article before 'I. X. in the first: and the second disappears in the best authorities, being in all probability a mere marginal gloss, though it crept in at a very early epoch. In Heb. 10:10, the article has no good authority whatever. In John 4:3, Christ should not be inserted (in the preceding verse *Ἰ. Χ.* is anarthrous, as it is regularly). In the last all the uncials and most others give simply "Jesus." Thus in fact, not only is the vulgar reading in Matt. 1:18 unsupported by the language of scripture everywhere else (the apparent parallels melting away when looked into), but it seems to me that it is not even Greek, unless the object were to assert the generation of Jesus as Christ, or the evangelist treated *Ἰ. Χ.* as practically one word.

If v. 18 refer to v. 17 where the phrase is unquestionably *τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, the order would be this. First, "Jesus Christ" is naturally brought before us in v. 1, which winds up with v. 16, "Jesus that is called Christ," and with the summary that follows, which gives the distinctive title, "the Christ" or Messiah. Then the portion that next commences unfolds the mysterious birth of this long-looked-for Messiah, whose name when born is Jesus (Matt. 21, 25; 2:1). Bengel has given a similar judgment, and Dr. Tregelles also.

Tischendorf omitted *Ἰησοῦ* in his seventh, and as far as I can trace his previous editions, but recurs to the common reading in his eighth, moved especially by the Sinitic MS.

That Bloomfield sees nothing to remark does not surprise one, but it certainly does that Alford passes it *over sicco pede*, even in the margin (save, of course, the readings). Kühnöl and Vater are equally. silent.

Jehovah's people were His people; and He should save them, not merely from their enemies, but from their sins. What a testimony to Him and for them! Blessed for any sinful soul to hear, how especially needed by a people then inflated with boundless hopes of earthly aggrandizement in their expected Messiah!

Here, too, alone in any part of the Gospels, it is that we hear of Jesus as "Emmanuel." This is equally instructive, significant, and beautiful; and the more because the Jew was too apt to forget it. Did he look for a divine Messiah -- for One who was God as well as man? Very far from it. Comparatively few of the Jews expected anything so astonishing as that. They craved and looked for a mighty king and conqueror, yet still a mere man. But here we find that the Holy Spirit, by their own prophet Isaiah, besides speaking of Him as man, takes care to announce that He was much more than man, that He was God (Matt. 1:22-23 {Isa. 7:14}).

> Behold, the (not "a" as in A.V). virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.

Matthew alone brings out this clear testimony of the great evangelical prophet -- "God with us." So perfectly did God provide for the stiff-necked Jews, and develop the neglected seeds of their prophecies, and reflect light on the obscure parts of their law; so that if a Jew rejected the Messiah, he did it to his own eternal ruin. Besides being the son of David and Abraham, then, He is God with us, Jehovah saving His people from their sins. Such is the true Messiah, and such the witness produced to Israel. Could they reject Matthew's history, if they received Isaiah's prophecy? In vain they worshiped God, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

> And Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of Jehovah had bidden him, and took unto him his wife, and knew her not till she had brought forth her [firstborn] son; and he called His name JESUS (Matt. 1:24, 25).

Some of the best authorities (the Sinaitic, Vat., &c.), omit "her firstborn," and so present simply "a son." But there is no doubt that these words are genuine in Luke 2, whence they may have been introduced here. The shorter form appears to be sufficient for the purpose of our evangelist.

We have been tracing what ought to have been of peculiar interest for a Jew; but may we also find the blessing of these truths for our own souls! Whatever exalts Jesus, whatever displays the grace and truth of God, puts down the pride of man, and is pregnant with blessing for the believer. By the blessing of God pursuing these lessons still farther, we shall find how the wisdom of every word of His is justified as we wait on this most illustrious testimony to Jesus the Messiah, to His rejection by Israel, and to the blessings which thence flow out to us, once poor Gentiles, now not only in the kingdom of heaven, but members of the Church, the body of Christ exalted on high.

Matthew 2

I think we shall find in the chapter before us abundant confirmation of the account already given of the Holy Ghost's special design by St. Matthew. That is, we shall see proofs that there is a most careful presentation of Jesus as the true Messiah of God, and of His rejection as such by the Jews; and that God, at the same time, takes advantage of Israel's fall to work out larger and deeper purposes.

The very first incident in the chapter illustrates it. Jesus was born. We do not meet with the same interesting facts which are given us in Luke of the very early days of our Lord's infancy: all are passed by, save that we have Christ presented as born in Bethlehem of Judea, the worship of the Magi from the east, and the flight into Egypt. The first fact that the Holy Ghost gives us here is the affecting one that there was no heart for the Messiah in Israel. And this was proved by the most significant circumstances.

> Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship (or do homage to) him (Matt. 2:1, 2).

We are not told how soon this was after His birth. No doubt a considerable time had elapsed. People are often deceived as to this in looking at the scene through the notions of their infancy. We have all seen the pictures of the Babe in the manger, and "the three kings" coming in to worship Him. But the truth is, that the Lord was not just born, as such associations would convey, when the Magi arrived. For His earliest condition in this world we must consult, not Matthew, but Luke.

Some might, it is true, gather a wrong impression from the Authorized Version of v. 1:

> Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king.

This does not intimate that the visit followed immediately upon our Savior's birth, but leaves room for a time more or less considerable afterwards. It simply means, that after He was born these easterns came: many months, or upwards of a year, might have intervened. What confirms this is, that the wise men had first seen the star in the east, and most probably at the time of our Lord's birth. After seeing the star, they had of course many a preparation to make before they could set out, and then a long way to travel; and traveling in those days was a hard and tedious matter in the eastern parts of the world. Even when they arrive in Judea, they go up first

to Jerusalem to enquire there. All this supposes necessarily the lapse of no little time. Their questions are answered by the scribes. Herod, hearing of it, is troubled, and all Jerusalem with him (v. 3). He gathers together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, and demands of them where the Christ should be born (v. 4). They tell him in Bethlehem of Judaea; upon which he calls the wise men and sends them there (vv. 4-8). All this took place before the scene of their worship.

> They, when they had heard the king, departed.
>
> And lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was (Matt. 2:9).

We have not to imagine, according to traditional notions, that the star tracked the way before them to Jerusalem. They saw it in the east, and connected the sight with the promised Messiah; for at that time the prophecies about His speedy appearance had been spread over a considerable part of the world. Many Gentiles were expecting Him, especially in the east. And the greatest and most opposed in the west were aware of such hopes. The last man that was known in the east as a prophet, before the Gentiles were broken in the presence of Israel, was Balaam. No doubt he was a wicked man; but God took advantage of him to utter the most remarkable predictions of Israel's coming glory. And that very prophecy had closed with a reference to the Star that should rise out of Jacob. And now, after many hundreds of years had passed away, the traces of this prophecy still lingered among the children of the east. It is unlikely, too, that Daniel's prophecies in Babylon, especially that of the seventy weeks, &c., were unknown, considering: his position and the extraordinary events of his day. We can understand that these prophecies would not only be such as the children of Israel would treasure up; but the knowledge of them might spread, especially in those lands. Much might not be clearly understood. Still, they looked for a wonderful personage to arise -- a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter out of Israel. [4]

When these strangers, then, saw the star, they set forward to His traditional capital, Jerusalem. It is clear that the star was a meteor of some kind. As it shone in the east, they put the fact of this remarkable phenomenon along with the expectations of the coming king. And this the more, because the easterns were great observers of the heavens, and were therefore more alive to any uncommon appearance. It may have recalled the prophecy of Balaam. Certain it is that they soon started for Jerusalem, where universal report among the Gentiles maintained that the great King was to reign. Having got there, God meets them, and it is remarkable how He does so. It is by His word, and His word interpreted by those who had not the smallest interest of heart in the Messiah. They were quite right in their interpretation; they knew where Messiah was to be born. The Magi probably thought that Jerusalem was to be the spot; but they were told by the scribes that Bethlehem was the predicted birthplace. Alas! the very men who could answer so pertinently, showed the not less solemn because it is a common fact, that it is possible to have a measure of clear knowledge of scripture, and at the same time to have no love for Him of whom all testifies. As to the Magi, ignorant as they were, and though they might have been in the dark as to other things, still their desire was true, and God overruled all. Through these Gentiles, indeed, He sent a testimony to Jerusalem as to the birth of the Messiah. God knew how to accomplish this and rebuke, through their testimony, those who ought, above all, to have watched for and hailed their own Messiah. If there was a queen who came from the distant parts of the earth to see King Solomon, who was the type of Christ, and to hear his, wisdom, so was it now. The Holy Ghost wrought on, and for, these pilgrims from a far country to bring them in presence of the true King. The scribes could answer the questions; but there was no care for the Messiah, and it was for Him that these wise men came. This at once detects the awful state that Jerusalem was in. The effect of the tidings that God's King was born is, that instead of seeking the promised One, instead of being filled with joy to hear of One whom they had not sought, they were all troubled, from the king downwards. More particularly, as we learn here, the chief priests and scribes are those whose state demonstrates the utter heartlessness of the nation. They had enough religious knowledge; they had the key in their hand, but they had no heart to enter in.

> Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared (Matt. 2:7).

I would call your attention to that, because it confirms what was said before. It was after the diligent enquiry of the king from the wise men, that he had settled in his own mind at what time the child must have been born. When they, warned of God, had withdrawn themselves instead of returning to Herod, he sent forth the cruel command to kill the children in Bethlehem and all the coasts, "from two years old and under" (Matt. 2:16). In other words, he naturally inferred that there had been a considerable lapse of time between the birth of Christ and the giving of his wicked order.

If we turn hence to the Gospel of Luke, we shall see the importance of this. We have there our Lord born, and born (just as Matthew shows) in the city of David; but we are told there the circumstances that account for this, for Bethlehem was not the place where Mary and Joseph ordinarily dwelt. It was a village to which they repaired because of the commandment of the Roman emperor, who had sent forth a decree, that all the world should be taxed or enrolled. They, being of the royal family of the Jews, go to Bethlehem, which was the city of David. Thus God brought to pass the

---

4. ◆ Q. -- Gen. 49:10, compared with 2 Chon. 26:21, and Matt. 2:1, &c.; how would you deal with them?

A. -- The "scepter" may be no more than av tribal symbol; and if this be the sense, Judah was thus kept till Shiloh, the Prince of Peace, came and was rejected, when in due time the place was lost, till He come again: then, and not before, the gathering or obedience of the peoples shall be unto Him. If it mean one entitled to royal sway in Zion, this is also true. So the line of David through Solomon went on to Jesus, as Matt. 1 shows; and in Him dead, risen, and glorified it abides, to be made good when God's time comes (*The Bible Treasury* 20:112). ◆

accomplishment of the prophecy of Micah through the decree of Cesar Augustus. Nothing was farther from his thoughts than the result which his decree, in God's providence, was to subserve -- the birth of the Messiah in the very place where prophecy demanded it. It appears that the census was not carried out then, but begun, and then stopped for some time. For it is said in Matt. 2:2, "And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria," which was several years after. People, not understanding this, have concluded that there was a mistake in Luke. They knew that Cyrenius's government of Syria was subsequent to Christ's nativity, and too hastily inferred that our Evangelist labored under the impression that the going up of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem took place in his time. But it is they who err, not Luke. The decree of Caesar Augustus did not come into full operation, or effect, till then. It was just sufficiently carried out, when the order for enrolment was given, to induce the parents, Joseph and Mary, to go up to the chief city of their lineage; and this was enough. God's object was accomplished. Joseph and Mary went there, and, while there, her days were fulfilled, and she brought forth her firstborn son, and "wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in the manger." There we have a scene totally different from what we had in Matthew, though this too was at Bethlehem. In all probability they paid more than one visit to the place. And let me ask, what more natural to suppose, than that the parents should, after such a miracle, revisit the birthplace of the holy and royal Babe? It was not far from Jerusalem, and we know that they went there every year to the feast of the passover. I see no reason to doubt that the visit of the Magi took place at another visit on the part of the parents to Bethlehem.

Mark how the circumstances recorded in Matthew differ from those in Luke.

In Matthew, Jerusalem is all troubled by the tidings of the Messiah's birth, while strangers from afar come up to do homage to the King of the Jews. They had seen His star; they knew it was the promised King, and now they are come to worship Him. They are found at Jerusalem, and when they leave it, on their way to Bethlehem, they are again encouraged of God. The star which they had seen before in the east reappeared, and went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was, to their exceeding great joy (Matt. 2:10) -- plain evidence that the star had not accompanied them all the way. And we shall find it true in our own experience, that where we act without appearances, we find all that is necessary. God always takes particular care of those who are true to the light, even though it be ever so little; while nothing is more abhorrent to Him than great pretensions to light, without any heart for the true light, which is Christ.

> And they came into the house, and saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him,

not her. Their homage was to Him.

> And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

They acknowledged Him as strangers whose greatest honor was to be owned of Him.

Jerusalem is outside all this. A usurper was there; an Edomite ruled. And, as when Christ returns again to the earth, there will be a false king in Jerusalem under the influence of the Western Powers, and in conjunction with the religious head of Israel, so it was at His first coming. All was entirely opposed to the recognition of Jesus.

We may observe that, of the reputed parents, Joseph is ever made the prominent person here, as in Matt. 1. The vision, given us in Matt. 2:13, was to Joseph.

In Luke we have quite another order of things. It is not so much one acknowledged as a king, though He was a king; but He is seen there in the lowliest possible condition. The persons that own Him are Jewish shepherds, who had the news made known to them from heaven. The heavenly hosts praise -- their hearts delight in the purpose and ways of God, in the Savior -- for as such had He been announced to them:

> To you is born this day, in David's city, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be the sign to you: ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger.

This was the very opening of our blessed Lord's life here below, evidently taking place immediately after His birth. The incident of the homage rendered by the Magi was long subsequent. There is not the slightest ground for confounding the two occasions. Each Gospel is true to its special purpose. It is a question of His royal rights over Israel and the Gentiles in Matthew. In Luke we have the perfect lowliness, from His very birth, of the Savior-Son of man; the interest of heaven in the birth of the earth-despised Christ the Lord, and on earth none but the poor of the flock, who have their hearts awakened to receive this blessed One, alike the expression, and the means, and the substance of divine grace. "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people," or rather, "to all the people," for it means the Jews. A much wider circle appears afterwards, but it does not go beyond the Jews yet. The message was sent to them in the first instance -- "to the Jew first," to apply the words of St. Paul.

How beautifully these various accounts harmonize with the Gospels in which they are found! In the one, the King, born some time before, is seen in Bethlehem, but none welcome Him save strangers from the east. From Matthew, we should not be aware of the slightest recognition of the Savior up to the time of their coming. On the contrary, when the first breath of these tidings is brought to Jerusalem, consternation was the result in all. The king, the priests, the scribes, all are in a state of ferment. There was no heart for Jesus. But God always will have a testimony. If the Jews will not have Him, the Gentiles come, and grace it is that effects this. Unbelieving Jews tell the Magi where the King should be born. They at once act upon it, and the Lord, meeting them on the way, puts them in presence of the King, to whom they present their gifts. It is the Messiah of Israel, but

rejected by Israel from His very birth. Jerusalem is with the false king, and cares not to receive Him. Those who were despised -as dogs, whom the Jews themselves had to instruct in the first lessons of prophecy, have the glory of being the true recognizers of the claims of the Messiah. Nothing more humbling. It is the Messiah come, and owned by the ends of the earth; but the Messiah slighted and rejected of His own nation. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" {John 1:11}. Of this we have proofs from the very first in Matthew. And as it was true, so it was important that Israel should know it. Here let them learn, through the earliest of the Evangelists; that it does not arise from any want of evidence on God's part. How did these Gentiles know? And where were the Jews that, during all this time, they had not recognized their own Messiah? It was a terrible tale, but the truth was the strangest of all things in their ears. Such is always the way of God. He does give a testimony, but man dislikes it because it is of God. To recognize the person of Christ was the difficulty. To see from scripture that their King was to be born in Bethlehem of Judah, was an easy thing; it did not test the conscience, nor put the heart to the proof. But to own that the ignored and despised One, the Child of Mary and the Heir of Joseph, was the Messiah -- this was indeed hard to the flesh. To those who had seen the sign of it in the heavens; to those who had looked for it in the midst of great darkness, but who had their eye toward it, and who had no preoccupations of heart to hinder them from bowing before His glory; all was simple, and they hastened to do Him honor. Now that He was born, they rejoiced at the thought, and they came from far to have the joy of seeing Him, and offering their gifts at His feet.

> And being warned of God in a dream, that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. And when they were departed, behold an angel of Jehovah appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him (Matt. 2:12, 13).

The unbelief that refused the word of God, is now allowed to show out how thoroughly it was under the power of Satan, who proves himself, as from the beginning, to be a liar first and a murderer afterwards. But the purpose of Herod was revealed of God, and Joseph, in obedience to His word, takes the young child and his mother by night and departs into Egypt,

> and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of Jehovah by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son (Matt. 2:14, 15).

A little word may be well here about this prophecy, and the application of it to our Lord. We shall have to take into account many prophecies cited in Matthew, if it please God. But the present quotation has evidently a remarkable character attached to it. It may have been said in the letter about His people, Israel was God's son, God's firstborn in Egypt. To them pertained the adoption. The prophet Hosea, writing seven hundred years, after their departure from Egypt, does not hesitate to apply this word to Israel; and now the same portion of Hosea is used of Christ, as that which fully came within the intent of the inspiring Spirit. How is it, that God's having taken Israel out of the land of Egypt should be so illustrated in Christ's history? Because Christ is the real, if sometimes latent, Object of the Holy Ghost in scripture. It matters not what may be the place of His people: they may have troubles or deliverances, but Christ must enter into all. There is no kind of temptation (save, of course, of inward evil) that He has not known; nor of blessing on God's behalf the spring of which He has not proved. Christ goes through the history of His people; and on that principle it is that such scriptures as these are applied to Him. Christ Himself is carried into the very place that had been the furnace of Israel. There it is that He finds His refuge from the false king of Judea. What a picture! Because of the anti-king then reigning in Jerusalem, the true King must flee, and flee into Egypt. Christ was the true Israel; Israel, as yet, but the empty vine. Compare Isa. 49.

We see from this, that no miraculous power is put forth to preserve Emmanuel. It was accomplishing the prophecies -- filling up the outline of desolation morally and nationally, that the Holy Ghost had sketched many a long year before. God was marking how precious to Him was every footstep of His Son. To unbelief it might seem a trifling circumstance in itself that the Lord was carried into Egypt and came out of it another day. But whatever was the place of Christ -- and His place here was wherever His people were in their sorrow -- He will not permit them to feel a pang without fully sharing it. He knows what it is to be carried into Egypt, and that too in a far more painful way than Israel had experienced. For the bitterest trouble of Christ was from His own people; the most murderous blow aimed at Him was by the king then sitting on the throne in their midst. Failing in this, he sends forth and slays all the male children

> that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, A voice was heard in Rama, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be comforted, because they are not (Matt. 2:16-18).

How clearly the Holy Ghost is here providing for the Jew the proof that they were precious in His sight; and that, if Christ entered into their sorrows, they must not wonder if His presence entail upon themselves the bitterest suffering through their rejection of Him. If Christ has the smallest connection with Israel, they become the object of Satan's animosity. It is Herod, led on by Satan, who issued the order to slay their little ones; -- but the Messiah is taken away from the scene of his rage. In Israel they have weeping and great mourning. Such were some of the troubles that Israel brought upon themselves; and this is but a little picture of what will befall them in the latter day.

> But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of Jehovah appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

> saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel (Matt. 2:19-21).

It is notable to find "the land of Israel" occurring here. It was not merely the country, as known among men, where poor Jews lived by the permission of their Gentile lords. How few look on it as the land "of Israel" now! But God's thoughts are toward His people in connection with the glory of His Son. If Jesus had His earthly tie there, if Emmanuel were now born of the virgin, why should not the land be called the land of Israel? It was the divine purpose completely to expel the foot of the Gentile that was now treading it down. If the people would only bow and receive Him to take His place as their King, how blessed their lot! But would Israel receive Jehovah-Jesus now returning from Egypt? There was no readiness for Him yet. One Herod passed away; another followed. Hence, when the young child was taken back into the land of Israel, and when Joseph heard

> that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene (Matt. 2:22, 23)

The method of citation is worthy of note here. Take note of another and most striking turn which is given to the prophets; for we must observe that it is not one particular prophet, but "the prophets." And by that we are to gather, not that any one inspired writer said these words, but that it is the spirit of the prophets who do speak of Him. When we read in one prophet,

> They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek {Micah 5:1};

in another,

> He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief {Isa. 53:3};

and again, what they would give Him for meat, and in His thirst for drink, and how He would be taunted up to the last -- we can understand this application of the prophets. It was the well-understood language expressive of contempt in that day: He should, in other words, be called a Nazarene. Nazareth was the most scorned of places. Not only did the men of Judaea proper look down upon Nazareth, but the Galileans themselves despised it, though it was part. of their own district. Later on we read of a guileless Israelite, who, when he heard of Jesus being there, exclaimed, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Thus, if one spot in Palestine more than another best accords with the rejection that befell the Christ, it was Nazareth. Can there be a more wonderful picture than this of One who, while He was the true King, was yet refused by His own people? Gentiles might have done Him reverence; but His own nation was not indifferent, but scornful. How little fruit was there to answer to the culture that God had bestowed upon them! Yet here was the Holy One of God who pursues His path of obedience unto death, who would not let out His glory by crushing His foes or protecting Himself. His people went down into Egypt: He goes down there also. He has to be called out of Egypt to avoid the king in the land. This was His portion. He would not screen Himself from the sorrows of His people: He would share far more than them all. When He does come forth, Israel is still unprepared for Him. His parents turn to Nazareth, Joseph having been again divinely instructed in a dream. This is the last mention that we have of him in Matthew. Luke gives us later circumstances; but Joseph wholly disappears before our Lord entered upon His ministry.

When He is called out of Egypt, He cannot go to Jerusalem, nor to Bethlehem either. He was to be despised and rejected: the prophets had said so; their words must be accomplished. Archelaus reigned in Judea: a usurper was still there. Joseph turns aside, at the warning of God, to Nazareth. There Jesus dwelt with them; that the word of the prophets might be fulfilled, in our Lord's proving to the full what it was to be the most despised of men. He knew it pre-eminently on the cross; but it was His all through. And this is the way that God speaks of the Messiah to Israel. He declares what their hardness of heart and unbelief would entail -- even if it were to the Messiah Himself coming, according to all that God had declared, to that land and people. What a picture of man, and especially of Israel, when such must be His portion! He comes and calls, but no answer greets Him. The unbelief of man hinders the blessing of God. It was the sin of Israel that thus complicated the early history of the King. But future chapters point out that God would turn the very unbelief of Israel into the means of blessing for the despised Gentiles; and that, if the Jews rejected the counsel of God to their own perdition, the Gentiles would hear and receive better blessing in the blessed One.

Thus we have from the, beginning of this wonderful book the germs of all that the end will display. We see One who is really the Messiah ready to accomplish the promises and to take the throne, but the people are in no way ready for Him. Israel were steeped in sin -- they had no heart for Him; and no wonder; full, as they were, of their own king, an Edomite; their own ceremonies, a cloak of hypocrisy; their own light, darkness Godward. All was turned to the exaltation of self. Hence Jesus is rejected from the very first. This is the story of man. The after chapters will draw out the glorious consequences which God, in His grace, causes to spring even from the rejection of His own Son. Upon that happier theme we may dwell on other occasions.

Matthew 3

We are now carried forward, from the return of our Lord into the Holy Land, to the days when John the Baptist came insisting upon the grand essential truth of repentance. But here John's ministry is viewed entirely in connection with the Lord's relation to Israel. It is interesting to compare the different ways in which the Gospels present John himself, as illustrating the manner in which the Holy Ghost uses His own divine right to shape and group the materials of our Lord's history according to the exact object in view. A casual reader might scarcely recognize that John the Baptist of the last Gospel was the Baptist of the first. The manner in which they are viewed, and the discourses that are recorded, take their form from the particular book in which the Holy Ghost has given them. This, so far from being imperfection, is a part of that admirable method in which God impresses the design which He has in view, and which suits the place which each portion of scripture has to fill. And what can be of deeper interest, or more strengthening, than to find that the very passages on which unbelief puts its finger and alleges as proofs of the imperfection of scripture (varieties of statement insuperable to the mind of man), on the contrary, when viewed as part of God's plan for commending His beloved Son, all assume their own place in this great scheme, which is to the glory of Christ. This is the true key to all scripture; and if that key be of great value from Genesis to Revelation, there is no place, perhaps, where its value is so conspicuous as in the Gospels.

In finding four different accounts of our Lord, each presenting things in a different manner, the first thought of man's heart is, that each succeeding Gospel must add to, or correct, what had gone before. But such thoughts only prove either that the truth was never known, or that it has been forgotten. Is it adequately borne in mind that God is the Author of the Gospels? Once admit that simple truth, and it would be evidently blasphemous to suppose that He makes mistakes. Look at the meanest thing that God has made, the minutest insect that the microscope can discover upon the least blade of grass: what does not fill the particular niche for which God created it? I do not deny that sin has brought all kinds of derangements into the natural as well as into the moral. world, I admit that men's infirmities may appear even in the word of God: first, in not keeping the sacred deposit free from all corruption; and, then, in interpreting that word through some feeble medium of his own; and thus, one way or another, hindering the pure, revealed light of God. But this does not impeach its original perfectness.

I have made these few remarks because all readers may not be equally familiar with the great truth of the difference of design in the Gospels, and, therefore, I do not scruple to draw attention to the immense help it furnishes to the understanding of scripture, and especially of its apparent discrepancies.

In the chapter before us, John the Baptist is presented as fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah. He came

> preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight {Matt. 3:2, 3}.

In Luke you will find that the prophecy is carried farther down. More is given us than the words we have got here.

> Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God, &c. {Luke 3:5}.

The range of Luke is wider -- "Every valley shall be filled . . all flesh shall see," &c. I ask, Why is that quotation continued farther there? It is the more remarkable because usually Luke does not quote much from the Old Testament, as compared with Matthew. How comes it that Luke departs in this particular instance from his habit? The reason is obvious. His task was to show the grace of God that brings salvation, and that has appeared to all men. The Holy Ghost leads him, therefore, to fasten upon these words that display the universal range of the Lord's goodness to man.

But there is another expression that demands our attention for a little -- "the kingdom of the heavens." We are all familiar with it as a phrase often used in scripture; but possibly not many are equally familiar with its force. Indeed, it is understood very vaguely even by most Christians. To many it conveys the idea of the Church, sometimes the visible, and sometimes the invisible, Church. By others, again, it is supposed to mean something tantamount to the gospel, or heaven itself at the end. The expression is derived from the Old Testament, and that is the reason why it appears in Matthew only. As we have already seen, our evangelist writes with a view to Israel, and, therefore, lays hold of a phrase which is suggested by the Old Testament, and taken from the prophecy of Daniel (4:26), who speaks of the days coming when the heavens should rule. Before that (Dan. 3), we hear that the God of heaven is to set up a kingdom that should never be destroyed; it is the kingdom of the heavens. And, again, in Dan. 7, we are told of the Son of man's coming, and of a universal kingdom which is given Him. Dan. 2 does not give us the person, but the thing itself: so that there might still have been a kingdom without the revelation of the person in whose hands it was to be held. But ch. 7 completes the circle, and shows us that it is not merely the heavens ruling in the distance, nor a kingdom opening with judgment on earth; but, besides that, there is a glorious Man to whom the- rule of the heavens will be entrusted. The Son of man will not simply destroy what opposes God, but introduce a universal kingdom which shall not be destroyed.

This kingdom John the Baptist came preaching. Is it to be believed that he was at all aware of the particular form it would take first? He simply preached the kingdom of the

heavens as at hand, himself the public and immediate forerunner of the Shepherd of Israel, with the thoughts of a godly Jew, and a special witness that the Messiah was there -- that He was about to be manifested who would execute judgment upon the evil, and introduce good in the power of God, and bring about the glory promised to the fathers; and that all this was to be inaugurated and established in the person of Christ here below. This, one cannot doubt, was the general thought. But we shall find subsequently that for the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, John was not at all prepared. This, too, it was that led to the twofold form taken by the kingdom of the heavens. While the old, or Jewish, view of a kingdom established by power and glory, as a visible sovereignty over the earth, is postponed, the rejection of Jesus on earth and His ascension to God's right hand lead to the introduction of the kingdom of the heavens in a mysterious form -- which is, in point of fact, going on now. Thus it has two sides. When Christ went up to heaven, and took His place as the rejected but glorified One there, the kingdom of the heavens began as it is now.

This is a view of the kingdom that we do not find in the Old Testament. To it pertain the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, which were only opened out as the Lord was manifestly rejected by Israel. Thus we see in Matt. 11 John sends two of his disciples to ask whether Jesus was really the Messiah, or were they to look for another? Whether he was himself staggered, or his disciples, or whether both were, it matters little -- such was the result. It sounds like an unbelieving question to the Lord. John might well be astonished that Jesus did not deliver the Jews, and bring in the glory for which patriarchs had waited, and which prophets had predicted. Strange that, instead of this, His messenger was in prison, Himself and His disciples despised! Our Lord at once referred to these deeds of power and grace, which bespoke the presence of God, acting in a new way, and introducing a power evidently in grace -- bringing in totally new thoughts above the habits, or hopes, of the most godly Jew. These they were to report to John. But He goes farther, and says, "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." This, apparently, conveys a rebuke to John, and implies that he had been, more or less, stumbled.

Yet it is beautiful to see how at once, after the departure of the messengers, our Lord vindicates the Baptist before the multitude. But, after pronouncing John to be the most blessed among those born of women, He suddenly introduces a most startling truth, namely, that, great as John was, the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he. This does not refer to the kingdom coming in power and glory, because, when that day comes, Old and New Testament saints must all be raised, or changed, to have their part in it; as it is said of those who are being called now, that they shall sit "with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of the heavens." What, then, does our Lord mean? Does He not refer to some form of it that John had not spoken of? And what was this? He goes on farther and says,

> From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of the heavens suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force {Matt. 11:12}.

What an extraordinary statement must this have appeared to those who listened to it then! The Lord is contrasting the kingdom of heaven, in a public manifest form, with that kingdom as opened to faith only -- more blessed as known to faith than to sight. As the Lord afterwards said to Thomas,

> Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed {John 20:29}.

This holds good in every dealing of God. Abraham was more blessed when, though in the land of Canaan, he possessed it not, than if it had all been actually his own. He gained a better place in the ways of God from the very fact of his not having one foot of the land in possession. So with David: his reign was morally far more glorious then that of Solomon. His heir had the place of power; but David had that which was unseen, yet nearer to God. We never find that Solomon enters into what was taught by the ark, whereas it was always the great attraction to David's heart. Solomon was found before the great altar which the whole world could see. The ark was within the holiest, where God sat. It was the throne of His majesty in the midst of Israel. To it the heart of David ever turned. The blessing of faith is always better than the blessing of sight here below, how great soever this may be.

There has been no time in the dealings of God so blessed for a soul as the ways of God now. To be born in the millennium is not really to be compared with it. It is true that then all will be in subjection to Christ, and the heart might say, Would that it were ours to be born then! But even the believers found in that day on the earth, will not know what it is to enter within the veil, or to have the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. Neither will they know, in the full sense, the joy of the Holy Ghost, with the privilege of being cast out and scorned by the world for Christ's sake. So that, both in the matter of suffering, and in the enjoyment of what Christ has gone through for us, and of His present glory in heaven, our present privilege is far beyond it. For those who suffer now, there will be the best of heavenly blessedness then. But the peculiarity of the present time is this, that while we are on earth, we are consciously dwellers in heaven. We are not of the world, as Christ is not of the world. Our life does not belong to it; our blessing does not spring from it; all our portion is outside this world. And this is communicated to us, while we are in the world, to raise us above the world. It is not, as with John here, going into the wilderness: a most seasonable and beautiful expression of what God thought of the city of holiness, Jerusalem, where the priests themselves ministered. John retires from it all. He is outside it in sympathy: the very act in itself declared that the wilderness is better than the city, even though it contain God's temple. But what a solemn declaration of the ruin, not only of the world, but of the favored people, who were the great link between God and men generally!

In this scene behold another thing altogether. It is not man blest, and the earth brought also into blessedness under the personal reign of Christ. But here the heavens were opened upon the Lord Jesus. Never had they opened before

upon anyone en earth, except as a sign of God's judgment. (Ezek. 1). But here, first of all, the eye of heaven, of the Father, who is in heaven, is directed upon the beloved One. By-and-by, He takes up His place in heaven, as the Main who had suffered for sins, and brought in the revealed righteousness of God.

The kingdom of the heavens then began. From the time that Jesus goes up into heaven; till He comes back again, the New Testament view of the kingdom of the heavens runs on, and in that sense, the privilege of the feeblest soul brought to the knowledge of Christ now, transcends anything that ever entered into the heart, or mind, of men, or even of saints, before the Lord died and rose again. You may dwell upon the blessed walk of Enoch and the bright faith of Abraham. But still this remains true --

> Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he {Matt. 11:11}.

There is no honest escape from the conclusion that has been drawn. If persons argue, Is a little child believing in Jesus now more holy and righteous than the blessed saints of old? I answer that it is another matter altogether. He ought to be. But it is not what is said. The Lord lays down that "the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

In a word, it is not a question of what men are; but God is glorifying Christ. Upon Him God is putting honor, and therefore He gives such privileges to the least one that believes in Him. Since His death and resurrection, the worshipers, once purged, have no more conscience of sins {Heb. 10}. Think of what such a thing would have been to an Old Testament saint! Was there one that knew such a place as this? It could not be. They might look forward to it, but they could not say that it was an accomplished fact. It would have been contrary to the holiness of God, and positive presumption for man, to have even the thought, till Christ came and wrought the work that blotted sins out completely. Now it is presumption not to take with confidence what Christ has done. Remission of sins never was, or could be, thus known of old. When we enter into the position in which we are set by the work of Christ, it is not merely that we have remission: we are made the righteousness of God in Christ; we have a new life, the risen life of Christ Himself; and we receive the Spirit of adoption, or the power of knowing and enjoying all. We stand thus in the conscious relation of sons of God, and are entitled by Christ Himself to say that His Father is our Father, His God is our God. We are entitled also to know that we are one with Christ, and that there is not a single blessing or glory that God has conferred upon His beloved Son, but what the Son shares with us. But glory conferred, be it said; for, of course, there is His essential, divine glory in which none can participate. God never gave Christ to be God. Deity was His own right from all eternity. He could not have Godhead bestowed upon Him. But Christ became man, and as man He was the Son of God (Luke 1:35); He is not merely the only begotten Son and the Word as God {John 1:1}. He was the Son of God as born into this world, and as such He has been raised up from the dead; marked out as the Son of God with power, by the resurrection of the dead {Rom. 1:4}, in virtue of which He brings us into the same place before God that He Himself has acquired {Eph. 1:6}. He has entirely delivered us from the place into which He entered for us, enduring the unsparing judgment of God. He brings us into the place which. He is not only entitled to Himself, but which He has acquired righteously for us.

But John had no conception of such a compass of blessing. To draw near to God, to hear Jesus saying

> My God and your God, my Father and your Father {John 20:17},

could not enter into his mind, if it were only because he was a saint in association with what was then revealed. Such an one would be jealous of going beyond the word of God before Christ uttered it. The Jews looked upon the kingdom as the state when Israel would be blessed of God as a nation; and even those that may have more fully understood, still looked for all the power of the kingdom to be brought in, entirely independent of anything on their part. "

> But the kingdom of the heavens suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force {Matt. 11:12}.

The Lord shows that there is an action of faith needed now; that the kingdom of heaven here presented, demands the rupture of natural ties, and the giving up of previous associations. In the sense of power and glory introduced by a personal Messiah upon the earth, John had already pressed on consciences, that it was not a thing of mere ordinance, or privilege by birth -- that God would not be content except with moral realities.

Allow me here to say, that it is a very solemn thing indeed to claim the privileges of grace for that which is contrary to the nature of God. I am not speaking now of the lost one found by grace, to whom God gives a new life, fresh from Himself. But the effect of a soul's receiving life in the person of Christ is, that there are produced feelings, thoughts, judgments, and ways, acceptable to God and akin to His nature. If a person is a child of God, he is like his Father; he has a nature suitable to God, a life that dislikes sin and is surely pained by what is iniquitous in others, but more particularly in himself. Many bad men are strong against evil in others; they are weak where it most touches themselves. But a believer, a Christian, always begins with self-judgment.

This is the reason why, now that there was to be a moral preparation for the Messiah, John preaches "Repent." Repentance is the soul's moral judgment of itself under the eye of God, the soul's acceptance of His judgment of its state before Him, and bowing to it. John called upon them to repent because the kingdom of heaven was, at hand.

> For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make his paths straight {Matt. 3:3}.

This clearly implied two things -- that he was but a voice, pretending to nothing, and that the work would be done by

another. The voice only was on his part, but the other, whose way he was preparing, was the Lord, Jehovah Himself. "Prepare ye the way of Jehovah."

Then we have the account of John the Baptist himself.

> The same John had his raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey {Matt. 3:4};

all perfectly suitable to this summons to repentance. As yet it is not grace introduced; this belongs to the kingdom of the heavens, when fully brought in. But John did not know it thus. He knew that the Messiah was coming, a Messiah who would introduce the power of God and deliver His people. But the deep unfolding of grace, the mighty victory which a suffering Messiah would accomplish for the soul, and' the way in which God would be magnified most of all by the putting away of sin by the death of His Son, were thoughts that must wait for another season, not for utterance more or less, but for adequate intelligence. No heart could be in communion with them till the work was done. The ark of the Lord must stand still in the waters of Jordan first. Not a foot can pass that way scathless till the ark has passed in. God in Christ must be before man.

Most fittingly, therefore, John does not bring out the fulness of divine grace, but the moral call to repentance. It is the Spirit of God producing a sense of what we are, but not yet revealing the work of Christ and the fulness of grace there is in Him. In the Gospel of John we do find the Baptist speaking so as to imply a good deal more, when he uttered those sweet and memorable words,

> Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world {John 1:29}.

How far he entered into them, who can say? There is no necessity to suppose that he comprehended all that was taught by them: many a child of God does not even now. God might make use of them with great power as a prophecy; and the Holy Ghost, in His action in Old Testament times, did not go beyond this in testimony. The saints, then, had the Holy Ghost giving them a faith in a coming Messiah. Some, the prophets, were the Spirit's vessels in predicting Him. But as to the personal enjoyment of communion, such as results from the accomplishment of all, it never was, nor could be, till the work was done.

John, accordingly, is found outside the religion of man, as well as outside his profanity. He was not in Rome, but he was also away from Jerusalem; and this, in the predicted messenger of Jehovah, was a most solemn feature.

> Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? {Matt. 3:5-7}.

Here is a part of that truth which is exceedingly startling, when we reflect upon it. The Pharisees were religiously the most influential in Israel. The Sadducees were the loose, secular, self-indulgent class; the Pharisees, those who stood very firm for much that was true, and for all that they considered the truth. Yet when John sees them both coming to his baptism, he says,

> O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance {Matt. 3:7}.

-- fruits of a kindred character. He maintains that the day of ceremonialism, or of birthrights, was completely past. The Pharisee might rest upon his religion; the Sadducee upon the fact that he was a child of Abraham. The desire to escape wrath and to have part in the kingdom might be no more than nature.

Humbled souls suit the kingdom, and God now being fully revealed, will have reality. Descent from the fathers, the law, the promises even, may be turned into a right against God, who will not allow it, and can raise out of the stones children to Abraham. But there must be, if they attempted to draw near to God, a nature and ways morally suitable to God. "Bring forth, therefore," he says, "fruits meet for repentance." He is not explaining here how a sinner is to be saved, or how God remits sins; but that if persons take the stand of having to do with God, there must be what becomes His presence. So the Apostle says to the Hebrews, "Follow peace and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." There he is not speaking of being accounted righteous, but of holiness as a present and practical thing. This is written to Christians: and the Holy Ghost does not hesitate to insist upon it. So strong is the tendency to reaction in human nature, that the very baptized Jews who were pleading for the law might fall into the opposite extreme, and think that sin is compatible with the salvation that God gives through grace. But God never allows that His nature can co-exist with sanctioned iniquity.

Here, then, was evidently a stern rebuke for the leading Jews. But more than that, John adds, "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees"; that is to say, judgment is just at hand. (v. 10).

> Therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance {Matt. 3:10, 11}.

He does not go beyond this. The remission of sins that he might speak of, appears to me to have been rather a question of the government of God, than of that complete clearing away of sins which. was the fruit of grace when' the work of atonement was done. But, even so, it was in view of Messiah's advent.

> I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptise your with the Holy Ghost, and with fire (Matt. 3:11).

Thus he brings together the two distinctive features of the first and second comings of Christ. He did not know but that both would go on together. All that might lie between the two was hidden from his eyes. The Old Testament scriptures did present the first and second advent of the Messiah, but not in such a way as to convey the thought of two distinct epochs.

Even after the Lord's death and resurrection, the disciples did not understand this. So John mingles these two things together -- the baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire. We know that the baptizing with the Holy Ghost is the power of God's blessing in the kingdom of heaven as it now is. The baptism of fire, is that which will accompany the kingdom of heaven, as it will be when Christ comes again. There is no such thing in the word of God as the baptism of fire to designate what took place at Pentecost. Baptism with fire is the application of the judgment of God in dealing with men. [5] Whereas the day of Pentecost was the outpouring of the grace of God, and the giving of the Holy Ghost to dwell in the saints of God, which merely referred to the power of the Holy Ghost going forth so as to bear testimony in such sort as would not bear a single evil thing in the heart of men, even while it showed out the grace of God.

This is Christianity -- the most perfect love of God shown to a man that has no claim upon it: all his evil condemned by the grace of God in the death of Christ! And thus it is that a man is made honest in the sight of God and men. He can afford to be guileless about himself, because he knows that God imputes nothing to him. When we read on the day of Pentecost of the tongues being divided, it was to show the going forth of the testimony of God to the Gentile as well as to the Jew. But when Matt. 3 speaks of our Lord's baptizing with fire, the allusion is not to these tongues of fire, but to the execution of righteous judgment when Christ comes again. This appears still more clearly from what follows:

> Whose fan is in his hand; and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:12).

It is not at all what He does in saving a soul, but the very contrary. It refers to the time when, men having refused the gospel, nothing remains but the outpouring of vengeance upon them.

> Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised of him (Matt. 3:13).

What a cluster of wonders! Jesus coming to be baptized of John, who was avowedly preaching repentance and remission of sins. What could bring the Lord Jesus there? for He never confessed sins, and had none to confess. He challenges even His enemies to convince Him of sin. A man without sin -- without the smallest particle of self in any form or degree -- the lowliest and most blessed of men -- the One who judged everything according to God: and yet He comes to be baptized! John at once felt it Jesus coming to be baptized of him! To be baptized at all, but above all of him whose baptism was that of repentance! What is the clue to this? It is grace -- the source and the channel of everything in Jesus. It was not the judgment of God that put Him there; it was not any need in Himself that brought Him there -- nothing that He had to acknowledge or confess; but it was grace.

For on whom in Israel did God's eye look down with compassion? Upon those that were confessing their sins. Upon such does His eye ever rest. For the next best thing to not being a sinner at all is to confess our sins. We find that this is the first great movement proceeded by the Holy Ghost in a sinner's soul -- he feeling of his true place in the sight of God. Here was the blessed One; and though not one flaw naturally could claim His presence, yet grace led Him there. And when John was earnestly hindering Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee; and comest thou to me?" what blessed grace and truth does not our Lord's answer unfold!

> Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness {Matt. 3:15}.

It is righteousness in every shape now to be fulfilled, not merely the doing of the law. But now there was the righteousness of acknowledging the true state in which even the. best part of Israel lay. For if there were any in Israel that showed a feeling for God, it was those who were baptized of John -- those who repented in view of the kingdom of heaven. They desired God's promises, and they wished to be ready for the King. And the Lord's heart was there at once; the sympathies of His soul were with those that were humbling themselves in the sense of their sin before God.

The same principle is true of us, in proportion as the Spirit of Christ is ungrieved in our souls. Wherever even it is a question of acknowledging anything to man, who is the person you can most open your heart to? The most spiritual man: he who is walking most above sin -- his is the bosom to which you can open out your sin more fully than to another:

> If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness {Gal. 6:1}.

It was exactly the perfection of the holiness of Christ that could enable Him so to act: another might have feared-appearances. If Christ had merely been innocent, instead of holy, should we have found Him there? Never. Holiness implies divine power against sin -- innocence merely the absence of sin. Thus we find our Lord in the full consciousness of His perfect holiness coming to the baptism of John, and taking His place with those in Israel who felt aright for God. Then John suffered Him. He was fulfilling all righteousness, not confessing sin; and His goodness could associate John in it.

> And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased {Matt. 3:16, 17}.

---

5. ◆ Q. What is the baptism of fire, spoken of in Matt.3:11, and Luke 3:16? L.R.

A. I understand it to be that unsparing divine judgment which the Lord at His appearing is to execute on all evil, from which the righteous are for ever separated. John the Baptist presented the work of Messiah as a whole. The cross severed the two baptisms: that which followed His first advent when He ascended on high, baptizing in the power of the Spirit; and that which awaits His second advent, as detailed in the verse that follows in both Gospels. The Gospels of Mark and John speak only of that power which in virtue of the cross severs the Christian from the evil condemned therein. So in the Acts, we hear nothing of baptism. in fire: this is to be when the Lord returns (*The Bible Treasury* 18:256). ◆

Does it not seem that this wonderful testimony of God the Father was the consequence of Christ's fulfilling all righteousness in the waters of Jordan? It was the answer of God to the place that Christ, in His grace, had taken. It was God jealous for the glory of His Son, who would not permit that a suspicion should rest upon this loveliest and lowliest of acts. And, therefore, lest the full grace of it should not be felt, how quick is God the Father to say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" Think not for a moment that He has sin. But if you who feel your sins are baptized by John, He is with you: if the sheep go into the waters, the Shepherd would enter them too. The Father at once vindicates His Son: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is not that He was well pleased with that act merely; it is the retrospective expression of God's delight. It refutes all that the poor mind of man might have -- and has -- gathered out of this transaction.

Is it not always thus in the word of God? If there be, so to speak, a locked door, the key is, as the rule, behind it. If there is a heart that counts upon God, and knows the perfection of His character, and is jealous over the honor of His beloved Son, God watches that they may not stray. Man has endeavored to take advantage of the Lord's grace, thus taking His place with the godly in Israel, in order to lower His person and His position even in relation to God Himself. But when we read in faith, with chastened spirits, what do we hear? "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We shall by-and-by find the importance of this in connection with what follows; but we may leave the subject for the present. There is nothing in the whole compass of God's Word so full of blessing to the believer, as the person of Christ and His ways. But we ever need unremitting jealousy over self, and the special guidance of the Holy Ghost: for who is sufficient for these things?

Matthew 4

There are two things that we may notice before our Lord is tempted of the devil. The first is, that He is most emphatically recognized as the Son of God by His Father; secondly, that He is anointed as man by the Holy Ghost. Now a similar thing is true of the believer, of course in an inferior way. Still, the believer is owned as a son of God, and has the Spirit of God given to him before he becomes the proper object of the enemy's temptations. And this is an important distinction to bear in mind. Strictly speaking, the relation which the sinner bears to the enemy is not as subject to be tempted. He is a captive; he is led by the devil at his will. This is a very distinct thing from temptation; for it supposes a person thoroughly under the power of Satan. We are tempted when we are out of the enemy's power, and because we are sons of God. Thus, plainly, all men have to do with Satan in one way or another. The mass of mankind are his slaves; but those delivered by the power of God, those who by grace are God's children, become the objects of his assault in the way of temptation. It is not so much his power that such have to dread; for when the soul has received Jesus, Satan's power is really null and void; it is completely broken for the believer. And therefore it is that we are warned rather against his wiles. In certain cases there may be the suffering from his fiery darts; but even this is not his power, which is broken for the believer through the work of Christ: he has only to resist, and the devil will flee from him. If Satan had really power, it is clear that he would not flee; but he has none. He has lost it as regards the soul that has received Christ. But then, while to faith the power of Satan is a thing destroyed in the cross of Jesus, his wiles are a very serious matter; and we ought not to be ignorant of his devices. Now God has been graciously pleased to give us his manner of dealing with our blessed Lord. And that this is intended for our use, and the great pattern arid principle of the temptations of Satan at any time, is clear from many obvious and weighty considerations.

Besides; we know from the Gospel of Luke that, in the case of our Lord, there was a very long-continued temptation of Satan, of which we have no details. We are only told the fact that Jesus was tempted of the devil during forty days {Luke 4}. But the great temptations, which the Holy Ghost has been pleased to record for us, are those that took place at the end of the forty days. May we not gather hence, that in the temptation of our Lord there were two parts -- first, that not common to man, but peculiar to our Lord? For we are subject to no such circumstances as being driven into the wilderness for forty days. But, secondly, we are exposed to such as are given us at the close. The Lord seems to cast a veil over the first, and discloses carefully what, in principle, every child of God may be tempted by some time or another. We shall see that these three temptations; presented by Matthew and Luke in a different order, give us an admirable insight into the ways of Satan when he thus assails the children of God. But it is exceedingly sweet to see, that, before Satan is allowed to tempt at all, the blessedness of the Son's recognition by the Father is most fully brought out. And, indeed, it is something akin which renders anyone obnoxious to the hatred of Satan. The enemy is well aware when God converts and quickens a soul hitherto dead in trespasses and sins; and at once he is prepared with his temptations. They need not, of course, come in the same order as our Lord's; but they seem to be, more or less, of a similar character with those which are revealed.

It is clear that the first temptation grew out of our Lord's actual circumstances. He had been all this time in the wilderness without food, and at the end of forty days He was an hungered. When Moses was without food on the mount for the sane time, he was with God and miraculously sustained. But the wonderful thing here is, that the time was spent with the enemy. None had ever been so, or will be so again. To be

all that while in presence of Satan, dependent on God, was the greatest moral honor, though the severest trial, that man had ever passed through. Throughout the Lord is seen as Son of man, though also as Son of God.

The introductory notice shows us that temptation was going on all the time our Lord was in the wilderness.

> Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread {Matt. 4:1-3}.

Whatever may be the aim of Satan, this is one main part of his tactics -- he insinuates a doubt, a doubt of our own relationship with God. "If thou be the Son of God." Now, search the word of God as you nay, never will you find His Spirit leading a soul to doubt. Nor can anything, indeed, be more opposed to His way than sanctioning mistrust of God. And it shows the exceeding subtlety of Satan, that he has actually made the children of God themselves to be his instruments, not only by permitting doubts in themselves, but helping to raise them in others, often on the mistaken plea, that not to be confident with God is a sign of humility, and of a desire to be lowly; But faith says, "We are always confident."

Not that we are to shrink from self-examination: this is carefully pressed in scripture. Thus, in 1 Cor. 11 the believers are evidently exhorted to examine themselves, but not with any idea of producing doubt. On the contrary, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat" {1 Cor. 11:28}; for the question was about the Lord's Supper. If the right effect were hesitation, it would have been "let him not eat," in case of not finding himself as he ought to be. But supposing he finds that which is wrong within, is he not to eat? Surely he is to look up to his Savior, and cast himself upon that grace which never can fail. To think that there was no resource would be indeed to dishonor Christ, and to deny His truth and love.

> "My grace is sufficient for thee: my strength is made perfect in weakness {2 Cor. 12:9}.

Such is the word of the Lord. Oh the strength of His grace, the believer is to examine himself in the thought of going to the table of the Lord. It is not a question whether he is to go or stay away: we do not find this in scripture. Nor do we find, on the other hand, that, because I am a Christian, it is no matter what state I may be in spiritually. But a man is to examine himself, and so to eat. He is sure to find that which calls for humiliation. It is important for a soul to draw near to God, and to have His light cast upon all that is there. This will give ground for humbling oneself, but never for staying away. Such is what the Spirit of God lays down as a general rule for the Lord's Supper. Of course, one does not refer now to cases of open sin, where the vindication of the Lord's glory is required. These suppose a man's practicing sin, and not examining himself. It is a question here of the ordinary walk of the child of God; and what the Apostle enjoins is careful enquiry as to what he finds within himself, but "so let him eat."

"If thou be the Son of God." Our Lord did not look like it. There was nothing of such a character outwardly as to carry necessary demonstration and bear down all question. If it had been so, there would have been no room left for faith-at all. Satan takes advantage of the lowliness of our Lord in the place that He took as man. And, indeed, nothing could be more singular than His being found in the wilderness, and, as we read in Mark, with the wild beasts. If He was really the Son of God, Maker of heaven and earth, what a place to be in, and led there by the Spirit, after the Father had spoken from heaven and acknowledged Him to be His beloved Son! But so it was. And so it is now, in a lower sense, with the children of God. For no matter how much blessed they may be of God, or how truly owned as His sons, and having His Spirit dwelling within them, they also in their measure have their wilderness. 'As my Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you into the world.' Not into some pleasant place where there is no room for trial, but the very contrary. Because we belong to God and to heaven, because we have the Holy Ghost sealing us unto the day of redemption, we have to encounter Satan, but with the certainty that his power is broken, and that his wiles are what we have to resist: This questioning the relationship of Christ with God shows how truly Satan was at work. But the Lord does not pronounce him to be Satan until open rebellion is manifested against God. When it is mere subtlety, He does not call him Satan. There are two ways in which the enemy is described in scripture. He is called Satan and the devil. The latter is the term which implies his accusing character and also his wiles; the former refers to his power as adversary.

We must wait, even when we suspect it is the power of evil at work, before we pronounce it absolutely. For if there is such a fact as the devil tempting, God also puts a soul to the test, and this may be very sharp. Moreover, even God Himself does not act till a thing is manifest. He shows wonderful patience and most contrary to the haste of man. He comes down to see whether the evil is so great; as in the case of Adam, yea, of Sodom and Gomorrah. But it always remains true that, whatever God may be in other things, quick as He is to hear the cry of His own in sorrow, He is exceedingly slow to judge; and there is nothing that more marks the knowledge of Christ practically and the effect of it in our own souls, than where the same thing is made true in us. Hastiness to judge is man's way in proportion to his want of grace; and patience is not a question of knowledge but of love that lingers over another, unwilling to pronounce till every hope is gone. There might still be hesitation. The rising in the flesh, which looked so threatening, might turn out after all to be only on the surface and not deep-seated. So here we see patience even in our Lord's dealing with the adversary. It is only when he thoroughly makes manifest what he is, that the Lord Himself calls him Satan. Only when he demands the worship due to God alone, does our Lord say, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Then the adversary flees instantly. But the Lord lets him thoroughly discover himself first. This is divinely wise. Because, although the Lord knew him to be

Satan all the time, what pattern would this be for us? The Lord is here the blessed man in the presence of Satan, showing us how we have to carry ourselves in the temptations that come upon us as saints of God.

And allow me to say another word with regard to temptation. In the sense we have it here, it is entirely from without {outside}. Our Lord never knew what it was to be tempted from within. He was "in all points tempted like as we are." But the Holy Ghost qualifies this by adding, "Yet without sin." It was not merely that He did not yield to sin, but He never had the principle of it -- never the least motion of any thought, or wish, contrary to God. He never knew sin. It is there that we so differ. We have cause of deep humiliation sometimes, because, besides having to do with the devil without, we have got also an evil nature within -- what scripture calls the flesh (i.e., self, the spring of insubordination and of enmity against God). It is the fountain of unloving, wilful, ungodly desires in us; that which naturally never seeks God's will, save only in a spirit of fear; that which says, What will become of our souls if we do it not? but never seeks it as that which is loved: we never do till born of God. Even afterwards the same wicked principle is still there; but we have a new life implanted of God in our souls, which delights in His will.

But although the temptations of our Lord, which we have here, were from without, still Satan adapted them to the circumstances in which our Lord then stood. He had been for forty days without food, and the first word, therefore, of the tempter is,

> If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:3, 4).

Our Lord refers to the chapter of Deuteronomy that alludes to the manna, the daily food of Israel, which involved dependence upon God, and showed that Israel did not need the resources of the world to sustain them. They did not require some rich country to supply them out of its abundant harvest; neither did they depend upon gold and silver. Israel, before they had a land to cultivate and the means of gathering from it, were taught alone with God. In the wilderness, where He had brought them out as His first-born son, He puts them to the proof; and the way of it was, whether they were content with God and with the fare that God provided for them day by day. Alas! they were not.

Here the scene is entirely changed. It is a man in the wilderness, but Satan is there, and not God. In spirit our Lord ever dwelt with His Father; for even when on earth He was "the Son of man which is in heaven" {John 3:13}. He combined thus two things in His own person. Day by day there He was, the man dependent upon God for everything. And this was the first great temptation of the devil -- the appeal to His earthly natural wants. It was no sin to be hungry; but it would have been a sin to have distrusted God because of the desert place. Did not God know that there was no bread there? and was it not His Spirit who had led Him there? Had God told Him to leave the wilderness, or to make the stones into bread? He would not use His own power, independently of the word of God. And it is the constant mark of the way in which the Holy Ghost energizes the children of God, that they do not use miraculous power for themselves, nor for their friends. If we look at it in the New Testament, we find Paul working miracles and using the power of God to heal the sick around. But was it ever used for his own circle? On the contrary, Paul leaves Trophimus sick at Miletum, and displays about him all the anxiety of one who might never have had power to heal the body. When Epaphroditus was sick, we see the exercise of a faith which knew that the will of God, with acquiescence in it, was worth a thousand miracles. Miracles had not in themselves the high character of exercising the soul in dependence upon God. To obey God, to submit to Him, to have confidence in Him, is that of which human nature is incapable. Power alone never reaches so high. Therefore, in the case of our Lord Himself, we never find that He puts His works of might on a level with obedience. Nay, He even speaks of His disciples as those who should do greater works than He Himself had done {John 14:12}. Great as had been His own works, He makes known to the disciples themselves that they were to do greater. But obedience was what characterized Christ: this never was found in a mere child of Adam.

Here, in the face of Satan, our Lord finds His strength, not in doing miracles, or in any provision that He might have made for Himself, but in the word of God. Hunger might have legitimate wants; but here He was, tried in presence of Satan, and He will not step out of the trial till it is over: He will not shift His circumstances or lift one finger for Himself He waits upon God. "Man shall not live," He answers, "by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." God's word had led Him there, for the Holy Ghost always acts by the word. He would not leave the wilderness till God Himself intimated as much to Him. This completely set aside Satan's temptations. But more: it brought out the real secret of living in dependence upon God day by day. For it is not a question here of imparting divine life, but of how we live when we have received it; and the food of the new life is the word of God. Of what immense importance does not this show it is to be growing in the knowledge of the written word, and having that word as our household. bread day- by day, not merely reading it. as a task or formal duty, but, as it is indeed the divinely suitable provision for the child of God! It is good for everyone to study it, because he needs it, because it is in every way for the good of the soul day by day to read it intelligently, heartily, as those that receive it from God Himself. And God does not give that which the heart of man cannot take in, but what is adapted to our daily wants.

> Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

This, then, is the answer of our Lord to the first temptation. Why should He turn the stones into bread? He hung upon God's word: His Father had not told Him to do so. He could wait. So should it be with us. Where we have no

clear expression of the mind of God, it is always our place to wait till we have. Sometimes it may show our weakness that we do not know the mind of God, and this is distasteful to us. Restlessness would like to go somewhere or do something, but this is not faith. Faith proves itself in waiting for God to manifest His will.

The next temptation was not a personal one, but connected with religion, as the first had been in respect of bodily wants. We shall find that the order is different in Luke. But here, in the second temptation mentioned, is what I may call the religious temptation. The Lord had said that men should live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The devil then takes Him up into the holy city, sets Him upon a pinnacle of the temple, and founds his temptation upon that very point in our Lord's answer -- the word of God. He says, as it were, Here is a word of God for you:

> He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone {Matt. 4:6}.

Very true. It was God's word, and evidently spoken of the Messiah. But what was Satan using it for? He says, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, &c." This was making a move without God -- doing something by oneself. Scripture did not say, Cast thyself down, because God has given His angels charge concerning thee, lest thou should dash thy foot against a stone.

The Lord would not turn aside from scripture, because Satan had misused it. He shows us, in the most instructive way, that we are not to be moved from our stronghold because it may be turned against us. Our Lord does not enter into nice distinctions, nor analyze what Satan had said, but He has given us that which ought to be, if one may so say, the standard mode of dealing for every Christian man. There are those who might have spiritual discrimination to see that Satan was perverting the scripture which he quoted; but many might not. The Lord takes a broad ground in dealing with the adversary. He stands upon what each Christian should know and feel, and this is,

> It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God {Matt. 4:7}.

He cites a plain, positive word of God which Satan was destroying by the use he made of Psa. 91. Now that is the stronghold of. a believer who may have to do with one that reasons subtly from scripture -- "It is written again." He can appeal to that which is palpable and clear. It will be found that, where a person systematically misapplies scripture, he destroys some fundamental principle of the word of God. Whatever is false is contrary to some plain passage of scripture. Now this is a great mercy. The believer holds fast to what is sure; he will not quit what he does understand for something that he does riot. He may be perplexed by what the adversary is producing, and may only have a growing suspicion that he is wrong. But he may say to himself, I can never give up what is beyond a doubt for that which I do not know. In other words, he holds the light and refuses the darkness.

It is thus, it seems to me, our Lord deals with Satan. He could at once have set him aside on grounds of reasoning, and have shown the perverted end to which Satan was applying scripture; but He rather deals with him on moral grounds which every Christian is capable of judging. Do I find a scripture used for the purpose of making me distrust God? At once I take my stand on

> Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

What is meant by this? I am never to doubt the Lord will be for me. If I do anything to prove Him, to see whether He will be for me, this is at once unbelief and disobedience. It is an allusion to Israel's history again and another quotation from the book of Deuteronomy. Indeed our Lord quotes every answer to the temptations, as has been long ago remarked, from the book of Deuteronomy, the book which characteristically makes known Israel's failure under law, and the intervention of grace when all was ruined, and along with this the righteousness of faith in such a day.

You will find in Ex. 17, that the Israelites tempted the Lord by asking, Is He among us or not? This does not mean that they provoked Him by idolatry, or refusal to do His will. It is not a question there of open sin, but of unbelief of His goodness and presence -- unbelief, in a word, of God's being for us. This is exactly what our Lord pleads. Cast Myself down in order to find that the scripture is true and that the angels will bear Me up! I do not need to do such a thing; I am very certain that, if I were cast down, the angels would be there to sustain Me -- If you have on your premises a person whom you suspect of dishonesty, you may perhaps be disposed to test him in some way or other. But who would think of testing one that he had full confidence in? Now that is exactly the import of our Lord's answer: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." His soul resented the idea of trying God, to see whether He would sustain His Son. God might try Him; Satan might put Him to the test; but as to His tempting the Lord, as if the Lord His God required to be put to the proof, whether He would be true to His word -- away with such a thought! -- He would not hear of it for a moment. The Lord still insists upon this -- perfect confidence in God. Such is the full expression of His plea.

The temptation, which is second in Matthew, Luke gives as the third. Why is this? Surely we ought not to read scripture as if such differences were not intended to suggest inquiry. We have to take care that we do not misinterpret scripture; but scripture is meant to be understood. I say of these different orders in which the temptations are put, both are right, both are inspired of God. If they were both intended to report the temptation exactly as it took place, it is clear they are not right, but God had a much higher object. God wrote for our instruction, and God has been pleased, in the different Gospels, to put the facts in the way that is most instructive. Matthew simply gives the temptation historically, as it took place. Therefore in Matthew we have notes of time: "*Then* the devil taketh him up," &c. In Luke there is no such thought; it is simply "*and* the devil," &c. This word at once prepares us for it. It is clear, there were these different temptations, but Luke puts them so as not to tell us the order

in which they occurred.

This is a general remark, true of the whole Gospel of Luke, that he habitually departs from the mere order of fact, to give an arrangement suited to the design which he had in view. As a whole, the Gospel of Luke is characterized by putting the facts of our Lord's life in an order that suited the doctrine He was teaching. Thus you will find in Luke, that even the genealogy of our Lord is not given in its regular place; there is a departure from the mere natural series, and there is, instead, a moral order.

Take the case of the Lord's prayer: Luke puts that in a totally different place from Matthew, who gives it in the wondrous discourse commonly called the Sermon on the Mount; and, as prayer formed a most important part of the new principles the Lord was bringing out, so it formed one of the main subjects of the Lord's discourse. Luke reserves that prayer till ch. 11, because our Lord is pointing out there the grand means of spiritual life -- how it is to be kept up and sustained in the soul. And this he shows us from the history of Martha and Mary (Luke 10). Why was it that Jesus approved of the path and walk of Mary rather than that of Martha? It is not that He did not love them all, nor was it that Martha had not a real personal love to the Savior, and that her heart was not true to Him. But there was an immense difference between them. What and why was it? Luke gives us the moral difference. When Martha was all busied with what she could do for the Lord, to show her love to Him, Mary was occupied with the Lord Himself -- seated at His feet, listening to His word. The one was full of what she could do for Christ; the other, full of Christ Himself; and nothing that she could do was of the smallest consequence in her eyes, compared with Christ Himself. Thus we find, in another instance, Mary breaking the alabaster box to anoint the feet of Jesus, an action little accounted of by others; yet what she had done, should be recorded throughout the whole world. Our Lord brings out in Luke this great point -- the word of God, the waiting upon Jesus, being the first great means of strengthening the new and spiritual life; and, therefore, immediately after this account of these sisters, we have the request of the disciples to be taught how to pray. It really took place long before; but they are put together in that special form by the third evangelist, in order to mark the connection of the word of God with prayer.

So, in the temptation, Luke departs from the order of fact and gives us the moral sequence. Matthew simply names the facts here as they took place. Luke puts them in the order of magnitude, and rises from the natural trial to the worldly one, and then to the religious temptation. For it is perfectly plain that the temptation by the word of God was much harder for one who valued His word above everything, than that which lay in an appeal to natural wants or to worldly ambition. Therefore, Luke keeps this temptation to the last. In Matthew it is not so, but we have, in the third place, the temptation by the world.

> Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me (Matt. 4:8, 9).

Here at once the devil was manifest. The very idea of presenting any object of obeisance and worship between the soul and God, was at once to detect that he was either the devil himself, or an instrument of the devil. The Lord, therefore, at once pronounces him "Satan."

> Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Matt. 4:10).

If it had been an apostle, it would have been just the same. If such a one had been so completely led away as to hint such a thing, the Lord would have said "Satan" all the same. Is not this most solemn with us, in dealing with Christians even, who may have become for the time instruments of Satan? The Lord did not hesitate on one occasion to say "Satan" to Peter himself, and be was the chief of the twelve, the first in dignity among the apostles of the Lamb. And yet our Lord Himself, after He had put signal honor upon Peter and given a new name, does not hesitate to say "Satan" not less to Peter than to the enemy himself. All this brings out an important principle for our own ways, in having to do even with a child of God.

In answering the third and last temptation, our Lord still confines Himself to the Book of Deuteronomy. Why? Because Deuteronomy is the book that regards Israel after they had completely failed under the law, when God brings in the principle of sovereign grace, and not the righteousness of law, but that which is of faith. This is the reason why St. Paul also quotes from Deuteronomy for the same purpose. It is the book that indicates the place of obedience, when it is no longer a question of ritual observance under the law. The Lord Himself here takes that very place. He is not witnessing what He could have done as a divine person. As such, He would have taken ground where we could not follow Him. But throughout this temptation He takes the posture that becomes us and all that desire to follow Him. The only thing right and becoming for a godly man, in meeting temptations, is the ground of the obedience of faith: one thus stands in the confidence of what God is in His goodness. The Lord would on no account swerve from what was the due and comely place for a servant of God in Israel. If a person was godly, his place was to confess and to be baptized with the baptism of repentance. Our Lord at once finds Himself with such, though in His case it was the fulfilling of righteousness; while with us it is the acknowledgment of sin. He who alone could have taken His stand upon legal righteousness, takes it as in every way vindicating God, not upon the mere righteousness of man. Satan may put temptation before Him in every form; but it is of no use. His only care is to vindicate God, and never to arrogate anything to Himself. The enemy was foiled, to God's glory, by an obedient and dependent Man.

I believe that the principles brought before us in this chapter are of the greatest practical importance for the children of God. The few remarks here made may help to direct souls to the value, practically, of these temptations of our Lord for guidance in our own path. But the whole subject

is commended to the attention of the reader, as one that, although it may have come before us many a time, and we may have often meditated upon its practical value, may still claim our earnest thought, as it will surely repay our prayerful study.

It may be instructive to compare the different ways in which the Holy Ghost introduces our Lord's ministry in the Gospels. And when one speaks of His ministry, you will understand that His public service is meant, for there was much appertaining to the Lord -- miracles performed, and remarkable discourses uttered -- before His ministerial course was formally entered on. What I would desire now, with the blessing of God, to notice, is the wisdom with which He has given us a distinct view of our Lord in each of these different inspired accounts. We may reverently follow Him who has been pleased to furnish them so variously -- omitting certain statements in some, and presenting them in others, altering now and then the order of narrating events, to accomplish thus His purpose more perfectly. In comparing these accounts we may see that the Holy Ghost always preserves the grand design of each Gospel, and this is the basis of all just interpretation. We shall find, steadily keeping in view what He is aiming at, that we have in this what was really the principle on which the Gospels themselves were written, and consequently what alone will enable any soul to understand them aright.

Now, it has been already shown, in commencing, that throughout the Gospel of Matthew, the Holy Ghost is setting before us the Messiah with the fullest proofs of His mission from God, but, alas! a suffring and a rejected One, and this specially by His own people; and among them rejected most of all by such as, humanly speaking, had most reason to receive Him. Were any peculiarly remarkable for their righteousness in the estimate of the nation? If Pharisees were so, who so bitter against Him? Were any celebrated for their knowledge of scripture? The scribes were those combined with the Pharisees against Him. The priests, jealous of their position, would naturally oppose One who brought out the reality of a divine power, administered by the Son of Man upon earth, in the forgiveness of sins. Now all these things come out with striking force and clearness in the Gospel of Matthew. But although we are not arrived at these details as yet, still the main design of the Holy Ghost discovers itself in the manner in which our Lord is presented as entering upon His public ministry, in the portion that is now before us.

First of all, no notice is taken in Matthew of all that passed at Jerusalem. The Holy Ghost knew this perfectly well; He had nothing to learn about it, Humanly speaking, Matthew was as likely to have known and enquired into the earlier circumstances of our Lord, and particularly His connection with that city, as the beloved disciple John. Yet of a great deal given in John not a word appears in Matthew. In the fourth Gospel we have a deputation from Jerusalem to see John the Baptist first, and then our Lord is acknowledged as Lamb of God and as He who baptizes with the Holy Ghost. Then we have our Lord making Himself known to various persons, among them to Simon Peter, after Andrew his brother had already been in the company of the wondrous Stranger. Then Philip is called, who finds Nathaniel; and thus the work of the Lord spreads from one soul to another, either by the Lord attracting to Himself directly, or through the intervention of those already called. All this is entirely omitted here. Then, again, in John 2 is given the first miracle, or sign, in which Christ set forth His glory -- the turning of water into wine; after which our Lord goes up to Jerusalem and executes judgment upon the covetousness that then reigned even in the boasted city of holiness. We have also a little incidental view of what our Lord was doing during this time at Jerusalem. He was working miraculous signs there, and many were believing on Him, though in a natural way. Jesus, it is said, "did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men" {John 2:24}; but He does open the great doctrine of the new birth, and brings out the cross -- Himself to be made sin thus, as the serpent had been lifted up by Moses in the wilderness, that whosoever believed in Him "should not perish, but have everlasting life." All this took place before the circumstances recorded by Matthew. When this is seen, it must strike any observing reader of the word of God. It could not be that these things were unknown to Matthew: they could not fail to be named and dwelt on, if, apart from inspiration, you look at him as a mere disciple. Andrew, Peter, John, and the rest, would have conversed on their first acquaintance with the Savior over and over again. Yet Matthew does not say one word about it, neither does Mark nor Luke, but John does. Now, when we examine the Gospels themselves, we find the real solution. It is not the ignorance of one evangelist, nor the knowledge of another, that accounts either for the omissions or for the insertions. God gives such an account of Jesus as would perfectly impress the lesson He was teaching in each Gospel.

Why does all we have noticed appear appropriately in John? Clearly because it falls in with the truth that is taught there. In John we have the utter ruin of man -- of the world—from the outset. The first chapter shows us the practical evidence of what Judaism was -- the Lord not received by His own, however duly coming, and thus calling His own sheep by name, and leading them out. For the testimony of John Baptist had no abiding effect upon the mass; it might pass from mouth to mouth, but it fell unheeded upon the ears of those that had no faith: "Ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." Now we have the sheep individually called by name, and one of them receiving a new name, thoroughly in keeping with the character of John's Gospel.

In Matthew we have none of these striking incidents, because therein the Holy Ghost brings before us Jehovah-Jesus, the Messiah, working miracles, accomplishing prophecy, expounding the kingdom of heaven, but in want, despised, and the companion of such in Galilee; for He is not seen here as the Son of God, whether from everlasting, or as born into the world; but He Himself takes a place in separation, to make good the great oracle that the prophet Isaiah had been inspired of God to reveal hundreds of years before. For you will remark that our Lord's leaving Nazareth

and coming to dwell in Capernaum, is brought in here as the fulfilment of that which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying,

> The land of Zebulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles {Matt. 4:15}.

It was outside the regular allotment of Israel, in that part of it which is yet to belong to Israel, which certain of the tribes had taken possession of, though, strictly speaking, it was beyond the proper limits of the promised land. The Lord goes through Galilee of the Gentiles; and in all that He was doing, He fulfilled the prophecy. The Jews ought surely to have known it. The people which sat in darkness thus

> saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up {Matt. 4:16}.

Now, if we turn to the prophet Isaiah, we shall find the importance of this quotation somewhat more. It is part of a grave prophetic strain, in which the Lord lays bare the exceeding rebelliousness of Israel, and the judgments falling upon His people, because they would not hearken to His voice. His hand was stretched out against them.

> For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still (Isa. 5:25).

In the midst of these dealings of God we have in Isaiah vi. the glory of the Lord revealed. God is acting in His own glory. Now we know that this glory is in the person of Christ, as John 12 declares. The Lord announces accordingly in Isa. 7 that there was to be a birth wholly above nature. It was no longer, nor merely, a glorious One sitting upon a high throne, removed from men, yet men receiving a message of mercy from Him in the midst of judgment. Isa. 7 reveals the great fact of the Incarnation. The King of glory, Jehovah of hosts, was to become a Babe, born of a virgin. The next chapter reveals another fact. Israel no more cared for the glorious Child of the virgin, than before for the warnings of God. On the contrary, they despised and rejected Him.

Consequently, Isa. 8 supposes a godly remnant more and more isolated in the midst of a fearful state of things in Israel, who will then be joined, too, with the Gentiles, saying, A confederacy. There, Israel are to take the place of utter unbelief; the inhabitants of Judaea will be the leaders in this rebellion against God. But in the midst of it all, what is He doing?

> Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon Jehovah, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel, from Jehovah of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion {Isa. 8:16}.

That is, there is a most distinct declaration that God will be pleased to have only a little remnant in the midst of His own people. When Israel should reject the Messiah, a separated remnant appears there, and the blessing would come at last in all the fulness of this grace. Still it would be a small despised thing in the beginning; and this is exactly the circumstance that our Lord now was bringing out in evidence.

> And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits . . . Should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them {Isa. 8:19}.

And accordingly the prophecy goes on,

> Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, then at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light [namely the Messiah]: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined {Isa. 9:1, 2}.

It is shown afterwards in this prophecy that (while the Gentile affliction upon the nation would be heavier than ever, and the Roman oppression far exceed the Chaldean of old), the Messiah would be there, despised and rejected of men, nay, of the Jews, and that at this very time, when thus set at nought by the people that ought to have known His glory, great light would spring up in the most despised place, in Galilee of the nations, among the poorest of the Jews, where Gentiles were mixed up with them -- people who could not even speak their own tongue properly. There should this bright and heavenly light spring up; there the Messiah would be owned and received. Thus we can see how thoroughly this prophecy suits the Gospel we are considering. For what we have here is One who is Jehovah-Messiah in the truest sense, a divine king, and not a mere human being; but at the same time Messiah, while slighted by the nation and despised by the leaders, making Himself known in grace to those who were the most scorned in the outskirts, as you go out towards the Gentiles. What kings had looked for in vain, what prophets had desired to see, it was for their eyes to look upon. The Lord begins to separate Himself a remnant in Israel, in Galilee of the Gentiles. This completely keeps up and confirms the object of Matthew from the first.

But there is more than this.

> From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 4:17).

Now it is clear that this begins His public preaching. The discourse to Nicodemus was entirely different. Why have we nothing like the Samaritan woman in Matthew? How does it fit in with the Gospel of John? In Matthew the subject is the accomplishment of the prophecies about the Messiah. The object of God there was to show that there was, on His part, no failure of testimony, till the Baptist's work closes. Jesus awaits this in Matthew. In John He waits for nothing. He gives the grandest possible testimony about the kingdom, not exactly of heaven, but of God; the necessity of a life that man has not naturally, that God alone can give; and the necessity of the cross as the expression of God's judgment of sin in grace to sinners -- to the world. So that the discourse in John 3 consists of these two parts -- a life given of God, that never sins, that is perfectly holy; and Jesus dying in

atonement for the sins of the old life, which never could enter into the presence of God. And though believers must have the new life, yet this cannot blot out sin. Death is needed as well as life, and the Savior provides both. He is the source of life as the Son of God, and He dies as the Son of man. And this is what He brings out most profoundly in the beginning of John's Gospel.

In Matthew, as I have said, Jesus is waiting till the testimony of John the Baptist is closed, and then He enters upon His public ministry. These things are perfectly harmonious. If our Lord had been said to preach the kingdom of the heavens to Nicodemus, there might have seemed to be a contradiction; but He did not. He showed the necessity of a new birth for any who would see the kingdom of God. But in Matthew He is looking at what, though from a heavenly source, concerns the earth -- the kingdom of the heavens according to the prophecy of Daniel. He therefore waits till His earthly forerunner had fully done his task. The ministry of John is set forth by Elias; the forerunner must have done his work before the Lord begins His own. Hence Matthew leaves out all allusion to anything public about Christ before John is cast into prison. He presents to the Jews the kingdom of heaven as that which was according to their prophets.

In the Gospel of Luke let us see how our Lord's ministry is opened. Luke 4 will suffice for this purpose. The Lord returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee,

> and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up.

This is a previous scene; He is not in Capernaum yet. Matthew leaves it all out. This is the more striking because Luke was not one of those personally with our Lord, while Matthew was. But unless you believe that it is God who has guided the hand of every writer, and put His own seal upon it, you are incapable of understanding scripture; you will add your own thoughts, instead of being subject to the mind of God. What we want is to confide in God., who is shedding on us His own blessed and infinite light. Why does God give us this incident at Nazareth in Luke and nowhere else? Is it the Messiah? No; such is not the object of Luke. Nor is it His ministry in the order in which it occurred; this you will find in Mark. But Luke, as well as Matthew, changes the order of events, for the purpose of bringing out the moral object of each Gospel. Luke gives us this circumstance in the synagogue; Matthew does not. If anyone has read the Gospel of Luke with spiritual intelligence, what is the uniform impression conveyed to the mind? There is the blessed Man anointed of the Holy Ghost, and who goes about doing good. Indeed, this is precisely the way in which Peter sums up the life of Jesus in the Acts, when preaching Him to Cornelius --

> How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy. Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him {Acts 10:38}.

And then he gives an account of His wonderful work in His death and resurrection, and its fruits to the believer.

Opening, then, the Gospel of St. Luke, what is the first incident of our Lord's ministry recorded there? At Nazareth, the most despised village in Galilee, the place where our Lord was sure to be scorned - in His own country, where He had been living all the days of His private life of blessed obedience rendered to man, and of dependence upon God -- in this same place He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up to read from the prophet Isaiah, where it was written,

> The Spirit of Jehovah is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted . . . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book {Luke 4:18; Isa 61:1}.

He stopped in the very middle of a sentence. Why so? For the most precious reason. He was come here as a herald of grace, the minister of divine goodness to poor, miserable men. There was judgment mingled with mercy in the prophecy of Isaiah. The Gospel of Matthew points out judgment upon the Jews, and mercy to despised Galilee. But here it is a larger thing. In Luke there is not a word about judgment; nothing appears but the fulness of grace that was in Christ. He was come with all power and willingness to bless: the Spirit of Jehovah was upon Him for the purpose. He was sent to preach the acceptable year of the Lord -- and there, and then, He closed the book. He would not add the next words, which announced "the day of vengeance of our God." He most significantly stops before a word is said of that day. As to the actual errand on which Jesus was come from heaven, it was not to execute vengeance; this was only what man would, by-and-by, compel Him to do by refusing grace. But He came to show divine love, flowing in a perfect unceasing stream from His heart. This was what our Lord opened out here. Where does such a scene as this suit? Exactly the place where it occurs -- the Gospel of Luke only. Your could not transplant it to Matthew, or even to John. There is a character about it that pertains to this Gospel and to none other. Some, of the circumstances of our. Lord's ministry are given in all the Gospels, but this is not; because it flows in the current of St. Luke: and there it is found, and there alone.

This will help to illustrate the characteristic and divinely-arranged differences of the Gospels. Harmonizing is the attempt to squeeze into one mold things which are not the same. Thus, if I may add a few words on the account in Luke, we have more in corroboration. While they hung upon His lips to hear the gracious words, as the Holy Ghost characterizes them, all eyes fastened upon Him,

> He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears . . . And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? {Luke 4:22}.

Such was their unbelief of heart. He was despised and rejected of men: not only of the proud men of Jerusalem, but even at Nazareth. This is Luke's object, who demonstrates the deeper thought still -- that it was not only men who might be built up in the law, but · that the heart of man was against Him wherever He was. Let it be at Nazareth, and let Him utter the most gracious words that ever fell from the lips of

man, still scorn followed.

> And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself; whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thy country {Luke 4:23}.

Evidently we learn, too, that the Lord had done many things there, and things that had taken place previously to this: but the Spirit of God records this first at length. The Lord accordingly brings in another thing that I must refer to. He takes instances from Jewish history to illustrate the unbelief of the Jews, and the goodness of God to the Gentiles.

> I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when -the heaven was shut up . . . But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, etc. {Luke 4:25}.

That is to say, He shows that, in the unbelief of Israel, God turns to the Gentiles, and that they should hear. There was one grand point in Luke's Gospel -- not only the display of the fulness of grace that was in Jesus, but God going out to the Gentiles, and this in mercy to them. The first recorded discourse of our Lord's in Luke brings out the very object of the Gospel. Accordingly, when the Lord uttered these words, they

> were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum {Luke 4:28-30}.

And then we have the Lord dealing with a man that was possessed with a devil. This is the first miracle detailed here; and it is only in the next chapter that we find our Lord calling Simon Peter, Andrew, and the rest to follow Him; all which is given with the greatest possible care. At once we are struck with the difference.

For when we turn back to Matthew, there is not a word about Nazareth, or the casting out of a devil from a man possessed; but simply our Lord, when He began to preach, was walking by the sea of Galilee, and

> saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net [6] into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men (Matt. 4:18, 19).

The account is given very succinctly. The particulars are not found, but we do get them in Luke, and, I presume, for this reason, that his is specially the Gospel where we see the moral analysis of the human heart. There are two things specially brought out in Luke -- what God's heart is towards man, and what man's heart is naturally towards God; and, besides this, what he becomes through the grace of God. Take the parable of the prodigal, for instance. Have you not there God's grace, and the wickedness of man's heart fully brought out; and then his coming to himself, and being lost in the goodness of God towards him? This is just the Gospel of Luke, the sum and substance of the whole book. It is one reason why you have the experience of Peter when first called to service; how the Lord met his fears, and fitted him to become a fisher of men. And Peter is there made a prominent person: such experience is worthless except in an individual. Experience must be a thing between the soul and Christ; and the moment it becomes vague, or a matter of public notoriety, all is gone; it becomes then rather a snare for the conscience. There is the danger of repeating what we have heard from others, or of keeping back what is bad as to our own souls. It must be a matter of individual conscience with the Lord. Hence Luke gives us one individual singled out, and the minute account of what he passes through with the Lord.

This is not Matthew's point. There it is the rejected Messiah, now that His forerunner is cast into prison, who will Himself soon find that there is worse than a prison in store for Him. But for all that, the Lord will accomplish the prophecies. He is, in the most despised place, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah that predicted the law bound up among His disciples, at the very time that the Lord was hiding His face from Israel. Now He wants to have persons who are suited to be the representatives of this godly remnant in Israel. Therefore He calls first two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother. It would be a mistake to suppose that this was our Lord's first acquaintance with them. They knew the Lord long before. How do we know this? John tells us. If you examine the point, you will find that all the incidents in the first four chapters of St. John's Gospel occurred before this scene. The circumstances recorded of our Lord in Jerusalem, in Galilee, and with the woman of Samaria even, all took place before Simon and Andrew were called away front their work. In order to call fora special line of service, there is a second work of Christ necessary.

It is one thing for Christ to reveal Himself to a soul, it is another to make that soul a fisher of men. There is a special faith needed in order to act upon the souls of others. The simple, saving faith that appropriates Christ for one's own soul, is not at all the same thing as understanding the call of Christ summoning one away from all the natural objects of this life to do His work. This comes out here. The Lord, in His rejection, calls, and causes His voice to be heard by these four men, and by others also. They had already believed in Him, and had everlasting life; but to have everlasting life, blessed as it is, may be where a man cleaves a good deal to the world, and is occupied with what contributes to his own ease here below; he may remain still a member of the society of men. Many that are godly still continue mixed up with the world.

But in order for the Lord to make any to be the companions of His own service, and to fit them for carrying

---

6. ◆ Q. -- As there are three different Greek words in the N. T. translated "net," would it not be well to have the distinction explained? Q.

A. -- *Ἀμφίβληστρον* occurs only in Matt. 4:18 (implied also in Mark 1:16, where the most ancient MSS. omit the noun), and means a casting net. It was thrown round the object, whence the term was derived. The more usual word it *δίκτυον*, but in the plural form in Matt. 4:20, 21, Mark 1:18, in the sing. in John 21:6, 8, 11. It is derived from *δικεῖν,* to cast. Trawl net has been suggested as appropriate. But the σαγήνη (in Matt. 13:47 only), from *σάττειν* to pack or load, was a dragnet or seine, on a larger scale (*The Bible Treasury* NS 1:32). ◆

out His own objects, He must call them away. But they have got a father: what is to be done. No matter; the call of Christ is paramount to every other claim. They were casting a net into the sea; and He saith unto them, "Follow me." But they might have caught ever so much fish: what of that?

> They straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them (Matt. 4:20, 21).

No doubt it was a struggle. They were mending their nets with their father when the Lord called them; but they immediately left their nets and their father, and followed Him. And for this reason: They now knew who Christ was, that He was the Messiah, the blessed Object of hope that God had from the beginning promised to the fathers; and now the children had it. He called them. Could they not trust all they had in His hands, and confide in His care for their father? Surely they could. The very same faith which gave them to follow Jesus, not alone as a Giver of everlasting life, but as One to whom they now belonged as servants, could enable them to confide all that they had pertaining to them in this world, into His keeping. Surely, if the Lord called them, His call must be superior to their natural obligations.

This was an extraordinary case. We do not find that persons in general are called to such a work as this; but, it may be, there are occasions where the Lord has those that He summons to serve Him in this special way. How could one be of use to the souls of others, unless he have known somewhat of this trial for his own soul? The Lord is presented here as thus forming this godly remnant for Himself from the very beginning. "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for, wonders in Israel." This was what the Lord was now doing; but it is not all.

> Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto him all manner of sick people, that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with demons, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and he healed them (Matt. 4:23, 24).

Now, mark, there is nowhere, except in Matthew, such a series of the Lord's works and teaching compressed into a couple of verses. In Matthew they are crowded into a cluster, before we, have the teaching commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. Why is it that the ordinary current of the Lord's ministry is brought before us here in this comprehensive form? The Gospel of Matthew is intended to show that, after the Lord had called these disciples, His general service is presented for the purpose of proving the universal attention that was drawn to His doctrine. The Lord had been giving a full testimony everywhere through all Syria. Persons had been attracted from all quarters; and the Holy Ghost then gives us the outline of the kingdom of heaven in its objects and character. The circumstances are so arranged by the Holy Ghost as to show the universal attention directed to it. When all are on tip-toe to hear Him, then the Lord unfolds the character of the kingdom of heaven. Matthew knew perfectly well that the Sermon on the Mount was really uttered long after. He heard it himself. Yet Matthew's own call is not given till ch. 9. It was subsequent to the call of the twelve disciples that our Lord took His place upon the mountain; but Matthew records it long before. The object is to mark, not the time when our Lord uttered this discourse, but the change announced. There were, first, all these mighty deeds that witnessed to His being the true Messiah; and then His doctrine was perfectly brought out. The Sermon on the Mount need not be considered historically as one continuous discourse, but may have been divided into different parts. It is nowhere said that it was all uttered in strict consecution. We have only the general fact that then He spoke thus on the mount, and there He taught the people. It may have been broken up into several discourses, with the circumstances giving rise to this part or that omitted in Matthew. The human mind compares these things together, and finding that in Luke different portions of it are given to us in a different connection, while in Matthew all are given together, instead of confiding in the certainty that God is right, jumps at once to the conclusion that there is confusion in these scriptures. There is really perfection. It is the Holy Ghost shaping all according to the object He has before Him.

Another time I hope, if the Lord will, to enter carefully into this rich and blessed discourse of our Lord's, to evince its immense importance in itself, and its appropriateness in Matthew, where alone we have it so fully. In Mark and John it is not given at all, in Luke only in detached fragments, in Matthew as a whole. But now I merely commend to you the subject we have been looking at, trusting that the general remarks already made may prove an incentive to further and prayerful examination. May the hints thrown out help some to a more profitable reading of God's word, and more intelligent entrance into His mind, besides giving a key to difficulties in the Gospels.

Matthew 5

It has been already explained, though briefly, that one reason which seems to have guided the Spirit of God, if we may reverently venture so to speak, in putting the Sermon on the Mount out of its historical place in Matthew, and giving it to us before many of the events which, in point of fact, took place subsequently, was this: that the whole Gospel was written upon the principle of convincing Jews, first, who Jesus was, their Messiah -- a man, but Jehovah -- the LORD God of Israel; that next, the fullest proofs were given of what He really was as their Messiah, according to prophecy, miracle, moral principles and ways, both in His own person and in His doctrine. [7] In order to give the greater weight to His doctrine, the Spirit of God, in my opinion, has been pleased, first, to give as a general sketch the deeds of miraculous power which roused universal attention. The report went abroad everywhere, so that there was no possible ground of excuse for unbelief to argue that there was not sufficient publicity; that God had not sounded the trumpet loud enough for the tribes of Israel to hear. Far from that: throughout all Syria His fame had gone forth, and great multitudes followed Him from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond Jordan. All this is brought forward here, and grouped together at the end of Matt. 4.

And just as there is this grouping of the miracles of Christ, which might have been severed from one another by a long space of time, so I apprehend the Sermon on the Mount was not necessarily a continuous discourse, unbroken by time or circumstances, but that the Holy Ghost has seen fit to arrange it so as to give the whole moral unity of the doctrine of Christ as to the kingdom of heaven, and specially so as to counteract the earthly views of the people of Israel.

St. Luke, on the contrary, was inspired of the Holy Ghost to give the questions that originated certain portions of the discourse, and the circumstances that accompanied it; and, again, to keep certain parts of that discourse back, connecting them with facts that occurred from time to time in our Lord's ministry, the actual incidents being thus interwoven in moral correspondence with any particular doctrine of our Lord. In some places of Luke the Spirit of God takes the liberty, according to His sovereign wisdom, of keeping back certain portions, and bringing in a part here and there, according to the object He has in view. The great feature of Luke's Gospel, which runs through it from beginning to end, being its moral aim, we can perfectly understand how suitable it was that, if there were circumstances in Christ's life which were a sort of practical comment on His discourse, there you should have the discourse and the facts put together.

Now, as to the discourse itself, the Lord here clearly speaks as the Messiah, the Prophet-King of the Jews. But, besides, all through you will find that the discourse, supposes the rejection of the King. It is not yet brought clearly out, but this is what underlies it all. The King has the sense of the true state of the people, who had no heart for Him. Hence there is a sweet tinge of sorrow that runs through. it. That must ever characterize real godliness in the world as it is: a strange thing for Israel, and specially strange in the lips of the King, of One, too, possessed of such power, that had it been a question of using His resources, He could have changed all in a moment. The miracles which accompanied His every word proved that there was nothing beyond His reach, if Himself only were looked at. But you will find, whatever be the ways of God, that He always makes good His counsels. Thus, if in predicting a purpose, He takes in hand to set up a kingdom, He will certainly accomplish it, since He never gives up a single thought that has proceeded from His heart. Nevertheless, He first presents the thought to man, that is, to Israel, because they were the chosen race among men. Man has thus the responsibility of receiving, or rejecting, that which is the mind of God, before grace and power give it effect. But man always fails, no matter what God's purpose may be. Be it good, and holy, and true, it is that which exalts Himself, while it no less abases the sinner. This is enough for man. Feeling that he is made nothing of, he rejects whatever does not gratify his vanity. Man invariably sets himself against the thoughts of God: consequently there is not only sin and sorrow, but rejection of God Himself. And the wonderful thing that the history of this world exhibits, is God submitting to be rejected and insulted; allowing poor weak man, a worm, to repel His benign advances and refuse His goodness, to turn everything that God gives and promises into the display of his own pride and glory against the majesty and will of God. You will find that as all this is the truth about man, so the tinge of it runs through this blessed discourse of our Lord. And when He is now bringing out (which is the great purport of the early part of this chapter) the character of the people who would suit the kingdom of heaven, He proclaims that their character was to be formed by His own. If we know men's dislike and contempt for what is of God, He shows that those who really belong to Him must have a spirit and ways flowing from knowledge of, and communion with, His own. Nevertheless you will find that the truth of a divine life given to the believer is not spoken of in this discourse. Nor is redemption ever touched upon. Neither is the subject of the Sermon on the Mount. If a person, therefore, wanted to know how to be saved, he ought not to look here with the thought of finding an answer. Elsewhere these truths are revealed. Here the Lord is bringing out the kingdom of heaven and the sort of people that are suitable to that kingdom. It is clear that He is speaking of His own disciples, and, therefore, is not, could not be, setting out how one that belongs not to Himself can be delivered. from the enemy. He is speaking about saints, not about sinners. He

7. A third point, I may add here, of immense moment was to make evident the consequences of His rejection by the Jews, not only to them, but to the Gentiles -- that is, the change of economy which turned on that solemn fact.

here lays down what is according to His mind; not at all the way for a sinner at a distance from God to be brought near. The Sermon on the Mount treats not of salvation, but of the character and conduct of those that belong to Christ -- the true, yet rejected, King. But when these beatitudes are examined closely, we shall find an astonishing depth in them, and a beautiful order too.

The first blessedness, then, attaches to a fundamental trait which is inseparable from every soul that is brought to God, and that knows God.

> Blessed are the poor in spirit {Matt. 5:3}.

Nothing more contrary to man. What people call "a man of spirit," is exactly the opposite of being poor in spirit. A man of spirit is one who is such as Cain was -- a person determined not to be beaten; a soul that dares to fight it out with God Himself. The very grace of God is perverted into a reason never to bend. Now he who is "poor in spirit" is the very opposite of this. It is a person who is nothing in his own eyes, and feels that the dust is his right place. And every soul that knows God must, more or less, be there. He may quit this place; for although it is a solemn discovery, yet it is easy enough for self to rise, and forget our right place before God; and it may remain a danger for those who have been brought into the liberty of Christ. When there is exercised self judgment, a man is apt to be low, specially if not quite sure that all is clear between his soul and God. But when full relief is brought to his soul through the fulness and certainty of redemption in Christ Jesus, if then he look away from Jesus and slip from dependence on grace, there you will have the old spirit revived, the spirit of man in self-confidence: so terrible is the effect of a departure from God in order to mingle with men.

The first in order the Lord lays down as a sort of foundation. It is, indeed, inseparable from a soul that is brought to God. One may not even know what full liberty is: but there is this stamp that never can be absent where the Holy Ghost works in the soul -- and that is poverty of spirit. It may be encroached on by others, or it may fade away through the influence of false doctrine, from worldly thoughts and practice; but still there it was, and there, in the midst of all the rubbish, it is; and God knows how to bring a man down again, if he has slipped from his true place.

> Blessed the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens (v. 3).

In speaking about the kingdom, Christ does not hide that these are the people to whom it belongs. By the "kingdom of the heavens" He does not mean heaven the scene of glory on high, but rather looks at the earth as under the rule of heaven. It is notorious that many, otherwise intelligent, are in the habit of confounding these things. "Theirs is the kingdom of the heavens," they think means "theirs is heaven"; whereas the Lord really refers to the rule of the heavens over that which is here. He reverses the Jewish expectation of a Conqueror. Those who are poor in spirit belong to that system of which He is the King. He does not speak of the Church here. There might have been the kingdom of heaven and no church at all. It is not till the sixteenth chapter of this Gospel that the subject of the Church is broached; and then it is a thing promised, but expressly distinguished from the kingdom of heaven. There is not in all scripture a single passage where the kingdom of heaven is confounded with the church, or vice versa. "Blessed the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." This is the primary foundation, the broad characteristic feature of all that belong to Jesus.

> Blessed they that mourn {Matt. 5:4}

is the second feature. There is more activity of life, more depth of feeling, more entrance into the condition of things around them. To be "poor in spirit" would be true if there were not a single other soul in the world. A saint thus feels because of what he is in himself; it is a question between him and God, that makes him to be poor in spirit. But "blessed they that mourn" is not merely what we find in our own condition, but the holy sorrow that a saint tastes in finding himself in such a world as this, and, oh, how little able to maintain the glory of God. So that there is this holy sorrow very prominent indeed in the second blessedness. The first is the child of God experiencing the earliest rudimental feeling of holiness in his soul; the second is the sense of what is due to God -- a feeling it may be of great weakness, and yet of what becomes the honor of God, and how little it is upheld by himself or others.

> Blessed they that mourn: for they shall be comforted (Matt. 5:4).

There is not a single sigh that goes up to God but He treasures and will answer it; "ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves." Here, then, we have the sorrowing of the godly soul.

But in the third case we come to that which is deeper and more chastened. It is a condition of soul produced by a fuller acquaintance with God, and is especially the way in which God elsewhere describes the blessed One Himself. He was "meek and lowly in heart"; and this was what the Lord said after He had been groaning in spirit, for He knew what it was to have a deeper sorrow than any spoken of, over the condition of men and the rejection of God that He witnessed here below. He could only say "Woe" to those cities in which He had done so many mighty works; and then Capernaum comes in for the deepest condemnation, because the mightiest works of all were done there in vain. And what could Jesus do but groan in spirit as He thought of such utter spurning of God, and indifference to His own love? But at the same hour we find He rejoices in spirit, and says, "I thank (I praise) thee, Father." Such is the blessed expression of matchless meekness in Jesus. The same hour which sees the depth of His sorrow over man sees also His perfect bowing to God, though at the cost of everything to Himself. Conscious of this, He says,

> Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls {Matt. 11:28, 29}.

Here, then, may I not be bold to say, that the meekness, which was found in its absolute perfectness in Jesus, is also what the gradually deepening knowledge of the ways of God, even in the sense of the abounding wickedness of, this world, and of the failure of what bears the name of Christ, produces in the saint of God. For, in the midst of all that he sees around him, there is the discerning of the hidden purpose of God that is going on in spite of everything; so that the heart, instead of being fretted by the evil which it witnesses, and which it cannot set aside, instead of the least feeling of envy at the prosperity of the wicked, finds its resource in God -- the "Lord of heaven and earth" -- an expression most blessed because it marks the absolute control in which everything is held by God. Jesus is the meek One, and those that belong to Jesus are trained to this meekness also.

> Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5).

The earth -- why not heaven? The earth is the scene of all this evil that had given occasion to such sorrow and mourning. But now, having better learned God's ways, they can commit all to Him. Meekness is not merely to have a sense of nothingness in ourselves, or to be filled with sorrow for the opposition to God here below; but it is rather the calmness which leaves things with God, and bends to God, and thankfully owns the will of God, even where naturally it may be most trying to ourselves.

The fourth blessedness is more active.

> Blessed they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled (Matt. 5:6).

Perfect soul-satisfaction they shall have. Whatever was the form of the spiritual feeling of the heart, there is always the assured answer to it on God's part. If there was sorrow, they shall be comforted; if there was meekness, they shall inherit the earth, the very place of their trial here. Now we hear of this activity of spiritual feeling, the going out after what was according to God, and what maintained the will of God, specially as made known to a Jew in the Old Testament. Therefore, it is called. hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Deeper principles still are disclosed in the New Testament, which had to be brought out when the disciples were able to bear them.

This closes what we may call the first section of the beatitudes. It is plain that they are divided, as the series of scripture often are, into four and three. We have had four classes of persons pronounced "blessed." All the traits ought to be found in each individual, but some may be more prominent in one than another. For instance, considerable activity is in one saint, edifying meekness in another. The principle of all is in every soul that is born of God. In v. 7 we enter upon a rather different class: and it will be found that the last three have got a common character, as the first four have.

> Blessed the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matt. 5:7).

As righteousness is the key note of the first four, so grace is that which lies at the root of the latter three; and, therefore, the very, first of them demonstrates not merely that they are righteous, and that they feel what is due to God, but they appreciate the love of God, and maintain it in the midst of surrounding evil. Yea, there is something more blessed still, and what is that? "Blessed the merciful," There is nothing on which God more takes His stand (as the active principle of His being in a world of sin) than His mercy. The only possibility of salvation to a single soul, is that there is mercy in God; that He is rich in mercy, that there is no bound to His mercy; that there is nothing in the heart of man, if he only bows to His Son, which can hinder His constant flowing spring of mercy. "Blessed," then, "are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." It is not merely a question of the forgiveness of their sins, but of mercy in everything. It is a blessed thing to hail the smallest sign of mercy, to take the little and look for much more. "Blessed the merciful." They will find, not that there is not difficulty and trial, but that though they shall know the cost of it, they shall know the sweetness of it; they shall taste afresh what the mercy of God is towards their own souls, in the exercise of mercy towards others. This is the characteristic feature of the new class of blessing; just as poverty of spirit was the introduction to the first blessings, so mercy is to these.

The next is the consequence of this, as in the former class. If a man does not think much of himself, men will take advantage of him. If a man is bold, and boastful, and self-exalting, saints may {but ought not to} suffer it (2 Cor. 11). If he does well to himself, men will praise him (Psa. 49). But the contrary of all this is what God works in the saint. No matter what he may be, he is broken down before God: he learns the vanity of what man is; he is content to be nothing. And the effect is that he suffers. Poverty of spirit will be followed by mourning. Then there is the meekness, as there is deepening acquaintance with God, and withal the hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

But now it is mercy; and the effect of mercy is not a compromising of the holiness of God, but a larger and deeper standard of it. The fuller your hold of grace is, the higher will be your maintenance of holiness. If you only regard grace as a wretched, selfish being, trying to find an excuse for sin, no doubt it will be perverted. And so He speaks at once of the simple, normal effect of tasting of this spring of mercy. They are "pure in heart." This is the next class, and it is, I believe, the consequence of the first -- of being merciful.

> Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God {Matt. 5:8}.

It is exactly what is proper to God; for He alone is pure absolutely. Thus also He was perfectly reflected in His beloved Son. For not a single thought, or feeling, ever sullied divine perfectness in the heart of Jesus. In this case He is just telling out what He Himself was. How could He but put His own characteristics before those who belonged to Him? For indeed He is their life. It is Christ in us that produces what is according to God by the Holy Ghost -- that blessed One, whose very coming into the world was the witness of perfect grace and mercy on God's part; for we know God so loved

the world that He gave His only-begotten Son for it. And He was there, a man -- the faithful witness of the mercy and of the purity of God. He, when He came with His heart full of mercy towards the vilest, was yet the very fulness and pattern of the purity of God in its perfection. "He that sent me," He could say, "is with me; . . . for I do always those things that please him." The only way of doing anything to please God is by the cherished consciousness of being in the presence of God; and there is no possibility of this, except as I am drawn there in the liberty of grace, and as knowing that what Christ was to God, in His own person, is given to me, as far as it could be, by redemption. Christ had, of course, a title to be ever there, because of what He Himself is: and we are there through faith of Christ, because of the nearness that is given us, founded on the blotting out of our sins through His blood. But this is not revealed here; for the Lord is rather unfolding the moral qualities of those that belong to Him.

The third and closing form of these blessednesses is,

> Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God (Matt. 5:9).

Here we have the active side again, as we saw an analogy in the closing one of the first four. These go out making peace. If there is the smallest possibility of the peace of God being brought into the scene, they are sure to find out where it can be, or may be; and if it cannot be, they are content to wait on God, and look up to Him, that He may make this peace in His own time. And as this peace-making can belong only to God Himself, so these saints that are enriched with these blessed qualities of the grace of God as well as His righteousness, with His active mercy, and its effects -- are equally found now characterized as peacemakers. "They shall be called the children of God." Oh! this is a sweet title -- sons of God! Is it not because it was the reflection of His own nature -- of what God Himself is? They bore the stamp of God upon them. There is no one thing that more indicates God manifested in His children than peace-making. This was what God was doing, what His heart is set upon. Here are found men upon the earth who shall be called the sons of God. What belonged to them naturally is merged; and they have a new title from God Himself.

Then follow two blessings of exceeding interest. They add much to the force of the truth, and complete the picture in a most striking way.

> Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:10).

This is evidently to begin over again. The first blessedness was, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; and the next three were all marked by righteousness. It is the first thing that God produces in a new-born soul. He who is awakened takes up God's cause against himself. He is, in measure, broken down, poor in spirit; and God looks for him to grow in poverty of spirit to the last. But here it is not so much what they were, as what their lot was from others. The last two blessednesses speak of their portion in the world from the hands of other people. The first four are characterized by intrinsic righteousness -- the. last three by intrinsic grace. These two, then, answer, one to the first four, and the other to the last three. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This does not go beyond the blessed state of things that the power of God will bring in over the earth in connection with the Messiah. Being rejected, the kingdom of heaven is His, only, as it were, with a stronger and deeper title -- certainly with the means of blessing by grace for the lost. A suffering and despised Messiah is still dearer to the heart of God than if one could conceive Him received all at once. And if He does not lose the kingdom because He was persecuted, neither do they.

> Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven {Matt. 5:10}.

Persecuted, not merely by the Gentiles, or by the Jews, but for righteousness' sake. Do not be looking at ·the people that persecute you, but at the reason why you are persecuted. If it is because you desire to be found in obedience to the will of God, blessed are you. You fear to sin -- you suffer for it. Blessed are they which suffer for righteousness' sake: they will have their portion under the Messiah Himself.

But now we have, finally, another blessedness. And mark the change.

> Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake {Matt. 5:11}.

This change to ye is exceedingly precious. It is not merely put in an abstract form -- "blessed are they"; but made a personal thing. He looks at the disciples there, knows what they were to go through for His sake, and gives them the highest and nearest place in His love. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you . . . for my sake." It is not now for righteousness' sake, but "for my sake." There is something still more precious than righteousness, even Christ Himself. And when you have Christ you can have nothing higher. Blessed indeed to be persecuted for His sake!

The difference is just this: when a man suffers for righteousness' sake, it supposes that some evil has been put before him, which he refuses. He would have perhaps to subscribe something against his conscience, and he cannot, nor would he dare, do it. He is offered a tempting bait, but it involves that which he knows is contrary to God. All is in vain: the tempter's object is seen. Righteousness prevails, and he suffers. He not only loses what is offered, but he is evil spoken of too. Blessed are they who suffer thus for righteousness' sake! But for Christ's sake is a totally different thing. There the enemy essays greater subtlety. He tempts the soul with such questions as these: Is there any reason why you should speak about Jesus and the gospel? Where is the need for being so zealous for the truth? Why go out of your way so far for this person, or that thing? Now, in these cases it is not a question of a sin, open or covert. For in the case of suffering for Christ's sake, it is the activity of grace that goes out to others. It is not a question of righteousness, but answers to the last three of the seven beatitudes.

A soul that is filled with a sense of mercy cannot refrain

his lips. He who knows what God is could not be silent merely because of what men think or do. Blessed are ye who thus suffer for the sake of Christ's name! The power of grace prevails there. Too often alas! motives of prudence come in: people are afraid of giving offence to others -- of losing influence for self —of spoiling the prospect of the children, &c. But the energy of grace, knowing all this, can still say Christ is worth infinitely more; Christ commands my soul for everything. I must follow Him. In suffering for righteousness' sake, a soul eschews evil, earnestly and peremptorily, committing itself at all cost to what is right; but in suffering for Christ's sake, it discerns the story, will, and path of Christ -- that which the gospel, the worship, or the word of the Lord calls to, and at once throws itself with its whole heart on His side. Then comes in the comfort of these very words, "Blessed are *ye* when men shall revile you, and persecute you . . . for my sake."

We may notice that the Lord does not refrain the expression of His soul's delight in His saints:

> Blessed are ye . . . Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven {Matt. 5:12}.

Observe it is not now in the kingdom of heaven, but "in heaven." He identities these with the source of the rule itself. It is not only the reign of God over the earth, and His giving them a portion here; but grace takes them out of the earthly scene to be with Himself above.

> For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

What an honor to follow in earthly rejection and scorn those who preceded us in special communion with God -- the heralds of Him for whom we suffer now! We may clearly, then, consider that these two final blessednesses, the persecutions for righteousness' sake and for Christ's sake, answer respectively to the first four blessings and to the last three.

In Luke, where we have these blessings brought before us, we have none for righteousness' sake -- only for His name's sake. Hence in all the cases there it is, "Blessed are ye." To some it may seem a delicate shade, but the difference is characteristic of the two Gospels. Matthew takes in the largest view, and specially that view of the principles of the kingdom of heaven which was suited to the understanding of a Jew, to bring him out of his mere Judaism, or to show him higher principles. Luke, whatever the principles, gives them all under the form of grace, and treats them as our Lord's direct addresses to the disciples before Him -- "Blessed are *ye*." Even if he takes up the subject of the poor, he drops the abstract form of Matthew, and makes it all personal. Everything is connected with the Lord Himself, and not merely with righteousness. This is exceedingly beautiful.

If we pursue, further, the next few verses, which give, not so much the characteristics of the people as their general attitude in the world -- the place in which they are set in the earth by God, we have it in a very few words, and strongly confirming the distinction which has been drawn between suffering for righteousness' sake, and for Christ's name's sake. Also, those who examine the First Epistle of Peter, will find this remarkably corroborated there also.

> Ye are the salt of the earth {Matt. 5:13}.

Salt is the only thing that cannot be salted, because it is the preservative principle itself; but if this is gone, it cannot be replaced.

> If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

The salt of the earth is the relation of the disciples here to that which already had the testimony of God, and therefore the expression "earth" or "land," which was specially true of the Jewish land then. If you speak about the earth now, it is Christendom -- the place that enjoys, either really or professedly, the light of God's truth. This is what may be called the earth. And this is the place which wil1 finally be the scene of the greatest apostasy; for such evil is only possible where light has been enjoyed and departed from. In the Revelation, where the closing results of the age are given, the earth appears in a most solemn manner; and then we have the peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues -- what we should call heathen lands. But the earth means the once-favored scene of professing Christianity, where there have been all the energies of the mind of men at work, the scene where the testimony of God had once shed its light, then, alas! abandoned to utter apostasy.

"Ye are the salt of the earth." They were the real preservative principle there: all the rest, the Lord intimates were good for nothing. But more than that. He gives a solemn warning that there is a danger that the salt should lose its savor. He is not now speaking of the question of whether a saint can fall away, or not. People go with their own questions of scripture, and pervert the word of God to suit their previous thoughts. The Lord is not raising the question whether life is ever lost; but He is speaking of certain persons who are in a given position; and among then there might be persons who had taken it heedlessly, or even falsely, and then there would be the fading away of all that they had once possessed. He announces the judgment -- the most contemptuous possible -- to be passed upon that which took so high a place without reality. And so it will be still more evidently yet.

> Ye are the light of the world {Matt. 5:14}.

This is quite another figure. Bearing in mind the distinction drawn in the series of the beatitudes and of the persecutions, we have the key to these two verses. The salt of the earth represents the righteous principle. This evidently involves the clinging to the eternal rights of God, and the maintenance before the world of what is due to His character; but it was gone when what bore the name of God fell below what even men thought proper. You can hardly read a newspaper now but what you find scoffs against what is called religion. All respect vanishes, and men think that the condition of Christianity is a fair subject for ridicule. But now, in v. 14, we have not only the principle of righteousness, but of grace -- the outflowing and strength of grace. And here we find a new title given to the disciples, as descriptive of their public

testimony --- "the light of the world." The light is clearly that which diffuses itself. The salt is what ought to be inward, but the light is that which scatters itself abroad.

> A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid {Matt. 5:14}.

There was a diffusion of its testimony everywhere. Man does not light a candle to put it under a corn measure, but on a candlestick, "and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." After this manner let your light shine before men, "that they may see your works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" {Matt. 5:16}. Mark it well.

We have looked at these two striking sketches of the testimony of believers here below, as the salt of the earth, the preservative energy in the midst of profession; and as the light of the world going out in activity and love towards the poor world; and the danger of the salt losing its savor, and of the light being put under a bushel. Now we find the great object of God in this twofold testimony. It is not merely a question of the blessing of souls, for there is not a word about evangelization, or saving sinners, but of the walk of saints. There is a grave question that God raises about His saints, and this is about their own ways apart from other people. Calls to the unconverted we find abundantly elsewhere, and none can exaggerate their importance for the world; but the Sermon on the Mount is God's call to the converted. It is their character, their position, their testimony distinctively; and if others are thought of throughout, it is not so much a question of winning them, as of the saints reflecting what comes from above. This light is what comes from Christ. It is not, Let your good works shine before men. When people talk about this verse, they are usually thinking about their own works, and when that is the case, there are generally no good works at all; but even if there were, works are not light. Light is that which comes from God directly and purely without admixture of man. Good works are the fruit of its action upon the soul; but it is the light which is to shine before men. It is the disciple's confession of Himself; that is the point before God. Confess Christ in everything. Let this be the aim, of your heart. It is not merely certain things to be done. The light shining is the great object here, though doing good ought to flow from it. If I make doing good everything, it is a lower thought than that which is before the mind of God. An infidel can feel that a shivering man needs a coat or a blanket. The natural man may be fully alive to the wants of others; but if I merely take these works and make them the prominent aim, I really do nothing more than an unbeliever might. The moment you make good works the object, and their shining before men, you find yourself on common ground with Jews and heathen. God's people are apt thus to destroy their testimony. What so bad in the way of a thing done professedly for God, as a work that leaves out Christ, and that shows a man who loves Christ to be on comfortable terms with those that hate Him? This is what the Lord warns the saints against. They are not to be thinking about their works, but that the light of God should shine. Works will follow, and much better works than where a person is always occupied with them.

> Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Let your confession of what God is in His nature and of what Christ is in His own person and ways -- let your acknowledgment of Him be the thing that is felt by, and brought before, men; and then when they see your good works, they will glorify your Father which is in heaven. Instead of saying, 'What a good man such a one is,' they will glorify God on your behalf. If your light shines, men then connect what you do with your confession of Christ.

The Lord grant, then, that this, as it is the word and the will of Christ, may be that to which we surrender ourselves, and which we desire, above all things, for our own souls and for those who are dear to us; and if we see the forgetfulness of it in any saints of God, may we remember them in prayer; and seek to help them by the testimony of His truth, which, if it does not carry the heart with it, may at least, more or less, reach the conscience, and be remembered another time!

We have seen our Lord's statement of the character, and then of the position proper to the heirs of the kingdom of heaven. We have found Him pronouncing those "blessed" whom man would have counted it folly to have so thought. Our Lord has shown us the perfect pattern of the same blessedness; for what could have sounded more unreasonable, specially to a Jew, than to hear one deliberately and emphatically call those blessed and happy, who were despised, scorned, hated, persecuted, yea, thought ill of, and treated as malefactors? No doubt it was expressly for righteousness' sake, and for Christ's sake. But then, to the Jew, the coming and reception of the Messiah were ever looked forward to as the crown of his joy -- that most auspicious event on which all was to turn for Israel, both as to the accomplishment of God's promises made to the fathers, and as to the fulfilment of the magnificent predictions which involve the overthrow of their enemies, the humiliation of every Gentile and the glory of Israel: And, therefore, to suppose that the receiving of Him who was the Messiah would now entail inevitable shame and suffering in the world, was, indeed, an enormous shock to all their most cherished expectations. But our Lord insists upon it, declaring such, and such only, to be blessed -- blessed with a new kind of blessedness far beyond what a Jew could conceive. And this is part of the privileges into which we, too, are brought by faith of Christ. The instruction of our Lord, in the Sermon on the Mount, only comes out in stronger terms now that He has taken His place in heaven. The enmity of man has also come out to its full measure. It has not been merely the world's enmity. The Jews themselves were the bitterest persecutors of the children of God. And so the last book of the New Testament shows us that those who take the name of Jews, without the present living reality, would remain to the end the most hostile to all true testimony of Christ on the earth.

In the portion that follows, we enter on a most important subject. If there was this new and amazing kind of blessedness, so foreign to the thoughts of Israel after the flesh, what was the relation to the law of Christ's doctrine,

and of the new state of things about to be introduced? If Messiah came from God, did not the law? It was given by Moses, indeed, but from the same source. If Christ brought in that which was so unexpected even by the disciples, what would be the bearing of this truth upon that which they had previously received through God's inspired servants, and for which they had His own authority? Weaken the authority of the law, and it is clear that you destroy the foundation on which the gospel rests, because the law was of God, as certainly as the gospel. Hence came in a most weighty question, especially for an Israelite: what was the bearing of the kingdom of heaven, of the doctrine of Christ respecting it, upon the precepts of the law? The Lord opens this subject (from Matt. 5:17 to the end of the chapter we have the question entered into) with these words:

> Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets.

They might have thought so from the fact of His having introduced something not mentioned in either; but "Think not," He says, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" {Matt. 5:17}. I take this word "fulfil" in its largest sense. In His own person the Lord fulfilled the law and the prophets, in His own ways, in righteous subjection and obedience. His life here below exhibited its beauty for the first time without flaw. His death was the most solemn sanction which the law ever did, or could, receive; because the curse it pronounced upon the guilty the Savior took upon Himself. Rather than God should have dishonor there was nothing the Savior would not undergo. But, besides, our Lord's words warrant, I think, a further application. There is an expansion of the law, or *διαίωμα*, giving to its moral element the largest scope, so that all which was honoring to God in it should be brought out in its fullest power and extent. The light of heaven was now let fall upon the law, and the law interpreted, not by weak, failing men, but by One who had. no reason to evade one jot of its requirements; whose heart, full of love, only thought of the honor and the will of God; whose zeal for His Father's house consumed Him; and who restored that which He took not away. Who but He could expound the law thus, not as the scribes, but in the heavenly light? For the commandment of God is exceeding broad, whether we look at the end of all perfection in man, or the sum of it in Christ.

Far from annulling the law, the Lord, on the contrary, illustrated it more brightly than ever, and gave it a spiritual application that man was entirely unprepared for before He came. [8] And this is what the Lord proceeds to do in part of the wonderful discourse that follows. After having said

> Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled {Matt. 5:18},

He adds,

> Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:18-20).

Our Lord is going to expand the great moral principles of the law into commandments that flow from Himself, and not merely from Moses, and shows that this would be the great thing whereby persons would be tested. It would no longer be merely a question of the ten words spoken on Sinai; but, while recognizing their full value, He was about to open out the mind of God in a way so much deeper than had ever been thought of before, that this would henceforth be the great test.

Hence He says, when referring to the practical use of these commandments of His,

> Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven {Matt. 5:20}

-- an expression that has not the smallest reference to justification, but to the practical appreciation of, and walking in, the right relations of the believer towards God and towards men. The righteousness spoken of here is entirely of a practical kind. This will strike many persons rather sharply. They may be somewhat perplexed to understand how practical righteousness is made to be the means of entering into the kingdom of heaven. But let me repeat, the Sermon on the Mount never shows us how a sinner is to be saved. If there were the smallest allusion to practical righteousness where a sinner's justification is concerned, there would be ground to be startled; but there can be none whatever for the saint who understands and is subject to God's will. God insists upon godliness in His people. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord {Heb. 12:14}. There can be no question that the Lord shows in John 15 that the unfruitful branches must be cut off, and that just as the withered branches of the natural vine are cast into the fire to be burned, so fruitless professors of the name of Christ can look for no better portion.

Bearing fruit is the test of life. These things are stated in the strongest terms all through scripture. In John 5:28, 29 it is said,

> The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation, or "judgment."

Clearly, there is no disguising the solemn truth that God will, and must, have that which is good, and holy, and righteous in His own people. They are not God's people at all, who are not characterized as the doers of that which is acceptable in His sight. If this were put before a sinner as a means of reconciliation with God, or of having sins blotted out before Him, it would be the denial of Christ and of His redemption. But only hold fast that all the means of being brought nigh to

8. {The Sermon on the Mount is *not* a "spiritualization" of the law. The Lord only referred directly to two of the commandments. Matt. 5:17 refers to Himself personally as the Fulfiller of the law and the prophets in the sense of carrying out the meaning -- for example, the types in Lev. 1-5. He fulfils the law in the same sense as He fulfils the prophets.}

God are found in Christ -- that the sole way by which a sinner is connected with the blessing of Christ is by faith, without the works of the law -- only maintain this, and there is not the least inconsistency, nor difficulty, in understanding that the same God who gives a soul to believe in Christ, works in that soul by the Holy Ghost to produce what is practically according to Himself. For what does He give him the life of Christ and the Holy Ghost, if only the remission of the sins were needed? But God is not satisfied with this. He imparts the life of Christ to a soul, and He gives that soul a divine person to dwell in him; and as the Spirit is not the spring of weakness, or of fear, "but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," God looks for suited ways, and for the exercise of spiritual wisdom and judgment in passing through the present, trying scene.

While they looked up with ignorant eyes to the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, our Lord declares that so low a sort of righteousness will not suffice. The righteousness that goes up to the temple every day, that prides itself upon long prayers, large alms, and broad phylacteries, will, not stand in the sight of God. There must be something far deeper, and more according to the holy, loving nature of God. Because with all that appearance of outward religion, there might be always, as there generally was in fact, no sense of sin, nor of the grace of God. This proves the all-importance of being right, first, in our thoughts about God; and we can only be so by receiving the testimony of God about His Son. In the case of the Pharisees we have sinful man deifying his sin, and utterly obscuring and denying God's true character as the God of grace. These things were rejected by the outward religionists, and their righteousness was such as you might expect from people who were ignorant of themselves, and of God. It gained reputation for them, but there it all ended; they looked for their reward now, and they had it. But our Lord says to the disciples,

> Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven {Matt. 5:20}.

Allow me to ask the question here, How is it that God accomplishes this in regard to a soul that believes now? There is a great secret that does not come out in this sermon. First of all, there is a load of unrighteousness on the sinner. How is that to be dealt with, and the sinner to be made fit for, and introduced into, the kingdom of heaven? He is born again; he acquires a new nature, a life which as much flows from the grace of God as the bearing of his sins hung upon the cross of Christ. There is the foundation of practical righteousness. The true beginning of all moral goodness in a sinner, as it has been said, and as it deserves to be often repeated, is the sense and confession of his lack of it, nay, of his badness. Never have we anything right with God in a man till he gives himself up as all wrong. When he is brought down to this, he is thrown upon God, and God reveals Christ as His gift to the poor sinner. He is morally broken down, feeling and owning that he is lost, unless God appears for him; he receives Christ, and what then? "He that believeth hath everlasting life." What is the nature of that life? In its character perfectly righteous and holy. The man is then at once fitted for God's kingdom. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" {John 3:3}. But when he is born again, he does enter there. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The scribes and Pharisees were only working on, and by, the flesh; they, did not believe that they were dead in the sight of God; neither do men now.. But. what the believer begins with is, that he is a dead man, that he requires a new life, and that the new life which he receives in Christ is suitable to the kingdom of heaven. It is upon this new nature that God acts, and works by the Spirit this practical righteousness; so that it remains in every sense: true, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

But the Lord does not here explain how this would be. He declares that what was suitable to God's nature was not to be found in human, Jewish righteousness, and that it must be for the kingdom.

Now He takes up the law in its various parts, at least what has to do with men. Here He does not enter into what touches God directly, but first of all takes up that which flows from human violence, and after this the great flagrant example of human corruption; for violence and corruption are the two standing forms of human iniquity. Before the flood even such was the condition of men: "The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." Here then in Matt. 5:21 we have the light of the kingdom cast on the command,

> Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.

The law took cognizance of this extreme form of violence; but our Lord gives length, breadth, height, and depth to it.

> But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire (Matt. 5:22).

That is, our Lord treats as now coming under the same category with. murder in the sight of God every kind of violence, and feeling, and expression, anything of contempt and hatred, whatever expresses the ill-feeling of the heart, any putting down of another, the will to annihilate others as far as character or influence is concerned: all this is no better than murder in God's searching eye. He is expanding the law; He is showing now One who looks at, and judges, the feeling of the heart. Therefore, it is not at all a question merely of the consequences of violence to a man -- for there might be no very bad effect produced by these words of anger, but they proved the state of the heart; and this is what the Lord is dealing with here.

> Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift (Matt. 5:23, 24).

He is not yet manifesting the Christian in his entire separation

from the Jewish system. These words clearly show a connection with Israel, though the principle of a Christian; for the altar has no reference to the Lord's table.

> Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art inn the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing (Matt. 5:25, 26).

I believe that Israel were guilty of that very folly -- Israel as a people -- that they did not agree with the adversary quickly. There was the Messiah, and they, being adversaries of Him, treated Him as their adversary, and compelled God to be against them by their unbelief. The position of Israel morally, in the sight of God, was very much the one shown us here. There was a murderous feeling in their heart against Jesus. Herod was the expression of it at His birth and it went through all the ministry of Christ; as the cross proved how utterly there was that unrelenting hatred in the heart of the Jews against their own Messiah. They did not agree with their adversary quickly, and the judge could only deliver them to the officer to be cast into prison; and there they remain until -this day. The Jewish nation, from their rejection of the Messiah, have. been shut ut from all the promises of God; as a nation they have been committed to prison, and there they must remain till the uttermost farthing is paid. In Isaiah we have the "Lord speaking comfortably to Jerusalem: "Cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins" {Isa. 40:2}. Thus, while we come into His favor now, while we, through the grace of God, receive the fulness of blessing through Christ Jesus now, yet I cannot doubt that there is rich blessing in store for Jerusalem. For God in His mercy will one day say to her, You have had punishment enough: I do not mean to make you any longer the witness of My vengeance on the earth. And why is Israel not permitted to this day to amalgamate with the nations? There they remain, kept apart from all other people by God. But God has in store for them His signal mercy. "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem . . . for she hath received at Jehovah's hand double for all her sins." This figure we find elsewhere beautifully set forth in the case of the man guilty of blood, who fled to the city of refuge provided by God. And the book of Numbers teaches that there the manna abode, out of the land of his possession, till the death, not of the manslayer, but of the high priest that is anointed with oil. The priesthood of our Lord is referred to there. When the Lord has completed His heavenly people and gathered them in where they do not need the activity of His intercession; when we are in the full results of all that Christ has wrought for us, the High Priest shall take His place, no longer at the right hand of God, but as the Priest on His own throne {Zech. 6:13}. Then will be the termination of His present heavenly priesthood, and blood-guilty Israel will return to the land of their possession. I have no doubt that this is the just application of that beautiful type. I cannot understand what proper interpretation there could be of the death of the High Priest anointed with oil, if you appropriate it to a Christian now; but apply it to the Jew, and nothing is plainer. Christ will terminate that character of priesthood that He is engaged in for us now, and will enter on a new form of blessing for Israel.

We have then the Lord closing this subject with the light that the kingdom of heaven throws upon the sin of killing, and the extension of the sin to every expression of the heart's anger. This is a very solemn thing when we know how little importance we attach to our words, and how apt we are to excuse any explosion of strong feeling. They are clearly here shown in their full contrariety to the nature of God.

But there is another thing -- the corrupt element that is in the heart of man -- the heart lusting for that which it has not. This is taken up in the next word of, our Lord:

> We have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee . . . And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Matt. 5:27-30).

That is, whatever in our walk, or in our ways, or in our service, whatever it might be that exposes a soul to the danger of yielding to these unholy feelings, should never be spared. There must be the excision of everything that is hurtful to the soul, the members of the body, such as the eye and the hand, being only used as showing the various ways in which the heart might be entangled. The cutting off of these members sets forth a heart thoroughly exercised in self-judgment; not prompted to excuse itself by saying that it had not actually committed the sin, but whatever exposed to it must be given up. Following this, our Lord denounces the easy dissolution of the tie of marriage:

> It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Matt. 5:31, 32).

Thus, our Lord shows that though there might be the most serious difficulties, still this human relationship receives the strongest sanction of the Lord. Though an earthly relationship, the light of heaven is thrown upon it, the sanctity of marriage held up, and the possibility of allowing anything to interfere with its holiness entirely put down by Christ, save only where there was that which interrupted it in the sight of God, in which case the act of separation would be only a declaration of its being already broken by sin in the sight of God.

The next case (Matt. 5:33-37) brings us into a different order of things: it is the use of the name of the Lord. Here the reference is not to a judicial oath, i.e., an oath administered by a magistrate. In some countries this might savor of heathenism or popery, and no Christian ought to take such an oath. But if the declaration were simply the authority of God introduced by the magistrate to declare the truth, the whole

truth, and nothing but the truth, I do not see that the Lord in any wise absolves the Christian from his obligation to competent authority. The matter here is expressly private communication between man and man.

> Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black {Matt. 5:34-36}.

None of these was a judicial oath; [9] they were the asseverations of common life among the Jews.

If our Lord had meant to forbid the Christian from taking judicial oaths, would He not have instanced the oath that was usual in the courts of those days? But it was not so. All the oaths that He brings before us were what the Jews were in the habit of using when their word was questioned by their fellow-men, not what was employed before the magistrate. For my own part, so far from thinking that a Christian is doing right in refusing a judicial oath, I believe that he is doing wrong not to take it, provided the magistrate required his testimony, and there be nothing to offend conscience in the form of the oath. If the magistrate does not acknowledge God in the oath, still the Christian is bound to acknowledge God in the magistrate. He is one who is, to the Christian, a servant of God in the outward things of this world. Even the Assyrian was the rod of God, all the while that he thought only of carrying out his own purpose against Israel. Much more the magistrate, let him be who, or what, he may, represents the truth of. God's external authority in the world, and the Christian ought to respect this, more by far than men of the world; and therefore the oath, which simply demands the truth on the ground of that authority, is a holy thing and not to be refused.

The Christian, doubtless, has no business with prosecuting another himself. On the contrary, he owes it to Christ and His grace to let the world, if it will, abuse him; he may protest by word against it, and then leave it with the Lord. When our Lord Himself was dealt with unrighteously, He convicts the person of it, and there it ends, as man would think, for ever. When He stood before the high priest, He was silent till He was adjured, as the oath was put according to the principle of Lev. 5. Then He spoke at once; and so should we at the call of lawful authority, however evil the officer may be. There is no such thing for Christ as seeking to get present reparation of His wrongs; and so should it be with Christians. There may be the moral conviction of those that do the wrong, but the taking it patiently is acceptable with God; and so is the true recognition of divine authority in the world.

There is no way in which the Christian so shows how much he is above the world, as when he seeks not the world's vindication in anything. If we belong to the world, we ought all to be volunteers. If the world is our home, a man is called upon to do battle for it. But for the Christian this world is not the scene of his interests, and why fight for what does not belong to him? If a Christian fight in, and with, the world (save his own spiritual warfare), he is a mere mercenary. It is the duty of men, as such, to fight, if need be, and repel wrong; and if the Lord uses the world in order to put down revolution and make peace, the Christian may well look up and give thanks. It is a great mercy. But the grand truth as to that, which the believer has to get firmly settled in his own soul, is that "they are not of the world." Up to what measure are they not of the world?

> They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world {John 17:14}.

In John 17, where our Lord repeats this wondrous word, He speaks in view of going to heaven, as if He no longer were on earth at all. Thus, in the spirit of one away from the world, He says, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." A little before He had said,

> Now I am no more in the world.

His going up to heaven is what gives its character to the Christian and to the Church. A Christian is not merely a believer, but a believer called to the enjoyment of Christ while He is in leaven. And, as Christ our Head is out of the world, so the Christian is in spirit lifted above the world, and his business is to show the strength of his faith as above his mere natural feeling. Nothing makes a man look so foolish as having no side in this world. Christians do not like to be nonentities; they are apt to wish one way or another to have their influence felt. But this is what the Lord delivers us from. It is natural in men who are desperately clinging to the only scene they possess of positive enjoyment, or of real hope.

It is below our calling, then, to indulge even in strong statements.

> Let your communication be, Yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." (Matt. 5:37).

---

9. ◆ Q. In a paper entitled, "Remarks on the Gospel of Matthew, chap. 5:17-48," July number of the *Bible Treasury,* the writer considers our Lord's command, "Swear not at all," as not referring to judicial oaths, which latter he holds that the Christian is not absolved from, the same being administered by a magistrate, in whom, he considers, the Christian is bound to acknowledge God. Now, is the Christian equally bound to obey the civil magistrate, when summoned as a juryman to try a fellow-creature in a criminal matter, and to unite with his fellow-jurors in returning such a verdict as (if found guilty) would be the means of depriving the criminal of his life? True, it is the judge, not the jury, who passes sentence on the criminal, but the verdict of the latter determines the sentence of the former.
W. B.

A. A Christian could hardly refuse to serve. It is not the same thing as to be a judge. A juryman is only called on, by authority, to state his belief of a fact; and this owns the authority, which of God has a right and is bound to enquire and bear the sword. It is of all moment that Christians should not trench on God's title to govern in the world, when pleading their Christian place. The magistrate's place is not theirs, but because they know God in theirs {i.e., in their place before God}, they are bound to own God in the place of authority in the world. There is this double sphere. They are *in* one, and have intelligence, and thus are called upon to own God to the other. Refusal of oaths, as such, imposed by a magistrate is unlawful, I conceive, and unchristian, though individual conscience is to be respected. The same thing that would hinder my being a magistrate (because it is another sphere of God's authority from that in which I am), would make me own that authority in that place. I do not see that the magistrate goes beyond it in calling twelve men to declare their estimate, as to a fact, of the evidence which can be produced, and this is a jury. The use made of the verdict is entirely the province of the judge (*The Bible Treasury* 4:32). ◆

It is worthy of note, as a practical proof of the distinction here drawn, how our Lord acted when He was before the High Priest. He was silent till the High Priest put the oath to Him then at once He answers. Who can doubt that He shows us the right pattern there?

But He comes next to the case of any practical injury that may be done us. It is not that it is wrong for a man to punish according to the injury that has been inflicted upon another.

> An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth {Matt. 5:38}

is perfectly righteous; but our Lord intimates that we ought to be much more than righteous, we ought to be gracious; and He presses this as the climax of this part of the discourse. First, He had strengthened the righteousness of the law, extended its depth, and put aside its license; but now He goes farther. He shows that there is a principle in His own ways and life which teaches the Christian that he is not to seek retaliation.

> An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also {Matt. 5:39}.

It is clear the Lord has no reference here to what governments have to do. The New Testament is written for the Christian, for that which has a separate existence and a peculiar calling in the midst of earthly systems and peoples. It belongs to those who are heavenly {1 Cor. 15:48} while they are walking through the earth. We become such by the reception of Christ now, and to such the Lord says, "Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." There personal injury is meant. Perhaps the evil to the person may be ever so intended and undeserved, but it has to be overcome with good. Show that you are willing to take even more for Christ's sake.

> And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also {Matt. 5:40}.

There the law is evoked: that is, a man lays a claim, perhaps falsely, to one part of your clothing, and if he will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, "let him have thy cloak also." Here it seems not exactly a man appealing to the law, but the public officers themselves.

> And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain {Matt. 5:41}.

The great principle our Lord marks is this -- whether it is human violence, or the law applied ever so hardly or tryingly -- that while, according to the law, you might go one step, according to the gospel you would go two. Grace does twice as much as the law, whatever may be the point in hand. It was never intended in any wise to supplant obligations, or to lower responsibilities, but, on the contrary, to give power and force to everything that is righteous in the sight of God.

The law might say, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Here there is not only the endurance of that which is positively wrong, but grace that gives more than is asked. "The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" {John 1:17}. And this is one way of practically showing how far we value grace. It is not a question of the mere letter of our Lord's words. If you were to limit it merely to a blow on the face, it would be a very poor thing; but the word of Christ is that which conveys to the believer the spirit that pleases God, and imprints the reality of grace. And grace is not the vindication of self, nor the punishment of a wrong that is done, but the endurance of evil, and the triumph of good over it. Christ is speaking of what a Christian has to put up with from the world through which he passes. He is to receive tribulation as the discipline which God sees to be good for his soul; the great spectacle before mein and angels that there are men on this earth who are allowed, and rejoice, to suffer for Christ, because they have learned to give up their own will, to sacrifice their own rights, and to suffer wrongfully, looking onward to the day when the Lord will own whatever has been their sorrow for His sake, and when all evil shall be judged most solemnly at His appearing and kingdom.

Our Lord had said, in Matt. 5:42,

> Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.

It is merely a particular example of a great general principle that the Lord is insisting upon; and as He had laid bare the character of violence, so here of another thing -- the solicitation that addresses itself to the kindness of heart of a christian man. "Give to him that asketh thee." Now, nothing can be more certain than that this is a comely and a gracious thing. But then it is perfectly plain that the Lord had not the least idea of pressing it as a moral principle upon His people, that the thing was to be done heedlessly, and as a mere gratification of their feelings -- it must be done with a conscience towards God. Supposing a person asks you for something, and you have reason to think that he will spend it improperly, you must limit it. Why not? He might say to you, Did not the Lord enjoin, "Give to him that asketh thee?' Certainly; but the Lord has given me certain other words of His, by which I judge as to the propriety of giving in each particular case. The asker might be going to do that which I am sure would be absurd, or wrong; am I still to give? or is there not at once introduced another principle, namely, due discrimination? From what I have reason to believe, perhaps from what he that asks tells me, I find out that he has plans of his own which I believe to be worldly: am I to gratify his worldliness? The believer is told to "owe no man anything": is not he also to obey? It is clear that what the Lord has in view is real need; and as there was wont to be excessive indifference to this among the Jews more particularly -- indeed such is apt to be the case always and everywhere -- the Lord not merely insists upon the Christian helping his brother, but takes up the broadest grounds, and urges the habit of generous giving, not, of course, for anything we may get by it, but out of a present, energetic love according to God.

"Give to him that asketh thee." We all know that there are those who would impose. This shuts up, and often hinders, pity; though it may be oftener still an excuse for it. The Lord is guarding against the snare, and shows the great moral value, for our own souls and for the glory of God, of habitual, considerate, ungrudging, kindness towards the

distressed in this world. Not that I am always to give what a person asks, for he may seek something foolish; but still

> Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away {Matt. 5:42}.

Do you count up how often you have been deceived? Even then, why be sore? You are entitled, at the word of Jesus, to do what you do to your Father. The receiver of your bounty may apply it to a bad use: that is his responsibility. I am bound to cultivate unsuspicious generosity, and this quite independent of mere friendship. Even the publicans and sinners are kind to those who are kind to them: human nature in its most degraded form is capable of this; but what ought a Christian to be? Christ determines the position, conduct, and spirit of the Christian. As He was a sufferer, they are not to resist evil. If there was need, the Lord's heart went out to it. They might turn His love against Himself, and use the gifts of His grace for their own purposes, like the man who was healed, throwing aside the Lord's warning and the sense of His benefits. But the Lord, perfectly knowing it all, goes on steadfastly in His path of doing good, not in the mere vague thought of benevolence to man, but in holy service of His Father. He did His Father's will; this was His meat and drink, and so it should be ours. That is, there is not the slightest thought of binding persons in a mere legal way, so that in every case absolutely we are to give what is asked. This the flesh might do to the uttermost without divine love, and without real profit (1 Cor. 13:3). Spiritual wisdom, the word of God, must be used by us to judge of each case on its own merits, and as before God. But still the general principle is to be taken in its fullest extent. We are to cultivate this habit and the spirit of mind that it flows from, looking up to its heavenly pattern and its source.

But now a word as to what follows. It is most weighty, the very pith and essence of that which concerns our relation towards others here below; the great active principle from which all right conduct bows. This is the question of the true character and limits of love. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." (Matt. 5:43). This was the expression that the Jews drew from the general tenor of the law. There had been the sanction of God for the extermination of their enemies; and from that they drew the principle,

> Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you {Matt. 5:43, 44}.

It was not merely a question about loving the neighbor, which was a duty of common righteousness; but here was a thing that no righteousness would ever have discovered, because it goes beyond the law -- it is grace. In a thousand practical instances, the question is not whether the thing is right. We often hear Christians asking, Is such a thing wrong? But this is not the sole question for the Christian. He is never at liberty to do what is wrong, and most surely he does the thing that is right. But supposing there is a wrong done him, what is to be his feeling then? If there is enmity to him in another, what is he to cherish in his own heart?

> Love your enemies . . . do good to them that hate you . . . that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven {Matt. 5:44};

thus they show that they belonged to such a parentage in practical ways,

> for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5: 44-48).

This has no reference to the question of whether there is sin in our nature or not. There is always the evil principle in a man as long as he lives here below. But what the Lord insists on is this: Our Father is the perfect pattern in His ways with His enemies now, and He calls upon us to be thorough in that same grace and love in which our Father deals. It is in pointed contrast with the Jew, or with anything that had ever been introduced before. Abraham was not called to walk in this way. He was, I believe, justified in arming his servants for the recovery of Lot; as were the Israelites in taking up the sword against the Canaanites. But we are never so to feel, or act, under any circumstances. We are called on (as the rule of Christian life, as that which governs our thoughts, and feelings, and ways, and supplies us with true feelings for our guidance day by day) to walk upon the principle of gracious long-suffering. We are in the midst of the enemies of Christ, of our enemies, too, because of Him. It may not come out at once, nor always. Persecution may pass out of fashion, but the enmity is always there; and if God were only to remove certain restraints, the old hatred would burst out with greater violence than ever. Nevertheless, there is only one course open to the Christian who desires to walk as Christ walked. "Love your enemies," and this really is not by a show of smooth ways, or words. A Christian might know very well that, in certain cases, to go and speak to an angry person would only draw out bitterness of wrath, and there the right course would be to keep away; but under all circumstances there should be all readiness to seek the blessing of our adversary. To do real kindness, even if it should never be known by a creature upon earth, to the one who has injured me, is the only thing worthy of a Christian man; and this we are called upon to do, specially towards those who despise and persecute us. We ought to ask the Lord to give us the opportunities of showing love to those that hate us. When the provocation occurs, we should have it settled in our souls that the Christian is here for the purpose of expressing Christ; for, indeed, we are His epistle, known and read of all men. We ought to desire to reflect what Christ would have done under the same circumstances. We are never at liberty to indulge in anything else.

May the Lord grant that this may be true of our own souls, first in secret feeling with Him, and then as manifested lowlily and unselfishly towards others. Let us remember that there is no battle for us that is ever decisive with others, but what is an outward reflection of the secret victory over self with the Lord. Begin there, and it is surely won in the presence of men, though we may have to wait for it.

Matthew 6

Now we come to another thing. Chapter 6 begins with what is higher even than what we have had. The various exhortations of ch. 5 brought out Christian principle, in contradistinction to what was required, or allowed, under the law. Henceforth the law is dropped there is no longer any allusion to it expressly in our Lord's discourse. And the first principle of all godliness comes out now in its simplest shape, namely, the having to do with our Father in secret; who, if there is not another soul that under stands us, sees all that is passing within and around us -- hears us and counsels us, as, indeed, He takes the deepest interest in us. Here we have what the Lord calls "your righteousness." It is not merely exhorting the saint against the evil of his nature in every form, and exhibiting the holiness that the Lord introduces now. It was not enough to familiarize the soul with the ways of love, even in its outward dealings with the worst of men. Now it is our Father, and all takes the form of righteousness. It is the inner, divine relationship of the saint that comes out in this chapter -- our spiritual bonds with God our Father, and the conduct that ought to flow from them. Hence says our Lord,

> Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them {Matt. 6:1}.

I take the liberty of altering the word "alms" into "righteousness" (v. 1), which last, a few of the very best original authorities support, though there are, of course, always persons that differ here as elsewhere; but, at the same time, internal and spiritual reasons confirm the external grounds. Thus, if you use the word "alms" in the first verse, is there not a mere repetition in the next verse? On the other hand, take the word as "righteousness" (so the margin), and all is plain. The context supports it. For it will be observed, in the following verses, our Lord divides righteousness into three distinct portions: first, almsgiving; next, prayer; thirdly, fasting.

That these are the three parts of the righteousness of the saint, as viewed by our Lord in this discourse, is evident. (**1**). With regard to alms, which was a very practical thing, the principle of mercy come in; as it might not in all cases of giving. It is a thing done seriously and solemnly, and the heart is drawn out. It is done in the sight of God. The universal admonition is this: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven:" "Therefore," founded upon this exhortation, "when thou doest thine alms," which was one branch of this righteousness, "do not sound a trumpet before thee"; alluding to certain ways of notoriety and self-commendation then adopted by the Jews, the spirit of which belongs to men at all times. There are few things in which human vanity betrays itself more glaringly than in the desire to be known by alms-giving. And what is it that brings the true deliverance from this snare of nature?

> When thou doest thine alms (observe, He now makes it entirely individual), do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right band doeth; that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly (Matt. 6: 2-4).

Thus it is not merely that one is not to blazon abroad what is done, but not to whisper it to oneself even. Not only another's left hand is not to know what your right hand does, but your own left hand ought not. Than the Lord's words nothing can be more cutting to everything like self-gratulation. The main point is this: that all be done to our Father. It is not a question of duty simply; but our Father's love has been brought out, and this is His will concerning us. He knows what is best, and we are ignorant of it. We might think to supply the greatest happiness by surrounding ourselves with what we most like; but the letting slip the means of personal enjoyment will open to us fresh sources of blessing. Besides, what we ought to desire is, that the alms may be "in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly." We shall find this repeated at every point of what is here called our "righteousness." Room is ever made for the flesh where there is not the cultivated habit of what is done being between our Father and ourselves. Nay, more, our Lord would have us dismiss the very thought into the bosom of the Father, who will not forget it.

(**2**). We have the same thing as to prayer. The allusion is, it would seem, to the practice, that every day, when a particular hour came round, people were found praying in public rather than miss the moment. It is clear that all this was, at best, most legal, and opened the door for display and hypocrisy. It utterly overlooks the grand truth which Christianity brings out so fully, that to do things for testimony, or as a law, or in any way for others to see, or for ourselves to think of, is totally wrong. We have to do with our Father, and our Father in secret. Therefore our Lord says,

> Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly (Matt. 6:6).

This is in no way denying the propriety of public prayer; but united supplication seems not referred to here, though it be "our," "us," "we," and not the singular form. They were to present their present, their brethren's wants in spirit. It was thus a transition before the common prayer of the church in the Acts of the Apostles, etc.

In the case of what is called the Lord's Prayer, it was the prayer of those disciples each for himself, who knew not how to pray, and who required to be instructed in the very first

principles of Christianity. [10] For this is part of what the apostle calls "the word of the beginning of Christ" when he says,

> Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit {Heb. 6:1-3}.

The apostle allows that all these were very important truths; but they are only Jewish principles (i.e., they are truths that a person ought to have known before redemption was accomplished), and these did not bring in the full power of Christianity. They were quite true, and will ever remain true. There never can be anything to weaken the importance of repentance from dead works, and faith towards God. But it is not even said, faith in Christ. No doubt faith Godward always abides; but still, till Christ died and rose, there was a great deal of truth that even the disciples were not able to bear: our Lord Himself says so. Therefore the apostle tells them, "Leaving the word of the beginning of Christ" (that which Christ here below brought out, and which was perfectly suited to the then state of the disciples), "let us go on unto perfection." There is no such thought as giving that up; but, taking it as a truth settled and that we do not always need to be repeating, assuming that as a settled truth, let us go on to the understanding of Christ as He now is, which is the meaning here of the word "perfection," or full growth. It is not a better state of our own flesh; neither does it refer to anything that we are to be in a future life; but to the full doctrine of Christ as He now is, glorified and in heaven. It scarcely admits a doubt that it refers to the doctrine of Christ, as brought out in the epistle to the Hebrews. Christ is in heaven -- there is His priesthood. He has entered in by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. It is Christ as He is now above; in Him thus and there known you have this perfection.

In the same epistle the apostle speaks of Christ as made perfect through sufferings. Christ was always perfect as a person; He never could be anything else. Had there been any flaw in Christ on earth, He must have been, like the offering that had a blemish in it, incapable of being offered for us. In the Jewish sacrifices, if the animal died of itself, it could not even be eaten. So, as to our Lord, had there been the principle of death in Him at all, if He were not the Living Stone in every sense, without the smallest tendency to death, never could He be God's foundation, nor ours. He did, no doubt, suffer death, the willing Victim on the cross;. but this was just because death had no hold on Him. Every son of Adam has mortality at work in him. The Second Man could say even here below, "I am the resurrection and the life." Such is the truth as to Christ Himself. While it is perfectly certain that Christ was always morally perfect -- perfect, too, not only in His divine nature, but in His humanity -- absolutely stainless [11] and acceptable unto God; yet, for all that, there was a mountain of sin that needed to be removed from us, and a new condition to be entered, in which Christ could associate us with Himself.

He had taken upon Him human nature (not in its liability or doom to death, because this indicates a connection with sin, but) in its capacity of death, though incapable of sin; and there is the line that separates sound doctrine, as to Christ's person, from that which is abominable and fatal. Anything that admits the smallest thought or touch of evil does wholly destroy His person. But Christ was most truly a man, and so capable of dying for us, or redemption never could have been accomplished. It was through death that He was to annul the power of him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. It is only now a question of the will of God, and all the power of Satan will vanish into smoke; this the believer knows -- at least he ought to know it. It is the wiles of Satan that we have to guard against; his power is broken to faith as far as we are concerned. The means by which Satan might seek to ensnare the soul must be watched against, but his power, we know, is null. But this was not true for any, till Christ had passed through death and resurrection; there was still that which was short of the full purpose of God. Christ was not yet in the, state of resurrection according to the counsels of God. He designs for man, for the saint, a condition that death cannot touch, and we stand in it now by faith and union with Christ, as we shall enter it actually when risen or changed. What God calls salvation is not only the soul's pardon, but the grace that sustains afterwards, and the power that completes all in the resurrection state. Even Christ, though absolutely sinless, entered this state after death. He was made perfect through sufferings; He passed through this course of sufferings into the blessedness in which He stands now as the risen Head and also High Priest before God. And while all that Christ taught while here on earth is as true as it can be, because it was uttered by Him who is the truth, yet was there a great deal that the disciples were not yet able to appreciate or understand. The Lord told them so. This was one of these things. One danger afterwards was, that men would go back simply to what they had heard from the Lord while He was upon earth. How subtle is the enemy, turning the pretended honor of Christ into His dishonor and the hurt of His sheep! Satan's aim in all is to keep their thoughts still earthly, and hinder them from apprehending the heavenly calling and position.

Hence the object of the epistle written to Hebrew Christians was for the purpose of leading them on from what they clung to as the full truth. They were not to give it up, but the apostle desired to lead them onward into further truth. There is the same difficulty now in the minds of many children of God. Among a large portion of them, they are not

10. {We must keep in mind that the prayer was for the disciples in their state at that time. The Spirit of sonship, whereby we cry, Abba Father, had yet to come.}

11. {This is called the impeccability of Christ. He could not sin. To say "He was able not to sin" does not convey the full truth; and, may be a cover for believing Christ was capable of sinning.}

beyond what a disciple ought to have been, or to have known before the cross, save in the recognition of the facts of death, resurrection, and ascension, but without apprehension of their bearing on the soul: and perhaps they would even think it presumption to suppose that they could advance, or that there is any further unfolding of God's grace. But why have we got other truth? We have not one word in the Bible but what is absolutely necessary; and, if "the word of the beginning of Christ" had been enough, God, with that economy that marks His dealings, would not surely have added to the bulk of the book He has graciously put into our hands: yet the Holy Ghost has largely revealed further truth, accomplishing thus the promise of our Lord, "He shall lead you into all truth" {John 16:13}. This was to be when they were capacitated, by virtue of the Holy Ghost's presence and indwelling, to bear and enjoy the full bringing out of the divine mind.

Upon the subject of the prayer I am going only to make a few remarks now. [12] But again I would notice that it is entirely individual. Many might unite in saying, "Our Father"; but, although it was a soul in his own closet, still he would say "Our Father," because he thinks of others, disciples, elsewhere. Yet it is plain that the Lord does not anticipate the use of this prayer, save in the closet and for the condition in which the disciples were. We have no hint that it was employed formally after the day of Pentecost: There were other wants and desires, other expressions of affection toward God, brought out then, into which the Holy Ghost would lead those who were passed out of the condition of nonage by having Him sent into their hearts, whereby they could cry, "Abba, Father." Such is the key to the change, and the New Testament is perfectly clear upon it. (Compare Gal. 3:23-26; 4:1-7).

However, let us look at the prayer itself; for nothing can be more blessed, and all the truth of it, as of every other part of the word of God, abides for us.

> When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking (Matt. 5:7).

Now it is plain that our Lord does not forbid repetition, but vain repetition. We find our Lord Himself, when He was in an agony in the garden, repeating the same words three times; on certain occasions it may be most suitable for us, and according to His mind. But vain, formal repetition, whether of words read out of a book, or sentences framed extemporarily, He does positively forbid. Again, let me press the plain fact, that our Lord is not here providing for the public wants of the Church; still less do we hear that it was so understood. There is not the smallest thought of such a thing after the gift of the Holy Ghost, when the Church, properly speaking, was formed and at work in this world. So that, while the Lord's Prayer was given as the most perfect model of prayer, and was also intended to be used as it stands by the disciples previously to the death of our Lord and the gift of the Holy Ghost, yet it seems plain that afterwards it was not to be so. The New Testament is, of course, the only test of this. When we come to tradition, we shall find all sorts of difficulty on this as on other subjects, but the word of God is not obscure. In no way does it leave us uncertain as to what God's mind is: else indeed the very purpose of a revelation would be defeated. What then is the permanent use of the prayer? Why is it given in scripture? The principle always abides true. There is not a clause of that prayer, I believe, but what one might prefer now, even to "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." For it is a mistake to suppose that it puts the sinner upon the ground of prayer in order to acquire forgiveness of his sins. Our Lord speaks of the believer -- the child of God. Our daily faults and shortcomings we need to spread before our God and Father, as He encourages us to do day by day. It is a question of His government who, without respect of persons, judges according to the work of each; and hence He will not own the petition of one who cherishes an unforgiving disposition towards others, even if they have done us ever so grievous wrong.

This habit of self-searching and confessing to our Father is a very important one in Christian experience; so that this clause I believe to be as true and applicable at the present time as it was to the disciples then. When the poor publican said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," there we have another thing as appropriate in his case, as this was to the child that lisped "Our Father." Again, when the Holy Ghost was given, and the child was able to draw near to the Father in the name of Christ, you have something different still. The Lord's Prayer, so called, does not clothe the believer with the name of Christ. What is meant by asking the Father in that name? Can it be merely saying "in His name" at the end of a prayer? When Christ died and rose again, He gave the believer His own standing before God; and then to ask the Father in the name of Christ, is to ask in the consciousness that my Father loves me as He loves Christ; that my Father has, given me the acceptance of Christ Himself before Him, having completely blotted out all my evil, so as to be made the righteousness of God in Christ. To pray in the value of this is asking in His name. (Cp. John 17.) When the soul draws near, consciously brought nigh to God, it may be said to ask in His name.

Is there a soul using the Lord's prayer as a form, that has a real understanding of what it is to ask the Father in the name of Christ? I believe that they have never entered into that great truth. Hence perhaps in their very next petition they take the place of miserable sinners, deprecating the wrath of God, and still under law. Is it possible for a soul that knows what it is to stand before God as Christ is, to be thus systematically in doubt and uncertainty? It was the case with the Jew; but if I am anything at all now, I am a Christian; and, as such, my place, is in Christ, and there is no condemnation: otherwise there cannot be the Spirit of adoption, or the exercised function of priests to God. We are made priests to God by virtue of this blessed standing; and it is on earth that the testing time comes in. The conscience is brought to this -- you cannot walk with Christ and with the

12. Those who desire its exposition in detail may be referred to Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer. {See *Appendix 1 for Matthew*}.

world. Thus the question of heaven or the world is raised. Now the Christian is properly a man who enters into heavenly thoughts and relationships while he is walking through this world. This is the vocation wherewith we are called, as God's dwelling and Christ's body. Whether Christians know and do it, or not, nothing less does Christ look for from them. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." This is true from the time that we know we are in Christ. From that moment we owe it to Christ, if we would be true soldiers of His, to take our place as those who are not of the world, even as He is not.

This will suffice to show that, while the Lord's prayer always remains inestimably precious, yet was it given to meet the individual wants of the disciples, and that the further revelation of divine truth modified their condition, and would thus lead into another strain of desires, which, in fact, were not then given expression to. It seems to me a happy reflection that it is our Lord Himself who tells us this. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." What do I gather from this? That one may use the Lord's prayer every day, and never have asked anything in the name of Christ. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full . . . At that day ye shall ask in my name" {John 16:24}. What day does this mean? A future time? No, but the present; the day that the Holy Ghost brought in when He came down from heaven. It is this which is connected with that full revelation of truth which is so essential to Christian joy and blessedness, and to the unworldly and heavenly walk of the children of God; and where the one is not entered into, the other cannot be. There may be vigor of faith, and personal love to Christ; but for all that a soul will be found to savour of the world in spirit and religious position, till he has entered into this blessed place that the Holy Ghost now gives us of drawing near to God in the name of Christ.

I must now pass on to one of the most important practical exhortations which our Savior gives us in connection with prayer -- the spirit of forgiveness. He has known little of prayer who does not know the hindrances which austerity of spirit brings with it. This was one of the things that our Lord had specially in view.

> For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:14, 15).

He does not mean that the disciples would not have their sins forgiven in the day of judgment, but speaks of forgiving trespasses as a matter of the daily care and training of God. I may have a child guilty of something that is wrong, but does it therefore lose its relationship? It is my child still, but I do not speak to it in the same way that I would had it been walking in obedience. The father waits till the child feels its sin. In the case of earthly parents, we sometimes do not take sufficient notice of what is wrong, at other times we may deal with things only as they touch ourselves. We may correct, as it is said in Hebrews, after our own pleasure. but God corrects for our profit. Our Father always keeps His eye upon what is most blessed for us, but for this very reason He does betimes chasten us.

> What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? {Heb. 12:7}.

If we were not sons, we might perhaps get off; but as surely as we are, the Father's rod comes upon us for our wrongs, though we may think them little: but though painful for the present, if it be His will, we may be assured that He will make the things that may seem most against us to be unquestionably for us. To maintain the spirit of love, and specially of love towards those that wrong us, costs somewhat; but blessing will be ours in the end, and indeed also by the way.

(**3**). We now come to the subject of fasting. I believe there is a real value in fasting that few of us know much about. If, on particular occasions which call for special individual prayer, one were to unite fasting with it, I have no doubt the blessing of it would be felt. Here there is humbling of spirit expressed. There are prayers which are most suitably accompanied by standing, others by kneeling. Fasting is one of those things in which the body shows its sympathy with what the spirit is passing through; it is a means of expressing our desire to be low before God, and in the attitude of humiliation. But lest the flesh should take advantage of even what is for the mortifying of the body, the Lord enjoins that there should be means taken rather not to appear unto men to fast than to permit any display, for although a true Christian would shrink from putting on false appearances, the devil would cheat him into doing it unless he is very jealous in self-watchfulness before God.

> Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly (Matt. 6:17, 18).

Then follow the exhortations with regard to the things of this life. And, first of all, as to the laying up of treasures upon earth, the Lord brings in a principle, not of natural interest, but of spiritual wisdom and freedom from care, which the soul enjoys that does not want anything here below. Supposing there is something that one very much values upon earth, there is proportionate fear lest the thief, or some corroding thing, should spoil our treasure. Very different is that which the Lord enjoins that we should seek:

> Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Matt. 6:19-20)

-- a most solemn test for examining ourselves by.

> For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt. 21:21).

We may detect where we are by that which our thoughts chiefly rest upon. If they are heavenward, blessed are we; but if earth-ward, we shall find that those very things upon which our hearts are set will prove a sorrow one day or another.

The Lord traces all this to one grand root -- you cannot serve two masters. You have not got two hearts, but one; and your heart will be with that which you value most. Everything is thus followed up to its source: God on the one hand, and mammon on the other. Mammon is what sums up the lusts of the heart of man as to all things here. It may manifest itself in different forms; but this is the root covetousness.

> Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought [be not anxious) for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on {Matt. 6:24}.

The great point is indifference to present things, or, rather, a peaceful trust about them; not because we do not value the mercies of God, but because we have confidence in our Father's love and care about us.

So the Apostle Paul shows us the most beautiful expression of this when he says,

> I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content {Phil. 4:11}.

He had known changes of circumstances -- what it was to have nothing, and what it was to have abundance; but the great point was his thorough content with God's portion for him. This was not a thing that he passed through lightly, but he had learned it. It was a matter of attainment-of judging of things in the light of God's presence and love. The blessing is, to be looking onward with this thought -- our Father deals with us now with a view to glory; as the apostle adds, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." How sweet that is! "My God" -- the God that I have proved, whose affection I have tasted. I can count upon Him for you as well as for me; and He "shall supply all your need," not merely. according to the riches of His grace, but "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." He has taken you as Christians from this world: He is going to have you the companions of His Son above; and He deals with you now according to your place and position then. Whatever is suitable to this great plan of His glory and love, the Lord will give us to prove the consequence of that.

May the Lord strengthen us, that we may accept this with thankful hearts, knowing that we are not our own masters! The Lord will preserve us from the dangers, the snares, the pains, which haste, or wilfulness, on our part as to outward things brings with it. He shows us in this chapter the exceeding folly of it, even as to the body. He takes an instance from the outward world, as to the utter uselessness of it; and shows how God may be confided in to accomplish His own purposes best. And more than that: He reminds us that these outward things, on which we are tempted to lay such great stress, are only the objects that the Gentiles seek after. A Gentile was a term used in speaking of a man without God, in contrast with a Jew who had God in an outward manner in this world. A Christian is a man who has God as Father in heaven. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Therefore, as our Father knows this, why should we doubt Him? We do not distrust our earthly father; much less then should we doubt our heavenly Father.

> But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you {Matt. 6:33}.

It is not that we are to seek them -- to seek first the kingdom of God, and then these things; but seek ye first the kingdom of God an d His righteousness, and all the rest will come. There is no seeking about it, except of what pertains to God and to His righteousness.

> Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself {Matt. 6:34}.

That is, He prepares us for this, that the anxiety which dreads an evil thing on the morrow is nothing but unbelief. When the morrow comes, the evil may not be there; if it comes, God will be there, too. He may allow us to taste what it is to indulge in our own wills; but if our souls are subject to Him, how often the evil that is dreaded never appears! When the heart bows to the will of God about some sorrow that we dread, how often the sorrow is taken away, and the Lord meets us with unexpected kindness and goodness! He is able to make even the sorrow to be all blessing. Whatever be His will, it is good. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Matthew 7

We now come to a very distinct portion of our Lord's discourse. It is not so much the establishing of the right relations of a soul with God our Father -- the hidden inner life of the Christian. But now we have the mutual relations of the disciples with one another, their conduct towards men, the different dangers which they have to dread, and, above all things, the sure ruin for every soul that names the name of Christ, if hearing and not doing His sayings. The wise man hears and does. And so the chapter closes. I would desire to dwell a little upon these various points of instruction which our Lord brings before us. Of course it will not be possible to enter thoroughly into all; for, I need not say, the sayings of our Lord are peculiarly pregnant with profoundness of thought. There is no portion of God's word where you find a more characteristic depth than here.

The point with which the Lord Jesus opens is this. He had before this shown fully that we are to act in grace as children of our Father; but that was more particularly with the world, with our enemies, with persons that wrong us. But then a serious and practical difficulty might elsewhere arise. Supposing that among the wrong-doers were some that bore the name of Christ, what then? How are we to feel about, and to deal with them? No doubt there is a difference, and a very weighty one. Still there is a thing that we have to take care of, before we touch the question of another's conduct; and that is, to watch against the spirit of censoriousness in ourselves, the habit, or tendency, to impute evil motives in that which we do not know, and which does not meet the eye. We all know what a snare this is to the heart of man; and that it is more particularly the danger of some, through natural character and unwatchfulness as to the allowed habit. There is more discernment in some than in others, and such ought peculiarly to watch against it. It is not that they are to have their eyes shut to what is evil; but they are not to suspect what, is not uncovered, nor to go beyond the evidence God gives. This is a most important practical safeguard, without which it is impossible to walk together according to God. People may be together as so many separate units, without any real sympathy, or power, to enter into the sorrows, and difficulties, and trials, and, it may be, the evil of others. All that has a claim upon the heart of a disciple. Even that which is wrong calls upon love to find out God's way of dealing with what is contrary to God. For the essence of love is, that it seeks the good of the object that is beloved, and this without reference to self. It may have the bitterness of knowing that it is not loved in return, as the Apostle Paul knew, and this too in early days, with real Christians, yea, with persons singularly endowed by the Spirit of God. And yet God has been pleased to give us these solemn lessons of what the heart is, even in saints of God.

Under all circumstances, this great truth is obligatory on the conscience:

> Judge not, that ye be not judged (Matt. 7:1).

No principle, on the other hand, could be more easily abused by the selfishness of man. Were a person going on in an evil course, and using this passage to deny the title of brethren to judge his conduct, it is clear that he betrays a want of conscience and of spiritual understanding. His eye is blinded by self, and he is merely turning the Lord's words into an excuse for sin. The Lord did not, in any wise, mean to weaken the holy judgment of evil; on the contrary, He, in due time, binds this solemnly upon His people: "Do not ye judge them that are within?" {1 Cor. 5:12}. It was the fault of the Corinthians that they did not judge those that were in their midst. It is plain, therefore, that there is a sense in which I am to judge, and another in which I am not. There are cases where I should be sinning against the Lord if I did not judge; and there are cases where the Lord forbids it, and warns me that to do so is to bring judgment upon myself. This is a very practical question for the Christian -- where to judge and where not to judge. Whatever comes out plainly -- what God presents to the eye of His people, so that they know it for themselves, or hear of it on testimony which they cannot doubt -- that they are surely bound to judge. In a word, we are always responsible to abhor that which is offensive to God, whether known directly or indirectly; for "God is not mocked," and the children of God ought not to be governed by mere technicalities, of which the cunning craft of the enemy can easily take advantage.

But what does our Lord mean here: "Judge not, that ye be not judged?" He refers not to that which is plain, but to what is concealed; to that whereof, if it did exist, God was not pleased to lay the evidence before the eyes of His people. We are not responsible to judge what we do not know; on the contrary, we are bound to watch against the spirit of surmising evil. It may be that there is evil, and of the gravest character, as in the case of Judas. Our Lord said of him: "one of you hath a devil"; and purposely kept the disciples in the dark about the particulars. Just remark, by the way, that it is only the Gospel of John which shows us that our Lord's knowledge of Judas Iscariot was that of a divine person. He says it long before anything came out. In the other Gospels all is reserved till the eve of His betrayal; but John was led by the Holy Ghost to remember how the Lord had told them it was so from the beginning: and yet, though He knew it, they were only to confide in His knowledge of it; for if the Lord bore with him, were not they to do the same? If He did not give them directions how to deal with the evil, they were to wait. This is always the resource of faith, which never hurries, especially in so solemn a case. "He that believeth shall not make haste." We need not trouble ourselves about that which is not certain. All is open to God, all is in His hands; and we can confide in Him. Patience is the word, until the Lord's time for dealing with that which is contrary to Him. The Lord lets Judas manifest himself thoroughly; and then it was no question of bearing with the traitor.

While there are certain cases of evil that we are to judge, there are questions He does not ask the Church to solve. The worst of all are those that go out, not those who are put out. What more condemns a man than that he cannot stay in the presence of the Lord, even on earth? Of course, no evil can consist with the Lord's presence in heaven; nor can it, in the long run, on earth.

> They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us {1 John 2:19}.

These are characterized as being antichrists. It was not merely evil of a moral sort, but against Christ personally, and thus directly struck at the foundation of everlasting truth. "They went out." Thus, wherever there is that which is decidedly contrary to Christ's personal glory, He deals with it. There may be. cases, as in 2 John, which it becomes the saints to deal with too; but we generally find that such go out. God prefers, if I may so say, that Himself should dispose of them, even here below. They could not continue in the Lord's presence, though it were simply by the power of the Spirit of God that His presence was made known upon earth. But while there are these cases where the saints judge, and where the Lord judges, still there remains the word, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." We must guard against imputing motives, or pronouncing upon the absolute state of a person before God.

We have to take care that we go not before God, lest we might find ourselves in detail, if not in the main, against God. We must not break that which is bruised, by yielding to embittered personal, or party, feelings. What a danger this is! The inevitable effect of a judging spirit is that we get judged ourselves. The soul whose habit is censorious is universally ill-spoken of. "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." Then He puts a particular. case:

> Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? (Matt. 7:3).

That is, that where this proneness to judge is, there is another thing found still more serious: it is habitually unjudged evil in the spirit of a professor or saint of God which makes a. person restless, and desirous of proving others to be. wrong too.

> Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? (Matt. 7:4).

The mote of course was but little, but it was made a great deal of, and the beam, an enormous thing, was passed by. It was the Lord bringing out, in the most emphatic way, His own truth, and the danger of a suspicious, judicial spirit. And He shows that the way to deal rightly, if we desire the good of His people and their deliverance from evil, is to begin with self-judgment. If we really wish to have the mote out of our brother's eye, how is it to be done? Let us begin with the grave faults we know so little corrected and confessed in ourselves: and this is worthy of Christ. What is His way of dealing with it? Does He say of the mote in our brother's eye, Bring it to the judges? Not at all; you must probe yourselves. The soul is to begin there. When I judge the evil that my conscience knows, or that. if my conscience does not know now, it may learn in God's presence -- if I begin with this, I shall then see clearly what concerns others; I shall have a heart fitted to enter into their circumstances, an eye purged from that which makes the heart oblique, and which unfits the heart to feel with God about it.

> Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye (Matt. 7:5).

This may be found in a believer in principle, though when the Lord says, "Thou hypocrite," He alludes to the evil in its full form; but even in "ourselves, we know it in measure, and what can be more opposed to simplicity and godly sincerity? The Lord shows that this very thing leads to the most hateful evil that can be found under the name of Christ -- a hypocrite -- a thing that even the natural conscience writhes under and rejects.

> Thou. hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Often and often have we found that, when the beam is gone, the mote is not to be seen, having already disappeared. This is a great comfort; and where the heart is set upon the Lord, would we be sorry to find ourselves mistaken about our brother? Should I not rejoice to find the grace of the Lord in my brother, if I discover in self judgment myself only to be wrong? This may be painful to one, but the love of Christ in the believer's heart is gratified to know that Christ is spared this further dishonor.

This, then, is the first great principle our Lord here enjoins. The habit of judgment is to be watched against earnestly; and this, too, because it, brings bitterness upon the spirit that indulges it, and unfits the soul for being able to deal rightly with another: for we are set in the body, as St. Paul shows, for the purpose of helping each other; and we are all members one of another. The Lord is inculcating the spirit of grace, that seeks the good of others even if it be in self-condemnation.

But there is another danger. In watching against hasty and harsh judgment, there might be the abuse of grace. And the Lord immediately couples this with the former --

> Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you {Matt. 7:6}.

We must carefully remember that the Lord is not here speaking about the gospel going out to sinners. God forbid that we should not carry out the grace of God to every quarter under heaven, because nothing less than this ought to be the desire and effort of every saint of God. All ought to do it; that is, to have the spirit of active love going out after others, energetic desires for the salvation and the blessing of souls: for it were a sad shortcoming, if it went not beyond bare bringing souls to Christ. The only thought worthy of a Christian is the glory of Christ; and therefore one should be seeking to grow up into Christ in all things, to know and to do the will of God. In this verse the Lord is not taking up the question of the gospel going out indiscriminately; for we know that, if there be a difference, the gospel best suits those who have been dogs; which, in the language of the Jews, was a figure of all that is abominable.

> Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God {1 Cor. 6:11}.

The apostle had been speaking just before about thieves, drunkards, extortioners, &c. It might have been asked, Is not the wickedness of one man greater than that of. another? On an

earthly platform, one might say, Much every way; but God does not, in saving souls, make these distinctions. So, speaking of believers, when Jews, St. Paul says, they were "children of wrath, even as others." There may have been highly moral characters among them. Did this dispose them better towards God's grace? Alas! where the soul finds a justification of itself in what it is, nothing can be more dangerous. It is a hard thing for a man who feels this, to bow to the truth that he can only enter heaven upon the ground of a publican and a sinner. But so it must be, if the soul is to receive salvation from God through the faith of Jesus.

The Lord, then, is not in any wise restraining the gospel from going out to every quarter; but He speaks of the relations of His own people with those that are walking unholily. The Christian is not to treat the worldly man on common ground; he is not to bring out for him the special treasures that are the Christian's portion. The gospel is to be lavished; it is the riches of God's grace to the world. But, besides the gospel, there are the special affections of Christ to the Church, His lordship as regards His servants, His priesthood, the hope of His coming again, &c.

If you were to talk about these things, which we may, perhaps, call the pearls of the saint, with these who are evidently not Christians, you are on wrong ground. If you were to insist upon the duties of the faithful in worldly company, is it not giving that which is holy unto the dogs? There is merciful provision for the dog -- the crumbs that fall from the master's table. And such is the great grace of God toward us, that the crumbs which once fell to our portion, poor dogs of the Gentiles as we were, proved the best of all. What is there like that which flows from the Lord's grace? Whatever may be the benefits promised to the Jew, the grace of God has brought out in the gospel fuller blessing than ever was promised to Israel. What can Israel learn, by-and-by, compared to the mighty deliverance of God that we now know? The consciousness of being in a moment completely cleansed from every sin, and having the righteousness of God for ours at once, and for ever, in Christ; present access to Him as Father through a rent veil; and made His temple through the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. As the Lord Himself said to the woman of Samaria,

> If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water {John 4:10}.

Where Christ is received now, by whomsoever it may be, there is this fulness of blessing. We have not even to go to the well now, for the fountain is within the believer. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a fountain of water, springing up into everlasting life." So that we may see in many a word of God how wide and perfect is His grace, while it forbids certain things being thrown indiscriminately among worldly persons, as not being suited subjects.

Any act that implies fellowship between a believer and an unbeliever is false. Take, for instance, the question of worship, and the habit of calling the whole round of devotions worship. But worship supposes communion with the Father and the Son, and with each other in it. There is not, nor can be, real communion in the usual forms of prayer. Indeed, you will find that evangelical people do not generally care for the prayers, but bear with them for the sake of the sermon. But the system which, founded on an easy rite that pretends to regenerate all, unites believers and unbelievers in one common form and calls it worship, is casting what is holy unto dogs. Is it not a thinly-disguised attempt to put the sheep and dogs upon the same ground? In vain! You cannot unite before God the enemies of Christ, and those that belong to Him. You cannot mingle as one people those that have got life and those that have not. The attempt to do so is sin, and always ends in failure and disappointment, as well as in the constant dishonor of the Lord. All effort to have a worship of this mixed character is going in the very teeth of the sixth verse.

On the other hand, preaching the gospel, where it is kept distinct from worship, is right and blessed. When the day of judgment comes upon this world, where does the worst stroke fall? Not upon the openly profane world, but upon Babylon, because Babylon is the confusion of what is of Christ with evil -- the attempt to make communion possible between light and darkness. There is what we are responsible for, as the apostle says,

> Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues {Rev. 18:4}.

It is the being partaker of her sins that is the grave affair with God. It is the acceptance of a common ground upon which the Church and the world can join; when the very object of God, and that for which Christ died, was that He might have a separate people unto Himself; so as to be, by their very consecration unto God, a light in this world; not a witness of pride, saying, "Stand by, I am holier than thou"; but Christ's epistle, that tells the world where the living water is to be found, and bids them come: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The light of the Church, reflected from Christ, shines upon the living water that Christ gives to him that will. Where we do not confound the religion of the world with the worship that goes up to God from His people, there you will also have the true line of demarcation -- where we ought to judge, and where we ought not. There will be active service towards the world with the gospel, but yet the careful separation of the Church from the world. This is also true individually. If there were only a single saint in the place, he is not to cast his pearls before swine; and if there be an assembly, they have to guard against it corporately also.

What a test is this for the heart! Thus persons take advantage of the word of God that says,

> If an unbeliever bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go, &c. {1 Cor. 10:27};

but take care how you go, and for what. If you go self-confident, you will but dishonor Christ; if to please yourself, this is poor ground; if to please other people, it is little better; if it were really to serve God and please our neighbor for his good to edification, it would be with pain to oneself, with reverence, I may say, and godly fear, lest one might forget the living God, and that He is a consuming fire; He is such in His dealings with us, and let us thank Him for it. He does not spare our evil any more than He wishes us to spare it. There may be occasions when the love of Christ might constrain a soul to go and bear a testimony to His love in a

worldly company; yet if we know how easily words may be said, and things done, that imply communion with that which is contrary to Christ, there would be fear and trembling; but where there is self-confidence, there never can be the power of God.

But now the Lord, having finished the subject of the abuse of judgment and the abuse of grace, indicates the necessity of intercourse with God; and this is very particularly in connection with what we have been seeing.

> Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you (Matt. 7:7).

Here we have different degrees, increasing measures of earnestness in pleading. with the Lord:

> For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened (Matt. 7:8).

And then He gives them an argument to encourage them in this:

> What man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Matt. 7:9-11).

There is a very interesting difference in the passage that answers to this in Luke 9, where, instead of saying, "give good things to them that ask him," it is said, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" The Holy Spirit was not yet given; it was not that He did not act in the world, but He was not yet personally imparted, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. Scripture says this expressly. Thus, until the time when He was poured out from heaven, it was quite right to pray for the Spirit to be given: and the Gentiles in particular being persons that were ignorant about it, this is expressly. mentioned in the Gospel of Luke, which especially contemplates the Gentiles. For who can read that Gospel without having the conviction that there is a careful eye upon those that have a Gentile origin? It was written by a Gentile and to a Gentile; and all through, it traces the Lord as Son of Man, a title which links itself, not with the Jewish nation properly and peculiarly, but with all men. This is the great want of man—the Holy Spirit, which was about to be given, and He is the great power of prayer, as it is said, "Praying in the Holy Ghost." St. Luke was led to specify that special good thing which those that pray would need in order to give them energy in prayer.

But returning to Matthew, we have the. whole passage wound up by this word:

> Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets (Matt. 7:12).

This is in no way dealing with men according to their ways, but the contrary. It is saying, as it were, "You who know the heavenly Father, who know what His grace to the evil is, you know what is comely in His sight; always act upon that. Never act merely according. to what another does towards you, but according to what you would that another should do to you. If you have the slightest love in your heart, your would desire that they should act as children of your Father." Whatever another person may do, my business is to do to them what I would that they should do to me; namely, to act in a way becoming the child of a heavenly Father. "This is the law and the prophets." He is giving them exceeding breadth, extracting the essence of all that was blessed there. There was this which was clearly the gracious wish of a soul that knew God, even under the law; and nothing less than this could be the ground of action before God.

But now we come to dangers. There are not only brethren that try, but now He says,

> Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves (Matt. 7:13-15).

There is a moral connection between the two things. One main feature of that which is false is the attempt to make the gate large, and the road broad; to deny the special manner in which God calls souls to the knowledge of Himself. There is not an arrangement in the religious world that does not interfere with this. Take, for instance, the parceling out of those that belonged to God into different companies, as if they were the sheep of man -- what people do not scruple to call "our church," or "such a one's flock." God's rights, His claims, His calling a soul to walk in responsibility to Himself, are all set aside by the state of thought and feeling which originates such language.. We never find even an apostle saying, "my flock." It is always "the flock of God," because this brings in divine grace and rights, and responsibility to God. If they are His flock, I must take care. that I do not lead them astray. It should be the object of my soul, in having to do with a Christian, to bring his soul into direct connection with God Himself: I ought, therefore, to remember and say, This is one of God's sheep. What a change would this make in the tone and ways of pastors, if the company were, and were viewed as, the flock of God! It is the business of the true servant to keep them in the narrow path on which His sheep have entered.

But there is also the broad-road-going world, who think that they can belong to God by profession of Christ and trying to keep the commandments. There has been the widening of the gate, the broadening of the road, in connection with which the Lord says,

> Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves {Matt. 7:15}.

There may be true teachers sent from God; but they suffer with the false ones, if they are mixed up with the world. Being all bound together for common objects, whether they belong to God or not, those that are really true are often drawn of the rest into what they know to be wrong. And remember another solemn thing. The devil never would be able to accomplish any plan in Christendom, if he could not get good people to join the bad in it. Unbelief constantly uses as an excuse, "such a good man is here"; "the excellent Mr.-- does that." But is the opinion or conduct of a Christian to be the criterion by which

I judge? If so, there is nothing I may not fall into: for what evil thing is there that a man, and even a believer, has not done? You know what David had to confess before the Lord. There is nothing too bad; and this is the way that the devil takes to keep other persons quiet in evil. Presumption has nothing to do with the matter, nor is it enough to cite good men. The only question for the Christian is the will of the Lord; and therefore it becomes a matter of searching into scripture. The sole standard for the believer is the written word of God; and this is the special security in these last days. When Paul was leaving the Ephesian elders, it was to God and to the word of His grace that he commended them. Grievous wolves might enter in among them, not sparing the flock; and of their own selves men might arise, speaking perverse things. But the sole safeguard, as a rule of faith and conduct for the saints, is God's holy writ.

Mass is the most wicked act of the most corrupt system under the sun; but if the grace of God could enter there, and work by His Spirit, spite of the elevated host {i.e., the Romanist wafer of the mass}, who shall put limits? But is this a reason why I should go to a Roman Catholic chapel, or pray to the virgin? God, in His sovereign grace, can go anywhere; but if I desire to walk as a Christian, how am I to do it? There is but one standard -- the will of God; and the will of God can only be learned through the scriptures. I cannot reason from any amount of blessing there, nor from any apparent weakness here. True saints might be allowed to seem very weak, for the express purpose of showing that the power is not in them, but in God. Although the apostles were such mighty men, they were often allowed to appear feeble indeed in the eyes of others. It was that which exposed Paul to be thought not an apostle by the Corinthians, though they, of all men, ought to have known better. All this proves that we cannot reason either from blessing that God's grace may work, or from the weakness of God's children. What we want is that which has no fault at all and this the word of God. I need it for my rule as a Christian man, and as walking together with all saints. If we act upon that word, and nothing else, we shall find God with us. It will be called bigotry; but this is part of the reproach of Christ. Faith will always appear proud to those who have none; but it will be proved in the day of the Lord to be the only humility, and that everything which is not faith is pride, or no better. Faith admits that he who has it is nothing -- that he has no power, nor wisdom, of his own; and so he looks to God. May we be strong in faith, giving glory to Him.

But, again,

> Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit {Matt. 7:17}.

The Lord does not here speak simply of men being known by their fruits, but of false prophets (Matt. 7:15-20). "Ye shall know them by their fruits." Where grace is denied, the holiness is hollow, or, at best, legal. Wherever grace is really held and preached, you will find two things -- much greater care in what concerns God, than where it is not equally known; and also greater tenderness, forbearance, and patience in what merely touches man. Winking at sin is one thing, but unscriptural severity is very far from divine righteousness, and may co-exist with the allowance of self in many a form. There are certain sins that call for rebuke; but it is only in the gravest cases that there ought to be extreme measures. We are not left to make laws about evil for ourselves; we are under responsibility to another, even to our Lord. We ought not in this to trust ourselves, but to learn the wisdom of God, and confide in the perfectness of His word; and our business is to carry out what we find there. Let the help come from where it may, if we can thus but follow the word of God more fully, we ought to be exceedingly grateful.

Solemn, most solemn, are the words that follow, as the Lord's eye scans the field of profession.

> Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23). [13]

The Lord affirms the stability of His word, for the obedient heart, from the figure of a man building upon a rock; He shows also, as none but He could, the end of everyone who hears and does not His sayings. But I must not enlarge on this now.

The Lord grant that our hearts may be towards Himself! We shall be able to help one another, and we shall be helped of His own grace. Weak as we are, we shall be made to stand. And if through unwatchfulness we have slipped, the Lord, as Advocate with the Father, will graciously set us upon our feet again.

May He grant us singleness of eye!

---

13. ◆ Q. Matt. 7: 22, 23; Luke 13:25-28. Do these texts warrant the inference that the parable of the virgins (Matt. 25) refers to the Jewish remnant, rather than to Christendom? J. D. B.

A. It is a mistake in interpreting scripture to conceive that similarity in one point or more establishes identity, *many* of which however striking would be of no weight against a single irreconcilable difference. The context (and not verbal analogies even if far stronger than in these instances) is alone decisive. It is worth remarking, just to show how precarious this ground is, that a well-known living commentator and critic *contrasts* Matt. 7:23 with Matt. 25:12. The truth is, that in the day of the Lord all will be judged who have not been saved, and on similar though not identical grounds; for the Lord will deal with Jew, Gentile, or Christian profession on their own footing, but in His light. The passage in Luke is proved by the context to be the judgment of the Jews who refused the urgent proffers of Jesus. The passage in Matt. 7 need not be so restrained, though no doubt applying there and then. But the parable of the virgins, both contextually and in its own statements, applies not to the Jews (who have already been fully treated of in the preceding two chapters, nationally and as a remnant), but to professing Christendom consisting of disciples real and unreal. The Jewish remnant will be rather the earthly bride than virgins *going out* to meet the Bridegroom; neither will they from the first possess the gift of the Spirit (the "oil in their vessels") like the wise virgins; nor will any of them be "foolish" like these, but "the wise"; nor will they go to sleep during their awful hour of trial *(The Bible Treasury* 7:64). ◆

Matthew 8

I can well understand a man, who received and revered the Bible as the word of the living God, finding himself at fault when he closely examines the Gospels which recount the Lord's ministry. A casual reader might find no difficulty; but, at first, nothing would be more probable than that he who carefully compared the different accounts might be perplexed -- I will not say stumbled, because he has too much confidence in the word of God. In comparing the Gospels, he finds that they differ very considerably in the way in which the same facts are recorded in different Gospels. He finds one arrangement in Matthew, another in Mark, and a third in Luke; and yet all these he is sure are right. But he cannot make out how, if the Spirit of God really inspired the different Evangelists to give a perfect history of Christ, there should, at the same time, be these apparent discrepancies. He is obliged to cast himself upon God, and to enquire whether there be not some principle which can account for these changes of position, and for the different mode in which the same circumstances are displayed. The moment that he thus approaches these Gospels, light will dawn upon his soul. He begins to see that the Holy Ghost was not merely giving the testimony of so many witnesses, but that, while they thoroughly agree at bottom, the Holy Ghost had assigned a special office to each of them, so that their writings present the Lord in various and distinct attitudes. It remains to enquire what are these several points of view, and how they may both give occasion to, and explain, the variety of statement that is undoubtedly to be found therein.

I have already shown that in the Gospel of Matthew the Holy Ghost has been depicting Jesus in His relationship to Israel, and that this accounts for the genealogy given us in Matt. 1, which quite differs from what we have in the Gospel of Luke. It is specially His genealogy as Messiah, which is, of course, important and interesting to Israel, who looked for a Ruler of the seed of David. At the same time, the Holy Ghost took particular care to correct the narrow worldly thoughts of the Jews; and shows that while He was, according to the flesh, of the seed of Israel, He was also the Lord God; and if Emmanuel and Jehovah, His special work, as a divine person, was to save His people from their sins. He may go out far beyond that people, and bless Gentiles no less than Jews; but saving from sins was clearly an expectation of Christ that ought to have been gathered from the prophets. The Jews expected that when Messiah came, it would be to be exalted over them as a nation; that they consequently would become the head, and the Gentiles the tail. All this they had rightly inferred from the prophetic word, but there was a great deal more that they had not discerned. Messiah is bent upon their spiritual, as well as their natural, blessing; and all present, hopes must fade away before the question of sin, yea, their sins. Jesus accepts His rejection from them, and effects on the cross for them that very redemption which they thought so little about.

How thoroughly, too, it falls in with the Gospel of Matthew, that we should have a long discourse like that of the Sermon on the Mount without interruption; the whole being given us as a continuous word from our Lord. All interruptions, if there were any, are carefully excluded; so as to bring Him out. on the Mount in pointed antithesis to Moses, by whom God was bringing in an earthly kingdom: but now, because He manifests the heavenly King, it is contrary to everything the Jews were expecting.

The Holy Ghost proceeds in this Gospel to give us the facts of our Lord's life, still in connection with this great thought. The Gospel of Matthew is the presentation to Israel of Jesus as their divine Messiah, their rejection of Him in that character, and what God would do in consequence. We shall see whether the facts that are given us even in this chapter do not bear upon this special aspect of our Lord. From the Gospel of Mark, it would be impossible to collect it in the same way. In Matthew, the mere order of history is here neglected, and facts are brought together that took place months apart. It is not at all the object of the Holy Ghost by Matthew, or even Luke, to give the facts in the order in which they happened, which Mark does. Those that examine the Gospel of Mark with care will find notes of time, expressions such, as "immediately," &c., where things are left vague in the other Gospels. The phrases of rapid transition, or of instant sequence, of course bind together the different occurrences thus brought: into juxtaposition. In Matthew this is entirely disregarded; and of all the chapters in the Gospel, there is not one, perhaps, that so entirely sets aside the mere succession of dates, as the very one before us. But if this be so, to what are we to attribute it? Why, we may reverently ask, does the Holy Ghost in Matthew disregard the order in which things followed one another? Was it that Matthew did not know the time in which they occurred? If he had been only a man writing a history for his own pleasure, could he not have ascertained with tolerable certainty when it was that each fact occurred? And when he first had published his statement, would anything have been easier than for the other Evangelists to follow, and give their accounts in accordance with his?

But the contrary is the case. Mark takes up a different line of things, and Luke another, while John has a character to himself. On the very face of it we are driven to one of two suppositions. Either the Evangelists were as careless men as ever wrote accounts of their Master, giving different accounts as if to perplex the reader; or it was the Holy Ghost who presented the facts in various ways, so as to illustrate the glory of Christ far more than what mere repetition would have accomplished. The latter I. believe to be the truth. Any other supposition is as irrational as irreverent. For, even supposing that the apostles had written different accounts and bad made mistakes, they could very easily have corrected each other's mistakes: but the reason why no such correction appears was not human error or defect, but divine perfection. It was the Holy Ghost who was pleased to shape these

Gospels in the particular form most calculated to bring out the person, mission, or various relations of Christ. The Gospel of Mark proves that the healing of the leper took place at a different time from what you might have gathered from this chapter -- in fact, long before the Sermon on the Mount. In ch. 1 we have the Lord described as preaching in their synagogues through all Galilee, and casting out devils: "and there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Mark 1:40-45).

Now, no intelligent man doubts this is the same story as in Matt. 8. But if we read the next chapter of Mark, what is the first thing mentioned after this?

> Again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house . . . and they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four {Mark 2:1-3}.

Clearly here we have a fact, the cure of the paralytic man, which Matthew does not give us till ch. 9, after a storm which Mark describes in chapter iv., and after the case of the demoniac, which only appears in ch. 5; so that it is perfectly plain that one of the two Evangelists must have departed from the order of history; and as Mark, by his strict notes of time, evidences that he does not, Matthew must be concluded to have so done. In Mark 3 we have our Lord going up the mountain, and calling the disciples to Him; and there is the place accordingly in this gospel where the Sermon on the Mount would, if inserted at all, come in. Thus, it was considerably after what took place in Matt. 8:2-4 that the Sermon on the Mount was uttered: but Mark does not give us that sermon, because his great object was the gospel ministry and characteristic works of Christ; and therefore the doctrinal expositions of our Lord are left out. Where brief words of our Lord accompany what He did, they are given; but nothing more.

It may make what I have been saying still plainer, if in Mark 1 we observe, further, the actual order. Simon and Andrew are called, in v. 16; James and John, v. 19; and straightway, having gone to Capernaum, He entered on the Sabbath-day into the synagogue, and taught. There we have the man with the unclean spirit: the fact took place a little after the final call of Andrew and Simon, of James and John. The unclean spirit was cast out;

> and immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James arid John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her, &c. {Mark 1:28-30}.

Hence we have positive certainty, from God's own word, that the healing of Peter's wife's mother took place a short time after the call of Peter and Andrew, and considerably before the healing of the leper.

Carrying this back to our chapter in Matthew, we see the importance of it; for here the healing of Peter's mother-in-law only appears in the middle of the chapter. The cleansing of the leper is given first, then the healing of the centurion's servant, and after that, of Peter's wife's mother; whereas, from Mark, we know for a certainty that Peter's wife's mother was healed long before the leper. Looking at Mark again, we find that, on the evening of the same Sabbath, after He had healed Peter's wife's mother,

> they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils . . . And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed {Mark 1:32-35}.

This is clearly the same scene alluded to in Matt. 8, and would come in after v. 17. The fact of His going to the desert and praying is not mentioned here; but it took place at the same time. Then, in Mark, we have His going into Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons; and after that, He heals the leper.

What I draw from this is that, as Mark tells us the very day on which these things happened, we must take him for a witness of their order as to time. When I go back to Matthew, do I find that there is any intimation of the time in which these events took place? Not a word. It is simply said, "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him" (Matt. 8:1), and then we have the healing of the leper. There is nothing to prove that the leper came at that particular time. All that is said is, "And behold, there came a leper," &c. -- an Old Testament form of expression. Whether the healing of the leper took place before He came down, or after, we are not told here. From Mark we infer that the Sermon on the Mount was given long after; and that the healing of Peter's wife's mother took place before the healing of the leper.

Why, let us ask, would it not have suited the Gospel of Matthew to put the healing of Peter's wife's mother first, then the leper, and lastly the centurion? For you will find that in the order of time this was really the succession. The centurion came up after the sermon was over, and Christ was in Capernaum; the leper had been healed a considerable time before, and Simon's mother-in-law earlier yet. But what is the great truth taught by these facts as they are arranged in the Gospel of Matthew? The Lord is met by a leper. You know what a loathsome thing leprosy was. Notoriously, it was not only most offensive, but hopeless, as far as man was concerned. It is true that in Leviticus we have ceremonies for the cleansing of a leper, but who could give a ceremony for the cure of a leper? who take away that disease after it had once infected a man? Luke, the beloved physician, gives us the notice that he was "full of leprosy"; the other Evangelists do not state anything but the simple fact that he was a leper. This was enough. To the Jews, the question was whether there was any leprosy at all: if such there were, they could have nothing to say to him till he was cured and cleansed. The Spirit of God uses leprosy as a type of sin, in all the loathsomeness that it produces. Palsy brings out the thought

of powerlessness. Both are true of the sinner. He is without strength, and he is unclean in the presence of God.

Jesus heals the leper. This at once illustrates the power of Jehovah-Jesus upon earth, and more than that; for it was not merely a question of His power, but of His grace, His love, His willingness to put forth all His might on behalf of His people. For the whole people of Israel were like, that leper. The prophet Isaiah had said so long before and they were not better now. The Lord repeats the sentence of Isaiah: "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy," &c., and this leper was a type of the moral condition of Israel in the presence of the Messiah. But, whether few or many, let them only present themselves in all their vileness before the Messiah, and how would the Messiah deal with them? The Messiah is there. He has got the power; but the leper is not sure of His will. "Lord," he says, "if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" {Matt. 8:2}. We may remember the distress of the king of Israel in the days of Elisha, when the king of Syria sent Naaman to him that he might be recovered of his leprosy—how, when he had read the letter, "he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" Only God could do it: every Jew knew this; and this is what the Holy Ghost is desirous of showing.

We have had the testimony that Jesus was a man, and yet Jehovah -- able to save His people from their sins. But here comes out His presentation to Israel in particular cases, where the Holy Ghost, instead of giving a mere general and historical outline, as in ch. 4, singles out special instances, for the purpose of illustrating the Lord's relation to Israel, and the manifested effects of it. The leper is the first case, where we have, as it were, the microscope applied by the Spirit of God, that we may see clearly how the Lord carried Himself toward Israel; what ought to have been the place of Israel; and what was their real conduct. At once, when the leper acknowledges His power and confesses His person, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"; when it was merely the question of His will, and of His affections, immediately there comes the answer of divine love as well as power: "I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." He put forth His hand, and touched him. It was not only God, but God manifest in the flesh -- One who entered fully into the poor leper's anxiety, yet proved Himself paramount to the law. His touch -- it was that of Jehovah. He was God. The law could only put the leper at a distance; but if God gives a law, He is superior in grace to the law that He gives. The heart of this leper trembled, afraid lest the blessed Lord should be unwilling to bless him; but He puts forth His hand, He touches him: none else could, none else would. The Lord's touch, instead of contracting defilement to Himself, banishes defilement from the leper. Immediately lie is cleansed.

Jesus then says to him,

> See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them {Matt. 8:4}.

There was no desire that he should publish what Jesus was: God might tell His works. He says, "See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest," &c. Nothing could be more blessed. It was not yet the time for the law to be set aside.[14] Jesus waits. The cross must come in before the law could be set aside righteously. We are delivered from the law by the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is the great doctrine of the Epistle to the Romans -- that we are become dead to the law (of course in His death) that we might "be married to Another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Up to the resurrection of Christ from the dead, there is the most careful guarding of the law. After resurrection, saints passed into another relationship with Him who was risen from the dead.

Here we find then was a sedulous maintenance of the claims of God's law; and it always was so until the cross. Therefore He says, "Go, shew thyself to the priest." Also, had the man gone telling it to everyone instead of to the priest, the great enemy might have found means to misrepresent the work, to deny the miracle, to try and make out that he was not the man who had been a leper. Alas! was it the wish of man's heart to hide that Jesus had wrought such a miracle? But the Lord says, "Go, show thyself to the priest." Why? Because the priest would be himself the authentic witness that Jesus was Jehovah. The priest that knew the man was a leper before, that had pronounced him unclean, that had put him outside, would now see that the man was cured. Who had done it? None but God could heal the leper. Jesus, then, was God. Jesus was Jehovah. The God of Israel was in the land. The priest's mouth would be obliged to confess the glory of Christ's person.

> Offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them {Matt. 8:4}.

When had there been the offering of that gift? They had no power to heal the leper, and thus could not offer the gift. So that Jesus had bowed to the obligations of the law, and yet had He done what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. But here was One who was God, and "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." God Himself, and God's own Son withal, He was here working this mighty work that proved His dignity; and He made the priest himself to be the witness of it.

But now we are to hear a different tale -- Jesus enters into Capernaum. When, we are not told. It had no connection with the story of the leper; but the Holy Ghost puts them together, because it brings in the Gentiles. We have had the Jew set forth in the history of the leper and the gift Moses commanded for a testimony to Israel. But now there is a Gentile centurion that comes on behalf of his servant, and this brings in a new kind of confession of the Lord altogether. Here there is no touching the patient, no connection with Christ after the flesh. Hence it illustrates the way in which the Gentile knows Christ. The Jew looked for a Christ that would put forth His hand -- a Savior personally present

14. {The law is still here (1 Tim. 1:8-10). The Christian is dead to the law (Rom. 7:4}.

among them -- bringing in also divine power, and healing them; as the scripture had said, "I am the Lord God that healeth thee." Here He was truly come; but they did not, would not, know Him. The next witness that we have brought forward in Matthew, but nowhere else, is the centurion; because God would show His grace to the Gentile, when the natural children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were going to be cut off. They would not worship Him as the poor leper did. The testimony to the priest would be disregarded. They become more and more opposed to His claims. God says, as it were, If you Jews will not have my Son, I will send a testimony to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles will hear. Upon the rejection of Jesus by the Jew, upon Israel's refusal of Him who had proved Himself to be their Jehovah -- God in forgiving all their iniquities and healing all their diseases, what then follows? The door of faith is opened to the Gentiles.

Thus, we, have the story of the centurion, which is taken out of its place and put here purposely. And even in the details of the history there are very noticeable differences. You have not the embassy of the Jews in connection with the centurion. This is left out in Matthew, but inserted in Luke. Thus, while Matthew's Gospel gives everything that might be calculated to meet the conscience of Israel; it abstains from giving that which they might have prided themselves on. It was wholesome for the Gentiles that they should hear of the embassy of this good man. He was like the Gentile laying his hand upon the skirt of him that was a Jew, taking his place behind Israel. But his faith goes beyond this; for we find that he comes and beseeches the Lord, and brings out his own personal faith in the most blessed manner. When Jesus says to him, "I will come and heal him," at once his heart is manifest. He answers,

> Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof {Matt. 8:8}.

For just as he, the centurion, could say to one, "Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh"; and to his servant, Do this, and he doeth it, how much more could the Lord "speak the word only," and his servant should be healed? Jesus had indeed authority over all diseases; but Was it merely a question of His putting His hand upon the leper? Not at all. He had only to utter the word, and it was done. The centurion assumes the grand truth that Jesus was God (not merely Messiah), and therefore full of ability to heal. In short, he looks at Him in a still higher way, not as One whose presence must be connected with the putting forth of power, but as One who had only to speak the word, and it was done. This brings in the character of the word of God, and the absence of Jesus from those who now profit by His grace.

Such is our position. Jesus is away and unseen. We hear His word, lay hold of it, and are saved. This is the beautiful way in which we are given the different bearing of the Lord on the Jew and on the Gentile; but we learn, moreover, that the blessing would be refused by Israel, and the Gentiles would become the objects of mercy; as it is said here,

> Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8:10, 11).

That is, many Gentiles shall come; neither is this all: "But the children of the kingdom" -- meaning the natural children, of course -- those that were the seed, but not the children of Abraham in a strict sense -- the children of the kingdom that were so by birth, but who had no faith at all -- these should be

> cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth {Matt. 8:12}.

The Jews as a nation were going to be rejected. There would only be a line of believing ones; but the mass of Israel should be rejected until the fulness of the Gentiles should be come in.

Thus we have here a wonderful view of our Lord, and this exactly in accordance with the general strain of the Gospel of Matthew. We have Jesus proving Himself to be Jehovah-Jesus, ready to heal, wherever there was faith; but where was it? The leper might represent the godly remnant; but as to the mass of Israel, we have their doom pronounced here, and that, too, in the very sane incident which proves that the grace of God which Israel refused would make a larger channel for itself to run in. The Gentiles should partake of the mercies which the Jews rejected. This is just what is here put together in these two stories. Jesus gives proof to Israel that He was a divine Messiah. If they scorned it, the Gentiles would hear.

But then there is another thing of great importance, and which shows why the healing of Peter's wife's mother is kept in this Gospel till after these events, although Mark gives it before. Mark furnishes the history of the ministry of Christ as it happened. Why does not Matthew the same? Divine wisdom is stamped upon this, as upon everything in the word of God. I believe it is reserved by Matthew for this place, because Israel might have the idea that, when the mercy of God flowed out to the Gentiles, His heart might be turned away from them. As we read elsewhere, the maid was not dead, but sleeping: this is the state of Israel now. And as surely as the Lord did raise her up, so surely will He in a future day awaken the sleeping daughter of Zion. We have got better blessing and higher glory now. But it is necessary for the truth of God's word that Israel should be blessed too; because, if God could break His word to Israel, I cannot trust His word to me. Now God positively promised the eventual final glory of Israel on the earth. The only thing needed is that we should not confound these things; that we should not be ignorant either of the Scripture, or of the power of God.

In this case we have an incident brought before us which proves that (though the Lord knew the unbelief of Israel and predicted it; and though He knew also that the Gentiles were to come in now by faith) His heart could not but linger over Israel. Therefore, as it seems, the Holy Ghost, to illustrate this, brings in here the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. In this third incident, the healing of Peter's wife's mother, He did it, we may infer, for Peter's sake, whatever may have been the other reasons. It is a natural relationship, and you

will find that the great scene for this is Israel. Peter was the apostle of the circumcision; so that I have not a question that one of the reasons why this event is brought in here is to show that the unbelief of Israel would not finally alienate the Lord's heart. There He was, still healing all their diseases, as was witnessed even to the crowd around her door,

> that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities anal bare our sicknesses {Matt. 8:17}. [15]

The Lord, when He wrought a miracle, entered in spirit into the circumstances of him whom He was relieving. If the miracle brought out His divine power, there was also the divine sympathy that entered into the depth of the need that He relieved.

Afterwards we have the Lord preparing to go to the other side. But this gives occasion for certain persons to be brought out in their true character and ways, and for the Lord to manifest His own. Now when did this happen? This brings out a most peculiar feature of the Gospel of Matthew, marking how entirely the Holy Ghost was here above the mere routine of dates. Look at the Gospel of Luke, and you will find that the conversation with these men which is recorded here, took place after the transfiguration. In Luke 9 we are told that, after the transfiguration had taken place, the Lord steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem; and then, in v. 57, it is said,

> It came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father (Luke 9:57-62).

Now, am I too bold in thinking that this was the same incident that we have recorded in Matthew? It would not be reasonable to suppose that our Lord should have the same things repeated at different times; nor could we fairly conceive of two distinct persons copying one another so exactly. But mark its importance, if this be so. It took place a very long time after, and yet it is put in here by Matthew. Why? Because it illustrates this -- that while the Lord had all this love in His heart towards Israel, spite of their unbelief, there was no heart in Israel towards Him. What was His condition now? He had not even where to lay His head. What a thing for the Messiah of Israel to be obliged to say, when a man offered to follow Him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."

This is the first time in our Gospel where He uses the expression "Son of man." It is no longer "Son of David." "Son of man," is the title of Christ as rejected, or glorified. There is no question which of the two it was here. Even His own people will not have Him. And He is going away to the other side -- He must leave them. He has done it now, as we know. But this man proposes to follow Him. The Lord knew all that was in his heart. The man was a mere carnal Jew, who thought by following Jesus to get a good place with the Messiah. The Lord tells him He had no place to give him. There was not even a nest for the Messiah. What was there for the flesh, offering to follow Christ, to find? The Lord unveils his heart, proves its utter corruption, shows it to be the more dreadful because the Lord Himself had not even the meanest spot that even the meanest and most mischievous creature He had made might possess. Had not the foxes their holes, and the birds of the air their nests? But the Son of man had not even where to lay His head. If the flesh should pretend to follow our Lord, it only meets with a rebuke. To a disciple who had said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," the Lord could say again,

> Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead (Matt. 8:21, 22).

Mark the difference. Where the call of Christ is, there may be great reluctance, trial felt, and struggling on the part of nature; still the word is, "Follow me." When a thoroughly carnal man stands in the presence of the gospel, there is not this backwardness -- none of this hesitation. He thinks it is all beautiful, but it does not lay hold of his soul; and very soon circumstances occur to draw his heart away to other things, and at last the man sinks down again to his own level. But where the Lord does say, "Follow me," how often the soul, before, or at the time, says, "Lord, suffer me, first to go and bury my father!" It is clear there was this natural relationship, which had a very serious claim. His father was lying dead: he must go and bury him.

One could hardly think of a duty more peremptory than this. People might say that a man must make the burying of his father so urgent that everything must give way to it. Not at all, says the Lord, Christ ought to be stronger still. If the call of Christ is heard, even at the very moment when the father lies dead, waiting for burial, we must forego even this. The world may say, There is a man that talks about Christ, and yet does not love his father; but we must be prepared for this: and if we are not, it is because we do not understand the value of the Christ we have got. You will find that natural ties and duties in this world are always apt to come in as a hindrance between Christ and the soul. The claims of nature are continually pressed upon one. But no matter whether it be father or mother, or brother or sister, or son or daughter, where the call of Christ is clear, take care that you do not say, Suffer me to do such and such a thing first. The word of Jesus is, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead."

Then the Lord goes. We find Him entering into a ship, and His, disciples following Him. And thereon follows the history of the tempest, and of the miracle that Jesus wrought in calming the winds and the sea. Now when did this really take place? On the evening of the day when the seven parables of Matt. 13 were uttered, before the transfiguration, but long after the other events mentioned in this chapter.

15. {The erroneous doctrine that Christ bore our diseases on the cross, using the verse in Isa. 53 from which Matt. 8:17 quotes, is shown to be false by Matt. 8:17. Isa. 53:4 was fulfilled by Christ in His ministry, not on the cross.}

Mark lets us know this positively in the chapter that records the parables (Mark 4) -- the very same that are given us in Matt. 13, with this addition,

> With many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone [when they had entered into the house, as it is given us in Matthew], he expounded all things to his disciples. And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

Then follows the same history that we had in the first Gospel; and after they come to the other side, there is the man with the legion of devils. There need not be a question that this is the same scene that we have here, in Matt. 8:24-27, followed by the healing of the men possessed with demons; but brought out in an entirely different connection. It did not really occur till a considerable time after; as the account of the conversation of our Lord with more than one has been given here, though it took place at a totally different part of the life and ministry of Christ.

What follows from this? That the Holy Ghost in Matthew only gives us historical order where it falls in with the special object of the Gospel. All this marks the perfect wisdom of God: and none but God would have thought of such a thing. But how few think of it, or even understand it now! Does it not show the slowness of our hearts to take in the full meaning of the word of God? What is the Lord teaching in these two scenes? He shows us here Himself alone with His disciples. The godly part of Israel are now separated with Himself, and exposed to all that the enemies of God could do against them. But it only serves to enlist the power of the Lord for them. Everything is subdued at His bidding. So is it in our own experience. There never is a difficulty, trial, or painful circumstance in which we appear to be utterly overwhelmed by the power of Satan in this world, but what, if our eye is towards Christ, and we appeal to Him, we shall know His power most truly put forth on our behalf. When they realize whom they had in the same boat with them and cry, saying, "Lord, save us; we perish," He arises and rebukes the wind and the sea. "And there was a great calm." So that even the very shipmen marveled, saying, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" {Matt. 8:27}. The disciples knew it in a still deeper way, but the others were astonished.

But this is not all. It might evince what Christ is for the godly who were with Him. But there were two men, far indeed from the Messiah, for they were among the tombs, possessed with demons, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way just the picture of the most desperate power of Satan in the world. One of them, as we are told elsewhere, went by the name of Legion, because many demons were entered into him. You could not have worse than this. The power of Satan was stronger than all the fetters of men.

But the Lord is there. The demons believe and tremble. They felt His presence. But the day was not come for Satan to be dispossessed of his title over the world. As yet it was only the time of the proof of the power to do it: but the full exercise of that power was reserved for another day. I doubt not that our Evangelist gives the casting out of the demons as a witness of Christ's power to deliver the Jewish remnant; and therefore the Holy Ghost, here only, names the two men: as, on the other hand, the possessed herd of swine seems to represent the destruction of the unclean mass of Israel in the latter day.

Then, again, the history brings out this also -- that Satan has power in a twofold way, not only in the dreadful excesses of those who are completely under his influence, but in the quiet enmity of the heart that could lead others to go to Jesus, in order to beseech Him to depart out of their coasts. What a solemn thing it is to know that the secret influence of Satan over the heart, that creates the wish to get rid of Jesus, is even more fatal, personally, than when Satan makes a man to be the witness of his awful power! But so it was then, and so it is that men perish now.

That is the history of the men that wish Jesus to depart from them. The Lord grant there may be that happy knowledge of Jesus, that entering into what He is to us now, which gives the soul calmness and rest in His love, and the certainty that there is the real presence of Jesus with those that belong to Him; "I am with you alway, even unto the consummation of the age." May we know what it is to have Jesus to take care of us, and produce a great calm, whatever may be the effect of the stirring up of Satan's power against us! The Lord give us to look at Jesus. If it be from my first knowledge of what sin is to my last trial in this world, it is all a question of whether trust in myself, or in Jesus.

Matthew 9

Whoever attentively examines this chapter with the following one, can hardly fail to see that the proper break is at the end of v. 25, the last three verses of ch. 9 forming properly the introduction to ch. 10. What we have in ch. 9, as far as I have understood, is the effect of the presence of Jesus upon the religious leaders of Israel: I believe this is the great subject The chapter before gave us the outline of the Lord's presence in Israel, and its results. That is, it was a general picture; and therefore we saw that the Holy Spirit entirely neglects the mere historical order, putting together passages in the life of Christ that were separated, in point of fact, by months or even a year. There is not here the slightest attempt on the part of the Spirit of God to present them as they happened; but, on the contrary, the Holy Ghost goes out of His way for the purpose of culling from different times and places certain grand facts that illustrated the Messiah's presence amidst His people, His rejection by Israel, and what the results of this rejection would be.

What we saw was that, first of all, He was proved to be God, the God of Israel -- Jehovah; to whom the cleansing of leprosy was merely the question of His will; for even the leper did not doubt His power. "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." None but God could do this. Now none had so strong a feeling about this loathsome evil as a Jew: because God Himself had laid down so carefully the nature and proof of leprosy in His law. For it was a question of hopeless uncleanness -- the solemn, emphatic lesson of how horrible sin is in itself, and often in its effects. God can cure and God can cleanse: nobody else can. It was not exactly a case of forgiving, but of cleansing and putting away defilement. The Spirit of God reserved the question of forgiveness (which is connected with the rights of God and with His judicial character, as the cleansing of leprosy is more particularly connected with His holiness) till the chapter we are about to look at now.

In the first of these chapters there was the broad feature that Messiah was there, -- God Himself in grace, and not acting according to the law, which would have banished the leper outside dwelling-place, and people, and His own presence. A most wonderful fact to realize on earth, and in Israel, that a Person was there, as plainly God in His power as He was God in His love! The law merely laid down that which was right, but could give no power, save to condemn the unrighteous. It must make the case of a sinner hopeless; just because it is God's law, which law can never mix with sin. But here was One who had given the law, and yet was above the law. Evidently indeed, unless there be some principle in God paramount to the law, there can be no rescue for the guilty. But grace is that principle. And here was one who showed in His acts and words that He was in nothing more manifestly God than in the fulness of His grace. He touched the leper, and said, "I will; be thou clean." The state of this man was just the picture of the true condition of Israel; and what the Lord did for the solitary leper, He was equally willing to do for the whole nation; but "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" {John 1:11}. Would God then be baffled in His love? If the Jew refused Him, what of the Gentile? They should hear; and therefore we have immediately following the centurion and his servant. But I will not repeat the facts of Matt. 8. In the chapter before us now, we have, not the general picture of God's presence and its results in Israel, but its special bearings upon the religious leaders of the people.

We begin again with the Lord's giving a remarkable case of healing; not the obvious case of leprosy, which ought to have struck any Jew, but another equally illustrative.

> He entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city (Matt. 9:1)

-- that is, Capernaum. Thus we are upon narrower ground now. Capernaum was the place where the Lord lived and wrought His mightiest miracles, and which for that very reason afterwards comes in for the most fearful woe that He could pronounce. This is always the case; and a most solemn principle it is. When the day of the Lord comes, the heaviest blow of judgment will fall, not upon the dark parts of the earth, but upon the favored ones, where there has been most light, but alas! most unfaithfulness. For my own part, I do not doubt our own land must suffer in a special measure; but, above all, Jerusalem, and Rome too, to which latter place the most remarkable of all the epistles was written as laying down the foundations of Christianity, but where there has been the greatest departure. They will come under the judgment of God in a most emphatic manner, not only religiously but civilly. No matter who reigns, or who may be put down, this must be the case wherever, in spite of the special favors of God and the light of His word spread abroad, persons have remained unfaithful, and have even become more lax, and superstitious, or skeptical. The Lord will remove those that are His before the judgment, and the rest will remain to suffer His just displeasure. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man."

In this scene the Lord lays down the moral necessity for such a judgment. Nor was it merely in the land of the Gergesenes, or of Nazareth. But take the very best -- the people who ought to have known the scriptures more than others, whose very profession it was to know and teach them -- what was their estimate of Jesus? It is this which comes out in our chapter.

> Behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer {Matt. 9:2}:

a most blessed word, meeting the whole case of the man; a word to touch his affections, and to meet his conscience. "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." There was somewhat for heart and conscience. His sins ought to

have laid more heavily upon his heart than his palsy did upon his body; but this word met all his need.

> And, behold, certain of the scribes said within: themselves, This man blasphemeth (Matt. 9:3).

In this chapter, it is not the scribe in his vain, fleshly confidence, professing to do honor to Jesus; the scribes here are judging and condemning Him. To their view Jesus was blaspheming, when He said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Awful delusion of the wickedness of man! "This man blasphemeth!" And these were the learned in the law; yet they said within themselves, "This man blasphemeth!" But

> Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? {Matt. 9:5}.

Such a word of His ought at once to have told upon a scribe, who would be familiar with the scriptures.

This, is not the experience of a saint now, though we can take it up in a most blessed sense. But when we weigh such a verse as this in Psa. 103, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases," can we say that this is the way the Lord deals now with Christians? Where He forgives a person's iniquities, does He necessarily heal all their diseases? In the Psalm it is evident that the union of the cure of bodily diseases with the forgiveness of sins is contemplated in the same people, and at the same time. When will this be? When God takes the government of the world into His own hands. When the One who was crucified comes to be glorified -- not only in heaven as now, but here below; when that day arrives, the outward world, the body of man, particularly in God's own people Israel, will feel the immediate effect. While we can take the pith and spirit of the Psalms, as far as they apply to our condition now, let us not forget that there is much more in the Psalms that we cannot adopt as applicable to ourselves. We cannot honestly say of ourselves now, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." The diseases there do not mean sin, because this was just spoken of separately. We have the forgiveness of iniquities, and the healing of bodily distempers, both promised; and so the Lord accomplishes both here. In His person, and by His ministry then in the midst of Israel, there was the witness of the power to do both. That they might know that the Son of man had

> power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house {Matt. 9:6, 7}.

The reality of the forgiveness was demonstrated in the fact that the disease was healed before their eyes. The union of these two things ought to have forcibly struck a scribe. God's word had united them, and this too with the reign of Jehovah. The soul had been called upon to bless Jehovah, who should forgive Israel's iniquities and heal their diseases. But who was the agent? He had spoken of Himself as the Son of man in the chapter before: -- "the Son of man," He had said, "hath not where to lay his head." It is the title of the rejected Messiah. Afterwards He is the glorious Son of man; but He is the Sufferer before He enters into His glory. In this miracle we have the strongest testimony of what the glory of His person was. He had only to tell the palsied man, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house"; and at once all powerlessness vanished from him, "and he arose, and departed to his house."

This then was the Lord's answer to the blasphemy of the scribes, who charged Him with blasphemy.

> But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men (Matt. 9:8).

Alas! they did not know that it was the power of God exercised by One who Himself was God. They saw that He was the vessel of the power of God, and this was all; and a man might be this, and not be God. The Lord might be pleased to work miracles even by a bad man. So that, while they gave glory to God, who had given such power to a man, there was no real faith in the person of Christ. But the great object of the miracle is the bringing out of the true state of heart in the ecclesiastical chiefs of the people. A solemn judgment, to apply any time, begins to dawn with this chapter; and before we have done with it, we shall find that the case is closed, as far as they are concerned. Jehovah-Jesus was intolerable to Israel; but, most of all, to those who had the highest reputation for learning and sanctity.

The Lord passes from this scene, and sees

> a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him {Matt. 9:10}.

If we compare the Gospels of Mark and Luke we find that both the palsied man's case and the call of Levi took place long before many of the circumstances that we have already had: but they are reserved for two special purposes in Matthew's account. They are given at the beginning of Mark 2 as they happened in order of time. Mark was undoubtedly led by the Spirit of God to act thus, but Matthew puts them out of that order for the purpose of giving large pictures, after a dispensational sort, of our Lord's presence upon earth, and its consequences for Israel; and all the facts that would bear upon their blindness for a time and their future restoration are grouped together.

But here we see the effect of His presence upon the religious guides. Matthew's call was a most significant one; and w find that the Spirit of God led him to give his name here -- the name by which he was afterwards known both on earth and in heaven. Matthew accordingly shows the grace of the Lord, spite of the animosities of those scribes against Him, and the form that His grace took in consequence of their unbelief. He goes out and calls Matthew as he was sitting at the receipt of custom. Other people had brought the palsied man; but Matthew does not seem to have manifested faith before the summons of Jesus. It was not Matthew who sought Jesus, but Jesus who called Matthew. Matthew was busied only about the tax, of which he was the licensed gatherer. The publicans were always classed with the sinners, and the Lord goes and calls the publican Matthew when he was in the

very midst of the performance of his office, sitting at the receipt of custom.

Obedient to the Messiah, Matthew not only follows Him at once, but invites Jesus to sit at meat in the house. And,

> behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? {Matt. 9:10}.

It was a positive, clear subversion of all propriety and order in the eyes of a Jew. To sit down at meat without the least feeling of contempt for these publicans and sinners was, indeed, strange in the eyes of the Pharisees. What was the Lord doing? He was displaying, God's grace increasingly, the more unbelief broke out from the merely outwardly-religious people -- persons who had thoughts of God, but not founded upon His word (for men may be ever so earnest out of their own minds and hearts, but without the faith of God's elect). On the one hand, these men proved their total unbelief in Jesus and His glory; but, on the other hand, God, in the person of Jesus, was going farther in His grace, and more counter to the thoughts of the religious people in Israel. He calls Matthew, and He eats with these publicans and sinners; and when fault is found with it by the Pharisees to the disciples, the Lord at once produces the authoritative warrant from the Old Testament, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He vindicates His call, and maintains it, not as an exceptional case, but as a principle Emmanuel was come down to make good upon earth.

It was not the law, but grace now. This gives rise to something further, and a very instructive word from the Lord is brought before us here. The disciples were found fault with, because they did not fast, like the disciples of John, and the Pharisees. And the Lord gives this reason for it:

> Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? {Matt. 9:15}.

That is, He shows the absurdity of fasting, when the source of all their joy was there. How utterly contrary would it have been to their faith in Him, the Messiah, to submit to this mark of sorrow and humiliation, in the presence of the spring of all their joy and gladness. But there was something deeper than this to be learned. There was not only the presence of One that the disciples understood, and that the others did not, but the Lord urges that you cannot mingle the prescriptions that flow from the law, with the principles and power of divine grace.

It is a most important principle, and the very one that Christendom has practically destroyed. For what has brought about the present state of Christendom? Christianity is the system of grace in Christ maintained in holiness by the Holy Ghost among those that believe. Christendom is the great house of profession, where there are unclean vessels mingled with those that are to honor; where principles abound, and reign, that never came from Christ, but are adopted, some of them from Judaism, others out of people's own wit, without respect to the Bible. But the Lord insists that, even if you take what God once sanctioned under the law, it will not suit now. The same God who tried Israel by the law has sent the gospel; and it is the gospel that He is sending now, not the law. It is His grace with which we have to do. It is Christ risen and in heaven that the Christian is in relationship with, not with the law. I have died to the law if I am a Christian {Rom. 7:4}. Christendom has forgotten and departed from grace; and, arguing from the premises that the law is good, and the gospel also, they say, Will it not be much surer to put them together? The result of this has been, that what our Lord said could not be done without ruin, men have been aiming at with the utmost diligence. They have tried to put the new wine into old bottles -- that is to say, the grace and truth which came by Christ, into the receptacles of legal principles which God has done with. He has brought in new wine, which demands its due vehicles.

The inner virtue and power of Christianity must clothe itself with its own proper forms. The new garments were the due manifestation of the gospel, which totally differs from ways framed according to the law. Legalism was the old garb; and it was despising the goodness of God to merely patch up the old one. And, after all, it can never succeed. The attempt will only make the old worse. This is what Christendom has done. It has tried to mend the old garment with the new piece -- to bring a certain measure of Christian morals into the old garment, as a sort of improvement upon Judaism. And what has been the result? Besides, there is the pouring of the new wine into old bottles. There is a certain measure of the preaching of Christ, but it is all in connection with the old bottles. These verses embrace both the outward development and the inward power; they mean that Christianity is so entirely a new thing, that it cannot rightly be mingled with the law. If you find a man who thinks he has got some righteousness of his own, you can cut him down by the law. This is the legitimate use of the law. He is really ungodly, and you use the law to prove that he is so. But in the Christian we have one who is godly; and the law, as St. Paul expressly insists, in 1 Tim. 1, is not for him. I am not to put the new wine into old skins, any more than the old wine into new skins. The Lord brings out the entire newness of the conduct and principles that flow from Himself and from His grace.

All this was strongly opposed to the thoughts and prejudices of the Scribes and Pharisees, who came in afterwards with their question about fasts. Not that fasting is not a Christian duty (for we already see that it is, in Matt. 6); but then it must be on Christian principles, and not on Jewish ones. God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son. Judaism is outside Him, and lies in death.

Now we come to an incident of the deepest interest. A ruler of the synagogue sends for our Lord to heal his daughter, then comes and pays Him homage, saying,

> My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples (Matt. 9:18, 19).

That was exactly an illustration of the Lord's attitude towards

Israel. He was there with life in Himself. Israel was like the maid that needed Him; she had no life in her: such was Israel's condition. But the Lord is at once roused, and goes at the call of the ruler. He owns the claim of faith, let it be ever so feeble. The centurion knew that a word would be enough; but this Jewish ruler, with the natural thought of a Jew, wants the Lord to come to his house and lay His hand upon his daughter, that she might live. He connected the Lord's personal presence with the blessing that was to be conferred upon his sick child; whereas we, who were Gentiles, walk by faith, and not by sight. We believe in, and love, One that we do not see. The Jews look for One whom they shall see; and they will have Him in this way. As Thomas, after eight days, was allowed to see the Lord, and to thrust his hand into His side, and see in His hands the print of the nails, so will it be with Israel. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced," whereas we believe in Him on whom we have not looked. Thus our position is a totally different one from that of Israel.

Now in this case the Lord hears the summons, and goes at once to raise up the dead daughter of the Jewish ruler. But while He is going, a woman touches Him. While the Lord's errand is to Israel -- and so it was, and it only remains suspended -- while He is on the way, whoever comes, whoever touches, gets the blessing. No unbelief of Scribes, no self-righteousness of Pharisees, ever would, or could, hinder the Lord in His mission of love. He was about to bring in new principles which would not mix with the law -- grace that would go out to all, and would meet the worst; which is plainly set forth by this woman who comes and touches Him. But first of all let us hold fast the pledge of the resurrection of Israel; for we have the warrant of the word of God for looking at the condition of Israel as one of death. Look, for instance, at Ezek. 37, where Israel is compared to dry bones.

> Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost . . . Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves . . . and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land.

So we may see in this miracle. It represents, not merely the conversion of a guilty sinner, but the raising of Israel as a nation. The Lord was refused by the people who had the deepest responsibility to receive Him; but most surely as He raised up that young woman front the bed of death, so surely will He restore Israel in a day that is coming. But meanwhile, whoever comes gets the healing and the blessing, as shown in this poor woman. The Lord not only gives her the consciousness that she is healed, but lets her know that His heart went thoroughly with it. "Daughter," He says to her, "be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole." There was no grudging the word of assurance. The Lord puts His seal upon what her faith had done, though she had done it tremblingly. Then, in due time, we have the raising up of the one who was dead, in whom it was not a question of faith, but of the power of God when all was over, and of His faithfulness to His own promise.

After this (Matt. 9:27) we find two blind men following Him: elsewhere only one of them is mentioned; but I believe that both are mentioned here for the same reason as we had the two demoniacs. They cry and say to Him, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." It is the confession of Christ, as connected with Israel. They address Him as Son of David. The Lord asked them,

> Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened (Matt. 9:28-30).

Then came the dumb man possessed with a demon:

> and when the demon was cast out, the dumb spake; and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel (Matt. 9:33).

Assuredly all these are brought together for the same purpose. The Lord was giving type after type, and pledge upon pledge, that Israel would not be forgotten, that Israel would be raised out of death: let them be ever so blind, they would see; ever so dumb, they would speak. Let the Pharisees and scribes be utterly unbelieving and blasphemous, and ready to turn away all from Christ -- let it be so now; but death would give way, blindness would be removed, speech would be given to Israel, in a day that was coming. The very confession of the multitude was, that it had never been so seen in Israel.

Let it be repeated that, in thus applying these miracles of our Lord, one does not at all deny the blessing of any part of these for a soul now. Yet this is no reason to prove that the Lord has not an ulterior view which we ought not to forget.

> But the Pharisees said, He casteth out demons through the prince of the demons (Matt. 9:34).

What could be worse than this? Was it not in principle blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? Such is the form which that sin took then. There was the power of the Holy Ghost which wrought in Christ and through Him; and they attributed this power to Satan. There could not be anything more determined than such hostility. They were not able to deny the righteousness of the Messiah, nor the facts of superhuman energy He displayed; but they might attribute the power that was entirely above man, not to God, but to the adversary: and they did so. Their ruin was complete and final. What more terrible! Nothing could convince a man, on whom all these evidences and appeals had been lavished in vain; and the end of it all was that, not the ignorant only, but the wise, the religious, and the righteous according to the law, the Pharisees, the choicest part to man's eye of the chosen nation -- even they said, "He casteth out demons through the prince of the demons."

Nothing more is needed. The Lord might send out a testimony through others; but as far as His own ministry was concerned, it was virtually at an end. He sends out the twelve immediately after, but it all comes to the same thing. The Lord is utterly rejected, as we see in Matt. 11. And then Matt. 12 gives the final pronouncing of the judgment on that generation. That sin of which they had been guilty would ripen fully into blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and could

not be forgiven them, either in this age, or in that to come. The consequence is that the Lord turns from the unbelieving race, and introduces the kingdom of the heavens, in connection with which He gives us all the parables in Matt. 13. He takes the place of a sower, no longer looking to gather fruit from Israel, and addresses Himself to the new work in this world that He was about to undertake, which He still carries on to the present moment, though now through the instrumentality of others. So that the beauty of all this arrangement of the Gospel of Matthew cannot be surpassed, though the other Gospels are for their own objects equally perfect. Each presents the facts of our Lord's history, so as to give a distinct view of Christ's person or service, with the effects of its display; and we ought to understand them all.

May the Lord grant that the effect of looking at these things; may be that we may know not only the scriptures, but Jesus, better! This is what we have most of all to cultivate -- that we may understand the ways of God, the wonderful ways of His love and glory in Jesus.

Matthew 10

At the close of the chapter before, our Lord, in looking upon the lost sheep of the house of Israel, speaks of them in deep pity, as sheep without a shepherd. He was now feeling what the Pharisees really were: not but what He knew it before; but the circumstances of their entire rejection of Himself, and their hatred, coming out more and more decidedly, brought up before His spirit the exposure of God's sheep. If their spirit was implacable against Him in whom there was no sin, who was God's own Son, the Shepherd of Israel, what must not be the sorrowful lot of those who had infirmities and failures which laid them open to the malice of those who cared not for them for God's sake, who would have the keenest and most suspicious eye for everything weak and foolish about them! Let us always remember the grace of the Lord, that even that which is humiliating in us draws out nothing but His compassion. I am not now speaking of sin, but of that which is infirm: for infirmities and sins are two different things. We do not want the Lord's sympathy with evil. The Lord suffered and died for our sins. But we want sympathy with us in our weakness, trembling, liability to anxieties, troubles: in all these things which make us suffer here we do want sympathy; and the Lord has it fully with us.

This was also the case with Israel. Unconscious of their miserable condition, Jesus calls upon the disciples, in the love of His own heart, to pray the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest. It was His harvest, and His laborers alone could gather. But immediately after, and this is remarkable, He shows that He is the Lord of the harvest Himself; and He sends forth laborers. The next chapter illustrates this, and beautifully evinces the scope of Matthew, who portrays Him as the One who should save His people from their sins -- Emmanuel, God with us. Mark the circumstances. This takes place upon His rejection by Israel. His own ministry, full of grace as well as power, we have seen fully exhibited, and terminating in the utter indifference of Israel and the hatred of the religious leaders. Matt. 8 gives us the people, and Matt. 9 their guides, thus severally manifesting themselves.

In Matt. 10 is seen Jesus, as Lord of the harvest, sending forth laborers, and this, too, with full authority and power given to them. But, observe, it is still in special connection with Israel; and the Lord is conscious from the beginning of rejection by Israel. Meanwhile it is a Jewish mission of the twelve Jewish apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I take this quite literally, and not as if it were said of the church, which is never spoken of as lost sheep; but the sheep of Israel in their desolate condition are most aptly so described. Before the church is gathered, what we want is a Savior. We Gentiles were not sheep at all, but dogs, from our Evangelist's point of view. (See Matt. 15). And after we have, been brought into the church, we are not, and cannot be, lost sheep. Whereas, these poor of the flock are spoken of as "lost sheep of the house of Israel." For, up to this time, the work was not done by which they could be put in the known position of salvation.

Again, when our Lord is sending His ambassadors forth, it is said,

> When he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against, unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease (Matt. 10:1).

This was peculiarly their mission. Not a word is said about preaching what we call the gospel, or teaching the whole counsel of God; but they were to go with Messianic power against Satan, and against bodily diseases, as a testimony to Israel. No doubt they were to declare the kingdom of the heavens. "As ye go," said our Lord, "preach, saying, The kingdom of the heavens is at hand" (Matt.10:7). But the great characteristic feature of the mission, was the conferring upon them power against demons and diseases. The appropriateness of this, in connection with Israel, is manifest. It was a bright evidence that the true King, Jehovah, was there -- One who was able Himself not only to cast out devils, but to confer that power upon His servants. Who but the King, the Lord of hosts, could do this? It was a testimony much greater than if the power had been confined to His own person. The ability to impart power to others (which was what Simon Magus, hoping to profit by it, so earnestly coveted) God here shows to be in His own Son. Now, the servants were to be sent out, and that in due order. There were twelve of them, in relation to the twelve tribes of the house of Israel. We find afterwards the promise that they should sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. There need be no question, therefore, that this was a Jewish mission.

When the church was called, God broke in upon the mere

Jewish order, by calling an extraordinary apostle, with a special view to the Gentiles -- one who was called after Christ, dead and risen, had taken His place at the right hand of God. Then came in this new work in the calling of the church, and the apostle Paul became the characteristic minister of the church, though the twelve had their place too. But in this case the twelve apostles were (what Paul was not) the ministers of the testimony to Israel of the kingdom of heaven. For, observe, the strictest injunction was given them that they were not to go outside the limits of Israel; not even to visit the Samaritans, nor to enter into the cities of the Gentiles. Their business was solely with the lost sheep of the house of Israel: the most positive proof that it means those of the Jews who had a sense of sin, and who were willing to receive the testimony of the true Messiah. Their business was with them, exclusively. The calling of the church was not referred to. This one thing is diligently kept in view by our Lord.

It is the more remarkable, because in this Gospel we are told that, after He had died and was risen, the Lord sent them out to the Gentiles; but, then, it was on the evident ground that death had come in. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me" {John 12:32}. Christ upon the cross becomes the attractive center for man, as well as the foundation of all the counsels of God. Now in this case we have nothing of the sort. The Lord's death is not even referred to. His rejection is brought out, but nothing is said as to the building of a new structure. There was the waiting for still further rejection before this could be disclosed, as in ch. 16.

But here the Lord Jesus sends forth the twelve, and commands them, saying,

> Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers [raise the dead] cast out demons: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; nor scrip for your journey; neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat (Matt. 10:5-10).

That is, they were to go just as they were, with the coat they had upon them, with the shoes they had then on their feet. They were not to provide anything, or to lay up any store as a. means of support during their mission. This is not a universal rule for the servants of God at all times. It was a peculiar mission, for a special time, and with reference to Israel only. It was not the gospel of God's grace, but of the kingdom: the two go together now; but then it was not so. Israel did not receive the testimony of the kingdom; an entire change comes in, and the kingdom of heaven, as an actual fact, remains in suspension.. The whole calling of God, going out now to the Gentiles, comes in as a vast parenthesis, between the sending out of this message and its full accomplishment in the last days. Whatever the Lord sends out must be accomplished, but nothing is perfectly fulfilled till the Lord takes all in hand Himself.

Everything that is to be taken up by Christ in power and glory by-and-by is first committed to man. Thus man fails, Israel as a nation breaks down, the church has become worldly and scattered. All will yet be to the praise of Christ Himself. Thus, no matter what you look at in the ways of God, there is, as a rule, first the presenting of the thing to man, when it is made to rest upon him, to see if he can bear the responsibility and the glory; and he cannot. But whatever man has failed in is destined to rest upon the shoulders of Christ in the day of glory, and all will then come to perfection. Not one of these things but what will shine out in far more than pristine brightness when Jesus appears in glory.

The twelve were sent out on this mission, and instructed that they were to be dependent upon Christ alone. He would provide for them. They were to announce the kingdom of heaven; and He, the King, would undertake all charges. They were to go with the fullest confidence in Him. Now, although His servants are not to look to the world, or to use human means of acting on men or saints; and although they may confidently look to God to provide for them, still they are not put in the same circumstances as these disciples. The difference is strongly shown. Let us take, for instance, such a command as this,

> Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence (Matt. 10:11).

Think of a man going out with the gospel now, and asking, Who is worthy? He seeks any and all, even the most unworthy. This is a totally different mission from that which followed after the death and resurrection of Jesus. It was a mission to Israel: and Jehovah wanted the excellent in the earth, those whose hearts really desired the Messiah. Hence they were to ask who, in any city, were worthy, and were to abide there.

> And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you (Matt. 10:12, 13).

Is this at all the way in which the gospel goes out now? On the contrary, it is peace with God that the servant of Christ is entitled to proclaim to His enemies. It is on the wretched, the outcast, the base, the despised, on those who have got nothing at all, and whom God brings down to take the place of being nothing, that His peace now descends. The direct bearing of the gospel is towards those who are evidently despicable, and vile, and forlorn: because the gospel is the fulness of the grace of God where man has nothing whatever to give to God. Nothing can be more blessed. Whether old or young, if they are broken down, to feel that they are utterly unfit for God, but that God has provided such a Savior as His word declares He has, then they cannot trust Him too fully, or too simply. The essence of the gospel is this: It is what God gives to me, not what I owe to God. It is the gospel of God -- the gospel of His Son: but here it is "the gospel of the kingdom." You will constantly find this phrase in Matthew. This gospel goes out to those that are worthy. If the house were worthy, the peace of the messenger comes upon it; and if not, it returns.

> And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet (Matt. 10:14).

There was a spirit of judgment upon them --

> Verily, I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city (Matt. 10:15):

just because they had the messengers of the kingdom coming to them with a gracious message, and they would not receive them.

From Matt. 10:16 commences the Lord's warning of the circumstances in which the gospel of the kingdom was to be preached.

> Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

That is, He calls for prudence, heavenly prudence, that God's power would make safe -- calls then to be wise as serpents, but at the same tine simple as doves. There was to be the most entire holiness in the object and character of the prudence, and that also which ought to be thoroughly free of all just charge of being injurious to men. "But beware of men"; do not suppose that, although you go forth with love in your hearts, you will not meet with wolves. "Beware of men." The Jews themselves are plainly intimated.

> Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings (Matt. 10:17, 18).

This shows their degradation; but, although they were under the yoke of the Gentiles, they would scruple at nothing, where it was a question of Christ's apostles. They would be quite willing to invoke Gentile authority where it became a question of Christ's followers. They themselves would drag them before the Gentile kings and governors, abhorred as they were. But our Lord adds this gracious word -- "for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles." This is the only way in which the Gentiles come in. Israel might thus summon the disciples of Christ before the Gentiles, but God is taking care that this should turn for a testimony to them and the Gentiles. Thus God turns the weapons of the adversary against himself. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

One cannot but feel that such a truth as this, though it has special application to apostles setting out on this mission, most surely remains for us. The pith of it abides eternally true.

> But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you (Matt. 10:19, 20).

At the same time, He prepares them for the most heartless conduct on the part even of relatives. The brother would know the habits of his brother, the father would know all about the child, and the child about the father: all this would be turned against the servants of Christ.

> Ye shall be hated of all men (it was universal exposure) for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come (Matt. 10:23).

-- a very remarkable statement. "Ye shall not have gone over" -- or, as the margin has it, "finished" -- "the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." This exactly recalls the expression made use of before: the church is a great parenthesis. The mission of the apostles was abruptly terminated by the death of Christ. They carried it out afterwards for awhile, but it was terminated completely by the destruction of Jerusalem: the whole thing was manifestly removed for the time being, but not for ever. The calling of the church was the only thing that remained. When the Lord has taken the church out of the world to heaven, God will raise up witnesses to the Messiah upon earth. The earth is reserved for the Jew, when the Jew shall be converted; because God will never break His promise. God has declared that He will give His land to His people, and He will do so. God must give that land to that people, for His gifts and calling are without repentance. It is a necessary consequence of God's faithfulness, that the Jewish people are yet to be restored to their own land, when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in. The calling of the fulness of the Gentiles is the parenthesis that is going on now.

When this is over, the Lord resumes His links with Israel. They will go back to the land in unbelief. The testimony of the kingdom, which was begun in the time of our Lord by the apostles, will be taken up in Jerusalem; and in the midst of their preaching, the Son of man will come, and then there will be a new means used: He will send forth his angels, and

> they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire . . . Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father {Matt. 13:43}.

The Lord will accomplish fully in that day what was committed to man, and what broke down through man's weak, or wicked, hand. Then everything under the Branch of Israel shall be glorious. This is what, I conceive, goes along with the remarkable expression that they should not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man came. The whole period of the Lord's turning aside to call in the Gentiles is passed over in silence. He speaks of what was going out then, and of what will be resumed in glory, passing over what is being done meanwhile.

In the latter part of the chapter He gives strong motives to encourage them.

> The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? (Matt. 10: 24, 25).

He was proving this now, and they would have to feel it in

their turn. "Fear them not therefore." The first motive for not fearing is: I have traversed the same path; My path is the only right path through the world; do not be afraid.

> Fear them not therefore; for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known {Matt. 10:26}.

You will understand the reasons and motives of people's unbelief another day, if not now. Everyone that knows the truth, and does not follow it, must have a dislike to those who do. As it was with Me, so will it be with you: but do not be alarmed. Be full of good courage, and persist in the testimony.

> What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops (Matt. 10:27).

He encourages them to the greatest openness and boldness. And now comes in a second admonition not to fear, on another ground: after all, what harm can men do? They cannot touch the soul; nor can they even touch the body, unless your heavenly Father allows it.

> Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul {Matt. 10:28}.

They cannot injure you. There is nothing which a believer has to dread, except grieving, and sinning against, God. Therefore He immediately adds, "Rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." You may know your own deliverance; but it is a fearful thing to apprehend what is before God's enemies -- the destruction of soul and body in hell!

> Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows (Matt. 10:29-31).

That is, the special care of our Father for His own children is drawn from this, that even the very sparrow, though so despised and trivial a bird among men, cannot fall to the ground "without your Father." He might have said, "Without God"; but He preferred to say, "Your Father." All belongs to Him. It is all measured by Him -- everything even in the outward world -- by our Father.

From v. 32 to the end of the chapter, we have the importance of the confession of Christ and the effects of it in this world. The first great principle, is this:

> Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven (Matt. 10:32, 33).

We have had the Father's care; we have now the Son's confession by-and-by. The Father's care is, known upon earth, whatever may be the trial. The Son's confession of us will be in heaven, when all the scene of trial is over.

Then He warns them that they must not be surprised if they find the, result of their testimony very painful households getting into confusion, members of a family at variance one with another. Do not be surprised. "Think not," He says, "that I am come to send peace on earth." We know that the Lord can give us peace always by all means: but He is speaking here of the entrance of His testimony, through His disciples, into a world that hates Him. Inevitably, then, the two principles came into collision. It is not that He desires confusion, but it is the natural effect of the knowledge of Christ entering a house, where either the heads, or the inferior members, of it reject Christ. As it is in the world, so in the house. There are those that believe and those that believe not.

> Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword (Matt. 10:34).

Dream not that everything is going to be triumphant. The day is coming when the Lord will cause peace to flow as a river; but He shows that such is not the character, nor the effect, of His first coming. It will be so when He comes again. But meanwhile it is not peace, but a sword. It is the badge of war now, and must be so; because of the opposition which unbelief always creates against the truth.

> For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household (Matt. 10:35, 36).

The Lord boldly meets the case. His coming so clashes with man's will, that, let it be a child, he is against his own father. Now this is the very thing that turns out one of our severest trials -- the effect that the testimony of God has upon families. People speak of households being broken up, and kindred disunited. The Lord already uses the same words, and strengthens us not to mind it.

> He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it (Matt. 10:37-39).

Certainly Christ had come for anything but giving us a path of ease in this world. On the contrary, we must with Him accept trial, rejection, and scorn; we must make up our minds to suffer. But then He adds the other side,

> He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me (Matt. 10:40).

There would be those that would receive, as well as those that would reject. And God the Father is most of all concerned, and will not forget it. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet" (that is, as a prophet) -- if he knew he was a servant of God, and received him as such, in the face of shame and scorn, he should have the same reward as a prophet himself. "And he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man" -- other people might call him unrighteous, but he receives him, not as a mere man or as a friend or relative, but as righteous, and he "shall receive a righteous man's reward." He proved that his own heart was

right with God. We always show, our real state of soul by the opinion we pronounce. Supposing I speak, or act, unwarrantably against a good man doing his duty, it is plain that I am not with God in that particular thing. On the other hand, if I have faith to discern what is of God, and to take my part with Christ in the face of general desertion, happy am I indeed! God alone enables a man to do so. It thus remains true that we always betray where our hearts are by our judgments of, and conduct toward, others.

> And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward (Matt. 10:42).

It would be the evidence and proof that the Spirit was at work in his soul. As the Lord had shown him mercy, so his own heart was drawn, out in the path of mercy and of sympathy with those who are of God in this world. He should in no wise lose his reward. It is the outward conduct springing from, the inward principle. In all these cases it is clearly the Jewish mission of these disciples. I believe that we thus get the true character of the chapter and the place it occupies in the Gospel. The point is, the Lord, as the. Lord of the harvest, not only bidding them pray, but Himself anticipating the prayer. "Before they call, I will answer." The Lord is acting in the very spirit of that which will be fully true in the last days. He is Himself sending forth the laborers. In Luke we are told that He refers to this very mission, and asks,

> When I sent you without purse, grid scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? and they said, Nothing.

Then the Lord tells them they were to provide themselves with purse, and scrip, and sword: the very things which they were not to do before, they were to do from that time. The Lord abrogates what He had here enjoined, as far as the special circumstances were concerned. His goodness and love to them, and their walking in wisdom and harmlessness, would abide; but the peculiar character of this mission terminated at the death of Christ. It will, I conceive, be taken up again by others at a future day: but the disciples actually sent out were soon to be called to a new work, founded upon redemption and the resurrection of our Lord.

Matthew 11

The chapter at which we are arrived is full of interest and importance; and specially inasmuch as it is a kind of transition. That which gives occasion for the Spirit of God to bring out, and to illustrate, the transition from the testimony to Israel to the new order of things which our Lord was about to introduce, is the fact that John the Baptist, in prison because of his own rejection, is now found in the exercise of his personal faith, responsibility, and patience. When he was simply fulfilling his prophetic office, none could be more unwavering than he in his testimony to Christ. But it is one thing for a man to preach the truth, another thing for him to enjoy it when all seems unfavorable. Even if he feel the preciousness of what he teaches, there may be moments when faith is put thoroughly to the proof, and when the strongest may know what it is to be "cast down, though not destroyed." Certainly this was the case with John the Baptist. It was not merely his disciples that were stumbled by his being in prison. Infidels ask now, if scripture be truth, how is it that people do not receive it? Why is it not more widely spread? I do not deny that the bare geographical area which the profession of the truth covers is larger now than it once was. But we know that at first there were many thousands that followed the name of the Lord Jesus in one city alone; and the moral weight and power was incomparably greater, for they walked in superiority to the world. Still the great difficulty comes up again, and we find that what works in the mind of a sceptic may be found more or less disquieting the believer, because the believer has got that which is of nature in him still Doubtless he has life everlasting in Christ, but he has also in him what scripture calls the flesh; and the flesh is always an unbelieving nature. The natural mind of man never has confidence in God.

Hence it came to pass that, blessed as John the Baptist was, yet does he send his disciples with the query,

> Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? {Matt. 11:3}. [16]

Here we find the great difference between the boldness of language that a man might hold in his office as a prophet, and what he now uses when everything is dark around him. I do not mean that he doubted thoroughly, but there seems to have been a question that passed through his mind, and a confirmation of faith was wanted; a most instructive instance of the solemn truth that there is no good thing in man. No

16. ◆ Matt. 11:2, 3. I apprehend that one reason which has hindered many from seeing the failure of John Baptist is, that we are all slow in learning and owning our own weakness. The heart that has proved its own faltering in devotedness and testimony for Christ, will readily understand how John, as well as his disciples, may have been cast down, when the herald of Messiah was himself bound and gone to prison in sorrow, instead of the ransomed of the Lord coming to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. But if the Lord notices indirectly, in v. 6, the stumbling of His tried servant (or certainly the blessedness of him who is not stumbled), He turns round to the multitude and graciously indicates the more than prophet place of John. I do not believe that v. 11 contains the least reflection on the Baptist, any more than v. 13 does on all the prophets. On the contrary, the former verse asserts for him the most distinguished place possible in the old economy; while it discloses at the same time the surpassing glory which attaches to the least in the kingdom of heaven (i.e. the new dispensation, which was then preached, but only set up when the Lord, rejected by the earth, took his seat in heaven). I am aware that some shrink from what appears such strange and undue exaltation of the New Testament saints; but our wisdom is to accept whatever God gives in sovereign love. It is His to order all for the glory of His Son, while Satan would cheat us of His blessings through a spurious humility, which is really unbelief; especially as the privileges given are the measure of responsibility. If we lose sight of what God intends, we shall proportionately fail in our walk and worship. (*Christian Annotator* 1855, pp. 321-322). ◆

doubt the most blessed things have been wrought by man, but they have been wrought because the power of Christ has rested upon. him. But here we have this favored, and otherwise faithful, man putting such a question, the very last that we might have expected. We may try and make excuses for it; but it remains true and plain that John the Baptist, instead of answering with the confidence of faith the question of his disciples, if it was such, has to send some of them to Jesus, saying, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" The Lord replies,

> Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see . . . And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me (Matt. 11:4-6).

Our Lord's answer evinces that it was not the disciples merely, but himself also that was shaken. These are the two parts of Christ's ministry -- His words and His works, "Those things which ye do hear and see" -- the word always having the higher place of the two; the works being what would appeal rather to the senses; whereas the word of Christ is that which deals with the heart and conscience by the Spirit of God. Still they were to go and tell John what they heard and saw. And therein we have what the Old Testament had predicted as signs and effects of the Messiah's power. We have not, I believe, one case of curing the blind before Christ came. It was a miracle which, according to Jewish tradition, was reserved for the Son of David. He it is who, according to Isa. 35, was to open the eyes of the blind. The Lord puts the blind receiving their sight as the first outward miracle, to indicate that He was really the Christ that was to come. And what the Lord puts last of all, but not the least weighty, is, that "the poor have the gospel preached to them." What is it but a testimony of the exceeding tender mercy of God, that while the gospel is intended for all, it is more especially, if there be any difference, for those that know misery, trial, contempt, in a selfish world? The Lord adds,

> Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

A remarkable word. It was easy to be stumbled then. What a word of warning! A man sent from God for a witness, that all might believe in Christ; and here, when this very man is put thoroughly to the test, the Lord has to bear witness to him, instead of his bearing witness to the Lord! How constantly do we see man breaking down when he is thus weighed; but what a blessed thing that we have such a God to deal with man, if He be only counted on! Unbelief is the only key to so extraordinary a state of things; and this it is which was at work in the question put to our Lord by John.

But when these messengers departed, the Lord marks His tender compassion and regard for him, and begins to vindicate the same John who had shown his feebleness under suffering and protracted hope. He asks them, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see?" A hard judgment might have concluded it was but "a reed shaken with the wind," when John sent disciples with the question just put. But no; the Lord will not allow it. He maintains the honor of John. He has given a little rebuke to John privately by his disciples; but before the multitudes He clothes him with honor. "But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?" It is in courts that you look for the grandeur of the world.

> Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet (Matt. 11:8, 9);

because John had a peculiar place that no prophet had assigned to him—to be the immediate forerunner of the Lord, a co-temporary herald of the Messiah Himself. John not only was a prophet, but the prophets prophesied of John; and the Lord says of him,

> Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.

But mark the word, for it is one of the most striking in this transitional chapter:

> Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he (Matt. 11:11).

What is the meaning?

Our Lord first says that among those born of women there had not risen a greater than John the Baptist, of course Himself excepted. Here, then, He is speaking of John, not as compared with Himself, but with others. He was the greatest born of women; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. It means clearly that there was a new order of things commencing, in which the privileges that God's sovereign grace would confer (for it is not a question of man's forming his own scheme about these things) would be so great, that the least in the dispensation about to open would be greater than the greatest in all the past. Of course this is not as to their faith or as to anything in themselves; neither does it mean that a weak believer now is greater than a man of mighty faith in times past; nor that some poor soul, anxious and troubled about his acceptance; is in a healthier state than those who could rejoice, like Simeon, in God their Savior. Yet the Lord does say that the greatest of those gone by is less than the least now. "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he," i.e., than John the Baptist.

"The kingdom of the heavens" never means heaven: they are different ideas as well as expressions. "The kingdom of the heavens" means that which, while it has its source in heaven, has its sphere over the earth. It may be applied, as it often is, to what is going on now; or, as sometimes, to what will go on when the Lord comes in glory, and brings His rule in a manifested form to bear upon the earth. But the kingdom of heaven always supposes the earth as the scene upon which the privileges or powers of heaven are made known. The Lord Jesus sees Himself rejected; but God, in His grace, turns the fact of the rejection of Jesus to the discovery and introduction of far greater blessing than if Jesus had been received. Supposing the Lord had been accepted by man when He came, He would have blessed man, and kept him alive upon the earth: He would have bound the devil, and brought in countless mercies for the creature in general. Still, what would have been all that without the vindication of God in the matter of sin? Neither moral glory, nor supreme love,

would have been manifested as they now are. For what could it be more than divine energy barring out the power of Satan? -- a mere though all-powerful medicine, or remedial measure, staying the power of evil and death in the world? But the death of Christ is, at once, the depth of man's wickedness and the height of God's goodness; for in the cross the one proved man's utter hatred and iniquity, the other God's perfect, holy love. It was man's unrighteousness that put Him there -- it was God's grace that brought Him there; and Christ risen from the dead takes His place as the beginning, the Head of a new creation, and displays it in His own person now, as a matter of faith to them that believe; puts them, while they are still in this world, struggling with the devil, in this place of blessing; sheds the joy of redemption into their hearts, and fills them with the certainty that they are born of God -- their sins being all forgiven -- and that they are only waiting for Him to come and crown the work of His love, when they shall be raised from the dead and changed into His glory. It is true to faith now, and will be true to sight by-and-by; but it is true always from the time it was introduced. It began with Christ's ascension into heaven, and it will terminate by Christ's descent from heaven, when He will bring in this power of the kingdom over the earth.

What, then, has the least believer got now? Look at saints of old. John the Baptist was resting upon promises. Even he, blessed as he was, could not say, My sins are blotted out, my iniquities are all gone. Before the death and resurrection of Christ, saints could only, but with joy, look forward to this certainty, and say, it will be blessed indeed! They might be sure that it was God's intention, but it hung upon a promise; it was not an accomplished thing. And, after all, if you were in prison, you would know the difference between a promise to bring you out, and the fact of your liberty when fairly out. This is just the difference. John the Baptist could not say, nor could the most advanced saint say, before the death. of Christ, my sins are all gone; though he would, and ought, to say, I am quite sure, that, when Messiah comes, everlasting righteousness will be brought in, and an end of sins will be made. But here appears the wonderful thing, that Messiah is come and has done the work. The atoning work is done; and the consequence is, that all who believe are entitled to say, I have no longer a single particle of sin upon me in the presence of God.

This is not true of some Christians in particular. I say it about every Christian, and I want every Christian to say it about himself; that is, that every Christian should take the place that God gives him in Christ. And what would be the effect of this? Christians could not walk with the world in the way they do; nor could they use the language that we so constantly hear taken up.

What I find, then, in the word of God is this: there was a new dispensation about to open, in which the very least is invested with privileges that the greatest could not, and ought not, to possess before. And this, because God sets infinite value upon the death of His Son. It is not only that there is the promise of it, blessed as that was; but God puts the greatest possible honor upon the death of Christ. And, therefore, as with an earthly sovereign it is the custom to put particular honor upon an epoch of special joy to himself -- if man could do that about the birth of a child -- still more how simple, and according to what faith may expect from God, is it that He should attach peculiar glory to that work of Christ by which redemption has been accomplished, though it be in the death of His Son? Now, everything is given; and God can invite souls not to forget their sins, or turn away their eyes from them; but looking at them fairly and fully, before the cross of Christ, He can call upon them to say, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." This is the foundation of Christianity. Knowing this, we must see how entirely evil is the place of a priest now; that is, of one particular mortal man put in a position to draw near to God for others. Every Christian is a priest -- man, woman, or child, it does not matter. All Christians are not ministers. This is another thing. Ministry and priesthood, though so often confounded, have not one idea in common between them. God gives this peculiar privilege now, that every believer is a priest of God; that is, he is entitled to draw near into the holiest of all, with all sin judged, all his iniquities purged away, so that he may be thoroughly happy in the presence of God while he is upon earth. I have given but a small part of the privileges of the least in the kingdom of the heavens now. And remember this -- all the grand prerogatives of Christianity are common privileges. One man may preach, and another may not; but this says nothing about the privileges of the kingdom. There was something that belonged specially to Paul, as the servant of God, which others did not possess: but any gifted one might preach, and there might not even be life in the soul. Caiaphas might testify, and Balsam too, and both utter true things; and Paul is willing to take such a place, and shows that he might preach to others, and yet, if regardless of holiness, be himself a castaway. Nothing can be more simple. But this has nothing to do with the blessings I have been speaking of as the portion of believers now.

The privileges of the kingdom are now the universal heritage of the family of faith; the least of them is greater even than John the Baptist. Great efforts have been made to shake the meaning of this verse. It has been taught that the least in the kingdom of heaven is Jesus Himself! -- Jesus, of course, in His humiliation, in His going to the cross. But what an utter ignorance of the mind of God is there manifested by such a remark! For the kingdom of the heavens was not yet come. It was preached, but it was not yet actually set up. And Jesus, far from being "the least" in that kingdom, was Himself the King; so that it would be derogatory to His person to call Him even the greatest, not to speak of "the least," in the kingdom. It would be want of reverence, as well as of intelligence, to say that He was in the kingdom at all: and perhaps it would be more true to say that the kingdom was in Him; for it was morally, and as far as divine power went, in the person of our Lord. "If I," says He to the Jews, "cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." It was arrived in His person. He being the King, and having the power thereof, it was there in Him. But if you look at "the kingdom of heaven" as a state of things introduced into this world, Christ had to go up to

heaven first -- a rejected King, no doubt, but still as such to sit on the right hand of God -- and thereon the kingdom of heaven commenced. The kingdom was not actually established till Jesus went up on high. Then it began, first spiritually, as by-and-by it will shine in power and glory.

Hence it is clear that in this chapter we stand upon the confines of the past dispensation, and of the one that was about to open. John the Baptist is on the scene, as the last and greatest witness of that which was closing. Elijah was coming. But Elijah had come now in the person of John the Baptist. John was doing the moral work that was associated with Elijah's mission; preparing the day of the Lord, and making the way for Himself. I do not say that Elijah may not come another day, but that John was the then witness of Elijah's service. He was come "in the spirit and power of Elias": and, as our Lord says a little after,

> If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come {Matt. 11:14}.

Such he was to faith. Like the kingdom of heaven now, it is a testimony to the future kingdom when displayed in power and glory. John was to faith then what Elias will be by-and-by. The kingdom of heaven is to faith now what the kingdom of heaven will be to sight hereafter. The Lord intimates that a dispensation of faith is coming in {Matt. 11:12}, [17] when the promises were not to be accomplished in the letter.

But just as John the Baptist was cast into prison -- a tremendous trial for a Jew who looked at him as a great prophet to usher in the Messiah in visible majesty -- so He says here, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" {Matt. 11:15}. It has to be received by the attentive ear of faith. How extraordinary it must have appeared to Israel that the forerunner of the Messiah should be in prison, and the Messiah Himself afterwards nailed upon the cross! But before the outward glory comes, there must be the suffering -- yea, and redemption -- effected. Hence, the least now who has this blessing.' of faith, who enjoys these astonishing privileges which the Holy Ghost is bringing out as the gift of God's sovereign grace, is greater than John the Baptist. For it is God's doing, and giving, and ordering. Judgment is His strange work.; but grace is the delight of God's heart. It is His joy by Christ to bless the man that has not the smallest claim upon Him. And such is His work now. But what would be the effect of this among the Jews? Our Lord compares them to a capricious people, who would neither do one thing nor another. If gladness is going on, they have no sympathy with it; neither have they with sorrow. John the Baptist called them to mourn: they had no heart for it. Then came Jesus, bidding them, as it were, to rejoice at the glad tidings of great joy: but they heeded Him not. They liked neither. John was too strict, and the Lord too gracious, for them. They could not bear either. The truth is, man dislikes God; and there is no greater proof of his ignorance of himself than that he does not believe it. Whatever they might plead in the way of abuse of John the Baptist, or of Himself, "Wisdom is justified of her children."

Accordingly He declares how wisdom was justified, positively and negatively.

> Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida . . . And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, &c. (Matt. 11:20-24).

What more solemn! They refuse the voice of heavenly wisdom; and the result must be, a judgment more unsparing than that which had of old made Sodom the monument of God's vengeance. Was there one place, one city, in the land more favored than another? It was Capernaum, where most of His miracles were wrought: and yet this very city should be brought down to hell. Even Sodom, the most notorious and depraved of all places, had not come under so fearful a sentence. The Lord never visits in judgment till He has exhausted all means to see whether things are as bad as they looked. But when He does judge, who shall be able to stand? Thus should wisdom be justified, if I may venture to say, by those that are not her children.

But now comes the positive part

> At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth {Matt. 11:25}.

From "Woe, woe," Jesus could turn round and say, "I thank thee, Father." Not that: the events recorded here took place together. The whole scene about John the Baptist occurred long before the Lord alluded to the wise and prudent rejecting Him, and the babes receiving Him. The Gospel of Luke occasionally gives precise marks of time, and shows that the Lord's reception of John's messengers was at an early period of His ministry, very shortly after the healing of the centurion's servant; whereas His thanking the Father was after the return of the seventy disciples who were sent out on the final testimony, which is not mentioned in Matthew at all. The Holy Ghost in our gospel puts aside, in general, mere

---

17. ◆ The Baptist was now in prison, and shortly to suffer unto blood. The Christ was more and more despised and rejected of men, especially of man religious after the flesh but not believing God. Hence the path becomes increasingly separate; and faith of the rejected Messiah is more and more in contrast with Jewish order where rights and privileges descend and are perpetuated in a natural way. John the Baptist marks the transition. From his days until now, says our Lord, the kingdom of the heavens is taken by violence, and violent persons seize it. It was no longer a question of swimming with the stream even in Israel and with Messiah present. He was going to act in all-over-coming power another day when He appears in glory (Psa. 110:2-3). Now the believer must in the energy of faith break with natural ties, and rise above hindrances when least expected and most abundant. The kingdom of the heavens is taken by such force as this: only those that can thus resist seize it. As He says later, "If anyone desireth to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." And this He said, when He told the disciples no longer to say to anyone that He was the Messiah (Matt. 16:20). He was now on the road to Jerusalem to suffer from the religious chiefs and to be killed and raised the third day as Son of Man. Thus was Christianity piercing through the clouds, and leaving Judaism to vanish away *(The Bible Treasury* NS 1:141). ◆

{An excellent answer to a question regarding Matt. 11:12 and Luke 16:16 is found in *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:300; the same in *The Bible Treasury* 7:47.}

successions of time, and welds together events separated by months or years, provided they illustrate the great truth that it was His object here to bring out, viz., the true Messiah, presented with adequate proofs to Israel, but rejected; and this turned of God's grace to be the occasion of better blessings than if the Lord had been received.

And while the solemn sight is before us of man's growing rejection, Jesus says, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (it is not now any hopes limited to the earth, but He is looked to as Lord of heaven and earth -- the sovereign Disposer of all things),

> because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father {Matt. 11:27}.

I may be refused the throne of Israel; the Jews may reject, the leaders despise Me: all this may be, but what is the result? Not merely what was promised to David or Solomon, but "all things are delivered unto me of my Father." Where, when, were such thoughts as these divulged before? Take the most wonderful prediction in the Psalms and prophets, and where do you get anything like them? It is clearly the rejected Messiah who, when man refuses Him, submits to it. They strip Him of His robes of Messianic glory, and what comes out? He is the Son of the Father, the Son of God from all eternity, the blessed divine Person who could look up and say, "Father." Refuse Him in His earthly dignity, and He only shines in His heavenly one; despise Him as a men, and He is manifestly God.

> And no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him (Matt. 11:27).

He is revealing the Father now. It is not merely that He is come to accomplish the promises of God, but He is revealing the Father -- bringing souls into a deeper knowledge of God than was possible before.

> Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28).

It is perfect grace: no restriction; no setting the Jew in the foremost seat of honor. But "Come unto me, *all* ye that labor." Jew or Gentile, it matters not; do you labor? Are you miserable? Can you find no comfort? "Come unto me, all ye that labor . . . and I will give you rest." It is without condition or qualification, if the needy but go to Him. "Come unto me." This is the proof of the Father's drawing -- that I go to Jesus.

> All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37).

It is the Son of the Father in John; and Matthew here draws near, and we have the like freedom of grace. For grace is always found most full and free where the Son is brought out in all His glory.

> Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matt. 11:29, 30).

Grace does not leave men to do as they like, but makes its object desire to do the will of God. So, immediately after saying, "I will give you rest," He, our Lord, adds, "Take my yoke upon you" -- not the yoke of their fathers, but that of Jesus. God now reveals Christ, and the Son is revealing the Father. Therefore He says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Mark the difference. In v. 28 it is, "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest." There it is pure, absolute grace; but, take my yoke upon you . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls." He is saying, as it were, Now you have got to obey Me, to be subject to Me, and the effect will be finding rest to your souls. When the sinner goes in his wretchedness to Jesus, the Savior gives him rest -- yea, "without money and without price." But if that soul does not follow on in the ways of Christ, he becomes miserable, and loses the comfort he had at first. Why? He has not taken Christ's yoke upon him. The terms on which the Lord gives rest to the sinner are, "Come unto me," just as you are, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden." The terms on which the believer finds rest are, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." The Lord thus secures His dignity, and keeps up His moral government over His people. They are more disturbed than any, if not subject to Christ; they can enjoy neither Him nor the world. If I have such a blessing as Christ, and yet am not bearing His yoke, God does not intend that I should be happy. All else is a false happiness. The only true enjoyment for our souls, now that we have Christ, depends on taking His yoke upon us, and learning of Him, bound to Him as One that we have evermore to serve and to worship.

Matthew 12

Chapter 12 completes the picture of the transition begun in ch. 11, and proves that, before God, the crisis was come. The Lord might continue to become the Object of still deeper rejection, but the spirit that crucified Him had already manifested itself clearly. In the center of this chapter we have the warning of the unpardonable sin, not merely against the Messiah, but against the Holy Ghost bearing His testimony to the Messiah; and, further, the fact that Israel, as a nation, would be guilty of that sin, and hence be given up to the power of Satan, beyond example in all their sad history. So that the evil for which God had allowed them to be carried captive to Babylon was a little thing in comparison with the iniquity of which they were now, in spirit, guilty, and into which they were about to sink. This thoroughly closes the announcement of the crisis; and Matt. 13 introduces a new thing -- the kingdom of heaven about to be set up in its present mysterious form, because of the rejection of the Messiah.

I must now proceed to show how far all the incidents in this chapter strengthen the general idea, how far all is in harmony with the leading thought -- the grand break between Christ and Israel. Therefore it is that the Holy Ghost here does not confine Himself to the mere order of time in which the events took place.

> At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath-day through the corn, and His disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat (Matt. 12:1).

We are not to suppose that "at that tune" means "at that exact moment" It is a general term, embracing events somewhat connected, though there might be months between them. It is not like "immediately," or "forthwith," or "the week after," &c. What did intervene we must gather from other Gospels. If we compare that of Mark, we find that the scene of the cornfields took place early in our Lord's ministry. Thus, in Mark 2, on the Sabbath-day following the call of Levi and the discourse about fasting, we are told that "He went through the corn-fields." Here we have this incident taken completely out of its historical connection. Mark adheres rigorously to the order of events; Matthew departs from it in order to give the great change consequent on the Messiah's rejection by Israel. Our Lord's word of woe upon Chorazin and Bethsaida, and of their blessedness who received Him, was spoken by no means early. Here they are put together, because the object of the Holy Ghost in the first Gospel is to reveal this change. Hence, what would prove the change is selected and reserved for this place.

In short, the Holy Ghost is giving us a historical picture apart from the mere date in which the events took place; and the events and discourses that illustrate the great transition are all grouped together. The disciples passed through the corn, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat, according to the liberty allowed them in the law.

> When the Pharisees saw it, they said into him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath-day (Matt. 12:2).

Our Lord then cites two incidents, one of them a constantly recurring fact among the priests, the other recorded of their most conspicuous king, David: both proving the sin and utter ruin of Israel. What was the state of things when David was obliged to use the show-bread? Was it not because the true king was a despised, persecuted man -- because the king of their own hearts' choice was there? It was the same thing now. The sin of Israel profaned the holy bread. God would not accept aught as holy from people that were living in sin. No ceremonial is worth a straw, if the heart does not honor Christ. Why were the disciples reduced to pluck and eat the ears of corn? Why were the followers of the true King reduced to hunger?

Besides,

> Have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath-days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? (Matt. 12:5).

The priests did a very important work upon that day. They offered sacrifices then because there was sin; and the people's sin demands what, according to the letter of the law, would seem to a Pharisee to be a breach of it. It does not matter what the law may ordinarily claim, if you have sin on the part of God's people, sacrifice cannot be deferred. Thus, whether you take the particular instance of the Lord's anointed in Saul's day, or the constant priestly service on the Sabbath-day, one thing accounted for all disorder, whether real or apparent -- Israel were sinners. They had allowed the chosen of the Lord to be hunted upon the mountains when he was there; and a greater than David was here. And so as to the priests and their work. There was one infinitely greater than the temple there. Messiah Himself: and what was not their indifference, nay, their enmity, towards Him?

But not only this; there was another Sabbath-day necessary to complete the sketch. And now Jesus does work Himself; and these two things are brought together here.

> When he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue; and, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days? that they might accuse him.

The Lord accepted the challenge.

> He said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? (Matt. 12:11).

Of course they would deliver the poor sheep out of the pit, because it was their own sheep. They had no conscience about doing what was to their own advantage because it was the Sabbath-day. And the Lord does not blame them; but, He presses this most pungent conclusion upon them --

> How much, then, is a man better than a. sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-days (Matt. 12:12).

In a word, He intimates by this second case that Israel was not only a guilty people respecting the true Beloved, but besides that, a people who, if they knew their own condition, would own themselves to be like the man with the withered hand, and thus willing to receive, and submit to, Him. He was there in grace to accomplish all necessary healing. The Lord pressed upon them their dismal condition. The whole nation before God was as withered morally as that man's hand was physically: not willing, alas! to be healed like him; but, as far as utter deadness before God was concerned, such was their state.

> Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other (Matt. 12:13).

Why is this recorded here as having occurred on the Sabbath-day? Why especially in connection with the incident of the corn-field? In the first, the Lord proves Israel's guilt in contrast with the sanctity of the Sabbath; in the second, He declares Himself there to work restoration even on the Sabbath. It is an account of all importance; because the Lord is, as it were, tearing in pieces the outward letter of the bond between Him and Israel, of which the Sabbath-day was a special sign.

I may here observe, the Lord's day differs essentially from the Sabbath-day; and in the early Church there was scrupulous care taken not to confound the two things. The Sabbath and the Lord's day are signs of wholly distinct truths. The first owed its origin to God's hallowing His rest when creation was done; and it was the token that, when God would finish His works, there would be a holy rest for man. Then sin came in, and all was ruined. We do not hear a word about it (at least, directly), till a people is called out from among all others to serve the true God, as His chosen nation. We have seen, in the Old Testament as well as in the New, how utterly they failed; and now the only hope of having a true Sabbath is when Christ Himself shall bring it in. When Adam sinned, death passed upon all, and the rest of creation was broken.

Then (after the type of Christ in the manna, with the Sabbath following) came in the law, which took up the Sabbath, incorporated it in the ten words {i.e., the law} and the statutes of Israel, and made it not only a hallowed day, but a day of command, which was enjoined upon them like the other nine words; a day in which every Israelite was bound, not only to abstain from work himself, but to give rest to everything that was his. It was not a question of a spiritual people. All Israel were bound by it, and they shared its rest along with their cattle.

The Lord's day, on the other hand, never was heard of till Christ rose from the dead. Thence issued an entirely new order of things. Christ, the beginning, the Head of a new creation, rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Thus, while the old world goes on, while sin is still at work, and Satan not yet bound, God has wrought salvation, which He is giving to every soul that believes. These recognize that Christ risen is their Savior, and that consequently they have new life in Him. This, and much more than this, they come together to acknowledge on the Lord's day. They "show the Lord's death till he come." Nothing can be plainer in scripture, if our desire is to know, and follow, the word of God. It was no question whether people were Jews or Gentiles. Were they Christians? Had they Christ as their life and Lord? If they thankfully confessed Him, the Lord's day was the day for them.

Such of the Christians as had been Jews continued to frequent the synagogue on the Sabbath. But this only establishes more plainly that it was not a mere change of day. To the Roman saints, the apostle insists that the man who regarded the day, to the Lord he regarded it; and that the man who regarded it not, to the Lord he did not regard it. Was this the Lord's day? No; but Jewish days and fasts. The apostle would never treat the Lord's day as optionally to be regarded or not. Some of these believers saw that they were delivered from the law, and did not observe the Jewish feasts, or fasts. The Gentiles, of course, were not under the law at all. But some, at any rate, of the Jewish believers still had a conscience about the ancient holy-days, and of them the apostle speaks.

The Lord's day never was, and never will be, a Jewish day. It has its own proper character stamped upon it; and Christians, though not under the law as Jews with the Sabbath, are yet by grace called on far more solemnly to use it for the Lord, as that which summons them to meet together in the name of Jesus, in separation from this world, conscious of redemption and justification through His death and resurrection. It is the type of the blessing that the Christian has got, yet to be manifested in glory. The world always confounds it, as do many Christians, with the Sabbath. One hears sometimes real, but uninstructed believers, talk of the "Christian Sabbath": this is, of course, because they do not see their deliverance from the law, and the consequences which flow from their belonging to Him who is risen from the dead. The apostle develops these blessed truths.

Our Lord merely deals with the Jews here. He points out the crisis then in progress. His disciples were not hindered from plucking, the ears of corn on one Sabbath; as on another He openly wrought a miracle in the presence of all (thus giving occasion for the Pharisees who sought one against Hin). It is true that the works were works of mercy and goodness; but there was no manner of necessity for either, had there not been a purpose. He could have spoken without doing a single thing. So with the blind man in the Gospel of John. All the clay in the world could not have cured him but for the power of our Lord. His word would have been enough; but He does something Himself, and makes the man do something else upon the Sabbath. We are told expressly,

> It was the Sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

The Lord was breaking the seal of the covenant between Jehovah and Israel. The Sabbath sealed that bond, and. was in Israel now worse than useless in God's sight; because the

people who pretended to keep the Sabbath so carefully, were the bitterest enemies of His Son. It was utterly false to subject Him to the Sabbath. The Son of man was "Lord even of the Sabbath-day." He takes that ground boldly, as we are here told (Matt. 12:8), and the following Sabbath performs this miracle.

The Pharisees felt that it was a death-blow to their whole system, and they, gathering together,

> held a council against him, how they might destroy him {Matt. 12:14}.

This was the first conclave for the purpose of putting Him to death. Jesus, knowing it, withdraws Himself from thence, "and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all:" a picture of what He would do when Israel put Him to death. Thenceforth the great work was to be among the Gentiles. The prophet Isaiah is quoted in connection with this occurrence, to testify what our Lord's character was:

> Behold, my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust (Matt. 12:18-21).

The Lord was departing from Israel; but this is not all. There is a final testimony before He pronounces sentence upon Israel:

> Then was brought unto him one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb, and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw (Matt. 12:22).

This was the condition in which Israel was about to be, without an eye, or a voice, for Jesus: the apt figure of the nation's condition -- the Messiah unseen and His praise unuttered in their midst. And here is the solemn thing. The poor, the ignorant, all the people, might cry,

> Is not this the Son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the. demons. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how shall then his kingdom stand? (Matt. 12:23-26).

He condescends to reason with them:

> And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you (Matt. 12:27, 28).

But they were dumb; they were blind. The man that submitted to Jesus was healed; but the Pharisees were consulting to slay the Son of David. The Lord answers them yet more. He tells them that now it was come to a point.

> He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad (Matt. 12:30).

All depended upon being, and acting, with Him; wherefore our Lord adds,

> All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men (Matt. 12:31).

The reason of it was this: not only was the Son of man working these miracles, but the power of the Holy Ghost was there, too. Although Jesus might submit to humiliation, He could not but assert the glory of God. The Holy Spirit, who was putting forth these mighty deeds, was going to be poured out when Jesus should go away. The unbelief that refused the testimony of the Spirit, when Jesus was there, would be even stronger against it on His departure. The children of Israel would prove themselves to be like their fathers.

> Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye {Acts 7}.

And what was the consequence? They would be guilty of the unpardonable sin, of rejecting (not only Jesus Himself, as a man presented here, but) the power of the Holy Ghost, whether then working in Him, or now by Him, and for Him.

It is the final rejection of the Spirit's testimony to Christ. It was true when the Lord was here, but is still more complete now that He is in heaven. They refused Christ on earth, and after He went up to heaven, when, through the power of the Holy Ghost, His name alone caused the dead to rise, and thus proved His glory even more than what He had done personally when here below. Those who resisted such testimony as this were evidently hopelessly lost in unbelief and scorn of God in the person of His Son. Therefore our Lord pronounces this blasphemy to be such as nothing can meet. It is not ignorance which thus rejects Christ. A man may, in that case, only want the light; and when it comes, he may, through grace, be enabled to receive Him. But he who refuses all divine testimony, and makes the displayed power of the Holy Ghost the occasion of showing his spite against Jesus, is evidently lost for ever: he bears the unmistakable stamp of perdition upon his brow. This was exactly the sin into which Israel were fast falling. The Holy Ghost might be sent down, and work even greater acts of power than the Lord Himself had done; it made no change in their heart. The unbelieving race of Israel shall be forgiven, neither in this "age," nor in that which is to come.

I am not fastidious about the word "dispensation," [18] meaning by it a certain course of time, ruled by particular principles; but the point is, that neither in this *αἰῶν*, nor in that which is to come, could this sin be forgiven. The age to come is that wherein the children of Israel are to be under the Messiah's rule; as, since the Babylonish captivity, they have been under the rule of the Gentiles. This sin should be forgiven neither now, nor then. As to all other iniquity, there

18. {W. Kelly did not believe that there were any "dispensations" before the flood. Perhaps if he was aware of the coming popular system he would have been more "fastidious" about this matter.}

was still a hope that what was not forgiven now might be when the Messiah came. Granted that there is unlimited forgiveness for every soul that receives Him. But they refused Him. They attributed the Spirit's power working in His person to Beelzebub; and that blasphemy would never be forgiven. Such was the growing danger of Israel.

Rejecting the Messiah thus, they are doomed. It was rejecting the Holy Ghost's testimony; and everything is made to turn upon this. To that the Lord proceeds, as showing the awful condition of Israel, and the necessity for the coming change. A new work of God must be brought in.

Hence the Lord pronounces them a generation of vipers. "The tree," He says, "is known by his fruit." It was a bad tree, and He did not expect anything but bad fruit from it. "O generation of vipers," He adds,

> how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word [that is, I suppose, everything betraying contempt for God] that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Matt. 12:34-37).

What proves the idleness of the word? It is without reverence for God and His Son. What God insists upon is testimony to Jesus. These idle words betray the heart's rejection of Jesus, and slight the Holy Ghost's testimony to Him. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." It is with the mouth that confession is made unto salvation; and the words that leave out Jesus prove that the heart prefers its sin to Him. The words of the mouth evidence the state of the heart. They are the outward expression of. the feelings, and they show a man in one way as much as his conduct does in another. If the heart is evil, the words are evil, the conduct is evil: all therefore comes into judgment.

After this, the Pharisees ask a sign, and the Lord gives them a most significant one: but before that, He pronounces His moral sentence on the nation

> An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas (Matt. 12:39).

What was the special feature of Jonah as a prophet? To whom did he prophesy? He was sent away from Israel to the Gentiles; and more than that: before Jonah performed his message aright, he must pass through the figure of death and resurrection. So obstinate was he in not going where he was bidden, that the Lord took care Jonah should be pitched out of the ship; and then He dealt with him as a dead man, and wrought a great work in his soul. Jonah, having passed through this most remarkable type of death and resurrection, was now ready for the message that the Lord gives him. This is the sign which the Lord puts before the Pharisees. Such was the state of the Jewish nation, that He must leave them and go to the Gentiles; and that, too, after death and resurrection in reality, and when all the hopes of Israel were buried. The Lord has blessing in store for His people by-and-by: but for the present all is lost for Israel. They had rejected their Lord. God was going now to occupy Himself with the Gentiles.

Hence it is that the instances used to affirm this are, first, the case of the men of Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonas; "and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." Then the Queen of Sheba, also a Gentile, who did not merely repent because of sin, but showed an energy of faith, I may say, worthy of all note, without even a message sent to her. Such was the ardor of her heart, and her desire after wisdom, that, hearing of Solomon, she hastened in order to hear it from his own lips. What a rebuke for Israel! "A greater than Solomon is here"; and wisdom as much beyond Solomon's as the person of Jesus is above that of Solomon. But they were an evil and adulterous generation. They knew not that their Maker was their husband: they despised Him; and, adds our Lord, "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it." But now He proclaims what will be their final condition. The link of Israel to Himself was broken; and for this blasphemous contempt of the Spirit's testimony to Jesus as the Son of man, they should be judged.

But that nation was also destined to be filled with the power of Satan. This is what the Lord now explains.

> When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none (Matt. 12:43).

Every student of scripture will acknowledge that the unclean spirit means idolatry. Are we to suppose that our Lord suddenly breaks off from what He had been saying of the nation to treat of mere individuals? Clearly it is about Israel. And what is the thought? After the return from Babylon, Israel never, as a nation, fell into idolatry as they did before. Not that they were better men; but the unclean spirit of idolatry was no longer their special temptation. There were new ways in which the devil tempted them to sin, if not after the old sort. But the unclean spirit is to go back to his house, and find it swept and garnished. Such it was when our Lord was here below. Israel had laid aside their idolatrous habits; they went to the synagogue every Sabbath-day; and they were zealous enough to compass sea and land to make a proselyte. There was the condition of the house, empty, swept, and garnished. All was apparently clean, and nothing outwardly to shock the eye if you looked at it.

> Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation {Matt. 12:46}.

The unclean spirit is to return, and not as before, but with the full power of Satan, with "seven spirits more wicked than himself." More wicked than idolatry! What can that be? "And they enter in and dwell there." It is only the figure of a man used to illustrate the state of Israel. ·The words that

follow leave this without a doubt: "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." The Lord takes the instance of a man, but He applies it to the nation's condition. The unclean spirit of idolatry was gone, and they had outwardly purged themselves; but the solemn warning is given that the unclean spirit must return, and bring with him seven spirits more wicked than himself; and their last state be worse than their first. And when is that to be? It is the last state; and I believe that it has not arrived, but is reserved for the Jews yet.

The empty, swept, and garnished state, existing then, may be still going on. Humanly speaking, they may be moral. They may not abandon the books of Moses, but take their stand as worshiping none but the true God. This will go on fora certain time, but not for ever; for we know from scripture that God has kept that nation for special purposes, first in judgment, and then in mercy. By-and-by He will convert them and bring them in and make them a holy, as they are the lineal, seed of Abraham. But they are to fill up the cup of their iniquity first; and this is the principle that runs through all the ways of God. Not first what is spiritual, but what is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual; first Adam, and then Christ. So in the case before us, Israel must show the last results of Satan's power over their souls, before God can convert a remnant, and make it a strong nation. The last state spoken of here regards the wicked generation; the Lord will create a future generation, "and so all Israel shall be saved {Rom. 11:26}."

But meanwhile, what was He going to do? Was He merely pronouncing judgment on Israel? Far from it. While He yet was speaking to the people, one came and told Him,

> Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee (Matt. 12:47).

The Lord immediately takes this opportunity to announce that He no longer acknowledged mere relationships according to the flesh. He had special relationship with Israel; "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came." He owns it no longer. They would not have Him. He had shown the end of all flesh. They become the tenement for the devil in all his power; their last state is worse than their first. But, says the Lord, I am going to have a new thing now, a people according to My own heart. And so He stretches forth His hand toward His disciples and days, "Behold my mother and my brethren." His only true relations were those who received the word of God and did it.

> Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

In a word, He renounced all earthly connection for the present time -- all relationship with flesh or nature. The only tie He acknowledges now is relationship to a heavenly Father, formed through the word of God received into the soul.

Thus we have in this chapter the Lord closing with Israel, as far as testimony is concerned. In the next chapter we shall find what comes dispensationally of those new relations that the Lord was about to unfold.

Matthew 13

At the close of the chapter before, our Lord disowned all the natural ties which bound Him to Israel. I speak now simply of His bringing it out as a matter of teaching; for we know that, historically, the moment for really, and finally, breaking with them was the cross. But, ministerially, if we may so say, the break occurred, and was indicated, now. He took advantage of an allusion to His mother and brethren to say who His real kindred were -- no longer those who were connected with Him after the flesh: the only family He could own now were such as did the will of His Father in heaven. He recognizes nothing but the tie formed by the word of God received into the heart, and obeyed accordingly.

The Holy Ghost pursues this subject by recording, in a connected form, a number of parables which were intended to show the source, the character, the conduct, and the issues of this new family, or at least of those who professed to belong to it. This is the subject of Matt. 13. [19] A striking

19. {A summary of the parables was given by W. Kelly in *the Christian Annotator* 1857, pp. 71, 72.

◆ Matt. 13 . . . -- The connection between these several parables is asked. It will be observed that they are in all seven, the number of spiritual, completeness in good or evil.(See Leviticus and the Revelation *passim.*) Next, it is manifest that the first differs from the rest, inasmuch as it is not a likeness of the kingdom of heaven, which the following, six are. Further, of these six, three were said (besides the "sower") to the multitude outside, as well as the disciples; the last three to the disciples alone within the house. All this bears upon the true interpretation, not as deciding, but as confirming it. For the first parable is evidently general, if it do not particularly refer to our Lord's personal ministry on earth, before the kingdom of heaven was introduced by His ascension. It is not here the heir sent to receive the fruit of the vineyard; Jesus is "a sower" and his sowing is hindered and opposed by the world, the flesh, and the devil, as we find in the explanation (vv. 19-22), though a portion of the seed takes root in good ground.

The three public comparisons of the kingdom of heaven follow -- the wheat and tare field, the mustard seed, and the leaven. The sower here is still the Son of Man, but it is His work from heaven (just as in Mark 16:20; Eph. 2:17). It is the kingdom of Christ when rejected by the Jews -- of Christ absent, not present in visible power and glory. It is the kingdom of heaven on earth, entrusted to servants who, alas! are soon asleep, and the devil sows his wicked children in the midst of the true children of the kingdom. The general teaching, then, is, that the new dispensation, as far as man's responsibility was concerned, would see ruin introduced by the enemy, which nothing could remedy but the judgment executed at the end of the age. But this is not all. Christendom would grow from a diminutive beginning into "a tree," emblematic of a towering earthly power, which would even shelter the instruments of Satan. (Compare vv. 4 and 19 with 32.) Nor this only: for a system of doctrine, nominally at least Christian, should spread over a certain defined mass, till the whole was leavened. Whether this mixture, this worldly aggrandizement, this propagation of, not life or truth, but profession, such as it was, was of the Lord or His enemy,

instance it is, of how manifestly the Holy Ghost has formed the materials into the particular, shape in which we actually have them: for we know that our Lord spoke more parables than are here given. Comparing it with the Gospel of Mark, we find a parable that differs materially from any which appears in Matthew.

In Mark it is a person who sows the ground, and sleeps, and rises night and day, waiting for the germination, and the full growth, and the ripening of the corn, and then he himself gathers it in. This diverges very considerably from all the parables of the earlier Gospel; yet we know from Mark that the parable in question was uttered on the same day.

> With many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spoke he not unto them . . . And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

Just as the Holy Ghost selects certain parables in Mark which are inserted, while others are left out (and it is the same in Luke), so also was it the case in Matthew. The Holy Ghost is conveying fully God's mind about the new testimony, commonly called Christianity, and even Christendom. Accordingly, the very beginning of this chapter prepares us for the new scene. "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side (Matt. 13:1). Up to this time the house of God was connected with Israel. There God dwelt as far as this could be said of the earth; He counted it as His habitation. But Jesus went out of the house, and sat by the sea-side. We all know that the sea, in the symbolic language of the Old and New Testaments, is used to represent masses of men, roving hither and thither outside, and not under the settled government of God. "And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship and sat." From thence He teaches them: "And the whole multitude stood on the shore" (Matt. 13:2). The very action of our Lord indicated that there, was to be a very wide-spread testimony. The parables themselves are not confined to the sphere of our Lord's previous dealings, but take in a much more extensive range than anything which He had spoken in past times.

"He spake many things unto them in parables" (Matt. 13:3). It is not intimated that we have all the parables our Lord spoke; but the Holy Ghost here gives us seven connected parables, all brought together and compacted into a consistent system, as I shall endeavor to show. The Holy Ghost is clearly exercising a certain authority as to the parables selected here, for we all know that seven is the scriptural number for that which is complete: whether it speak of good or evil spirits -- whether in one form or another -- seven is regularly the number used. When the symbol of twelve is used, it expresses completeness, not spiritual; but as to what has to do with man. Where human administration is brought into prominence for carrying out the purposes of God, there the number twelve appears: Hence we have the twelve apostles, who had a peculiar relation to the twelve tribes of Israel; but when the Church is to be presented, we hear again the number seven -- "the seven churches." However that may be, we have seven parables here, a thing ordered of God for the purpose of giving a complete account of the new order of things about to begin -- Christendom and Christianity, the true as well as the spurious.

The first question, then, that occurs is, How comes it that we have this series of parables here, and nowhere else? Certain of them are in Mark, and certain in Luke; but nowhere, except in Matthew, have we seven, the complete list. The answer is this: Nothing can be more in place, or more proper, than that they should be given in a Gospel presenting Jesus as the Messiah to Israel, and, on His rejection, revealing what God would next bring out. To the disciples, when their hopes were melting away, what could be of deeper interest than to know the nature and end of this new testimony? If the Lord should send out His word among the Gentiles, what would be the result? Accordingly, Matthew's Gospel is the only one that gives us a complete sketch of the kingdom of heaven; as it also gives us. the intimation that the Lord was going to found the church. It is only in Matthew that we have both: brought out. This, however, may be reserved for another place; but one must observe that the kingdom of heaven is not the same thing as the Church, but is rather the scene where the authority of Christ is owned, at least outwardly. It may be real, or not, but every professing Christian (not a Turk, or a Jew, or a Pagan, of course) is in the kingdom of heaven. Every person who has, even in an external rite, confessed Christ, is not a mere Jew or Gentile, but in the kingdom. It is a very different thing from a man's being born again, and being baptized by the Holy Ghost into the body of Christ. Whoso bears the name of Christ belongs to the kingdom of heaven. It may be that he is only a tare there, but still there he is. This is a very solemn consideration. Wherever Christ is outwardly confessed, there is a responsibility beyond that which attaches to the rest of the world.

The first parable clearly was true when- our Lord was on earth. It is very general, and would apply to the Lord-in person, or in spirit. Hence it may be said to be always going on; for we find in the second parable the Lord presented again, still sowing good seed: only here it is the "kingdom of heaven" that is said to be like to a man who sowed good seed

---

must be gathered not merely from hints here, but from. Scripture generally. Then, upon the dismissing of the multitude, the Lord explains the chief of the first three similitudes of the kingdom, and adds three more, which develop not its external appearances, but its internal aspects to the spiritual man. Treasure hid in the field, the pearl, and the drag-net comprehend their further instructions. Christ buys the field for the sake of the treasure, His own that He loved in the world. This, nevertheless, did not fully tell out either His love or their beauty in His eyes. Therefore, as it seems to me, the parable of the pearl follows -- "one pearl of great price," the unity and the peerless charms of the Church in the Lord's eyes, for which he gave up "all that He had," as Messiah here below -- yea, life itself. The net evidently presents the closing circumstances of the kingdom, as to which I would briefly call attention to two facts often confounded, that the fishermen gather the good into vessels, casting the bad away, while the angels at the consummation sever the wicked from among the just. Our part is to take forth the precious from the vile; theirs to separate the vile from the precious (*Christian Annotator* 1857, pp71-72). ◆

in his field. The first is Christ's work in publishing the word among men, while He was here below. The second rather applies to our Lord sowing by means of His servants; that is, the Holy Ghost working in then according to the will of the Lord while He is above, the kingdom of heaven being then set up. This at once furnishes an important key to the whole subject. But inasmuch as the matter of the first parable is very general, there is a great deal in all the moral teaching of it which applies as truly now as it did when our Lord was upon earth. "A sower went forth to sow," a weighty truth indeed!

It was not thus that the Jews looked for their Messiah. The prophets bore witness of a glorious ruler, who would establish His kingdom in their midst. No doubt there were plain predictions of His suffering, as well as of His exaltation. Our parable describes neither suffering nor outward glory; but a work carried on by the Lord, of a distinct character from anything the Jew would naturally draw from the bulk of the prophecies. Nevertheless, our Lord, I conceive, was alluding to Isaiah. It is not exactly the gospel of grace and salvation to the poor, wretched, and guilty, but One whoa instead of coming to claim the fruits of the vineyard set up in Israel, has to begin an entirely new work. A sower going forth to sow evidently marks the commencement of that which did not exist before. The Lord is beginning a work not previously known in this world.

> And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up {Matt. 13:4}.

That was clearly the most desperate case of all. It was null and void, not because of any fault of the seed, but from the destructive agency of the fowls, which devoured what was sown. Next we have, "Some [that] fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth." There was a more hopeful appearance in this case. The word was received, but the ground was stony; there was no depth of earth. Appearances were very quick -- "forthwith they sprung up." It is a serious thing to think of souls who go forward at once. Nature always brings to maturity in a very short time whatever it can do in the things of God. There is little or no sense of sin. All is taken in, but too readily. "The plan of salvation" may be thought to be excellent, the enlightenment of the mind undeniable; but such a one has never measured his awful condition in God's sight. The good word of God is tasted, but the ground is stony. Conscience has nothing to do with it. Whereas in a real work of the heart, conscience is the soil in which the word of God takes effect. There never can be a real work of God without a sense of sin. This is a thing which souls, drawn and attracted by the gospel, ought to weigh earnestly whether, in deed and in truth, they have really faced the blessed God who is speaking to them about their ruin. Where warm feelings are excited but sin is slurred over, it is the case spoken of here -- the word received at once, but the ground stony. There is no root because there is no depth of earth; consequently, "when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away."

But, further, "Some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them" {Matt. 13:5}. [20] This is another case; not exactly that wherein the heart received the word at once. And, let me repeat, that one can have as little confidence in the heart as in the head. The flesh differs in different individuals. Some may have more mind, and some more feeling. But neither can savingly receive the word of God, unless the Holy Ghost acts on the conscience and produces the sense of being utterly lost. Where this is the case, it is a real work of God, which sorrows and difficulties will only deepen. Those that received the seed among thorns, are a class devoured by the anxieties of this age, and led away by the deceitfulness of riches, which choke the word, so that no fruit comes to perfection.

But now comes the good ground. "Other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 13:8, 9). The sower here is the Lord Himself, yet out of four casts of the seed, three are unsuccessful. It is only the last case where the seed bears ripe fruit; and even there the issue is checkered and hindered -- "some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold." What a tale of man's heart and of the world! that even where the heart does not refuse, but receives the truth, it abandons it just as quickly. The same will that makes a man gladly receive the gospel, makes him drop it in the face of difficulties. But, in some cases, the word does produce blessed effects. It fell upon good ground, and brought forth fruit in different degrees. "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." A solemn admonition to souls, to look well to it, whether or not they produce according to the truth they have received.

The Lord explains these things. But, first of all, the disciples come and say unto Him,

> Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

The same parable would be just like the cloud of Israel in a former day -- full of light to those within, full of obscurity to those without. Thus it is with the sayings, of our Lord. So

---

20. ◆ Q. -- Matt. 13:5, 6. Can a believer lose life eternal? R. C.

A. -- —It would not be life eternal if it could be lost. Animal life can perish; but even the soul is immortal for man, being inbreathed by Jehovah-God (Gen. 2). How much less can that life perish, which the believer *hath* (not merely shall have) in Christ, the Son of God! What then means the withering away of what sprang up on the stony places? Our Lord explains in Matt. 13:20, 21. There is more than one way of ruin for mere professors of His name:

> 1st. *Satan*. hindering the entrance of the word, as in v.. 19;
>
> 2nd. as in vv. 20, 21 *the flesh* receiving the word hastily without conscience before God, and therefore quickly giving up under pressure; and
>
> 3rd. as in v. 22, the anxiety of this age and the deceitfulness of wealth choking all fruit, the necessary issue of life. It is *the world*.

He who hears in faith is no longer Satan's prey and does bear fruit, though even so the flesh and the world may hinder the hundredfold which ought to be (*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:159). ◆

solemn was the crisis now, that it was not His intention to give clearer light. Conscience was gone. They had the Lord in their midst, bringing in full light, and He was refused, specially by the religious leaders of the nation. He had now broken with them. Here was the clue to this conduct: "Unto you it is given to know," &c. It was kept from the multitude, and this because they had already rejected the clearest possible proofs that Jesus was the Messiah of God. But, as He says here,

> Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have, more abundance.

Such was the case with the disciples. They had already received His person, and now the Lord would supply them with truth to lead them on. "But whosoever hath not," the Christ-rejecting Israel, "from him shall be taken away even that he hath." The Lord's bodily presence, already there, and the evidence of miracles, would soon pass away.

> Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand (Matt. 13:13).

That judicial sentence of darkness which Isaiah- had pronounced upon them hundreds of years before, was now to be sealed, though the Holy Ghost still gives them a fresh testimony. And this very passage is afterwards quoted to mark that it is a finished thing with Israel. They loved darkness rather than light. What is the good of a light to one that shuts his eyes? Therefore would the light be taken away too.

> But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them (Matt. 13:16, 17).

Then follows the explanation of the parable. We have the meaning of "the fowls of the air" given us. It is not left to any conjecture of our own. "When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom" (this was being preached then. It is not exactly "the word of the gospel," but "of the kingdom"), "and understandeth it not," &c. In Luke it is not called "the word of the kingdom," nor is it said, "understandeth it not" It is interesting to observe the difference, because it indicates the way in which the Holy Ghost has acted in this Gospel. Compare Luke 13. We find some of these parables first given us in Luke 8. "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God" -- not the word of the kingdom, but "of God" (v. 11). There is, of course, a great deal in common between the two; but the Spirit had a wise reason for using the different expressions. It would have been rather giving an opportunity to an enemy, unless there had been some good grounds for it. I repeat that it is "the word of the kingdom" in Matthew, and "of God" in Luke. In the latter we have "lest they should believe," and in the former "lest they should understand."

What is taught by the difference? It is manifest that, in Matthew, the Holy Ghost has the Jewish people particularly in His mind, although the word is going out to the Gentiles in due time; whereas, in Luke, the Lord had particularly the Gentiles before Him. They understood that there was a great kingdom, which God was about to establish, destined to swallow up all their kingdoms. The Jews being already familiar with the word of God, their great point was understanding what God taught. They had His word already, though superstition and self-righteousness never understood it (you might have been controverted had you said to a Jew, You do not believe what Isaiah says); and a serious question came, Do you understand it? But if you looked at the Gentiles -- they had not the lively oracles, so that among them the question was believing what God said; and this is what we have in Luke. The point for a Gentile was that, instead of setting up his own, wisdom, he should bow to what God said.

Hence you will observe that, looking at people who had not the word of God, and who were to be tested by the gospel going out to them in due time, the question was believing something that had not been brought out to them before. In Matthew, speaking to a people who had the word already, the great thing was to understand it. This they did not. The Lord intimates that, if they heard with their ears, they did not understand with their hearts. So that this difference, when connected with the different ideas and objects of the two Gospels, is manifest, interesting, and instructive.

> When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not.

Another solemn truth we learn from this: -- the great thing that hinders spiritual understanding is religious prejudice. The Jews were charged with not understanding. They were not idolaters, or open infidels, but had a system of religion in their minds in which they had been trained from infancy, and which darkened their intelligence of what the Lord was bringing out. So it is now. Among the heathen, though you would find an evil state morally, yet at least there would be that kind of barren waste where the word of God night be freely sown, and, by grace, be believed. That is not the case where people have been nurtured in ordinances and superstition: there the difficulty is to understand the word.

> Then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.

The answer to the fowls, in the first parable, as we saw, is the wicked one taking away the word of the kingdom as soon as it is sown.

> But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it (Matt. 13:20).

There you have the heart moved in its affections, but without exercise of conscience. Anon with joy the word is received. There is great gladness about it, but there all ends. It is only the Holy Ghost acting upon conscience that gives what things are in God's sight.

> Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by-and-by he is offended (Matt. 13:21).

Then we have the thorny ground:

> He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful (Matt. 13:22).

There is a case that might have seemed promising for a time; but anxiety about this world, or the flattering ease of prosperity here below, rendered him unfruitful, and all is over.

> But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it" (all through it is spiritual understanding); "which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Now we come to the first of the similitudes of the kingdom of heaven. The parable of the sower was the preparatory work of our Lord upon earth.

> Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares [or darnel] [21] among the wheat, and went his way (Matt. 13:24, 25).

-- exactly what is become of the profession of Christ. There are two things necessary for the inroad of evil among Christians. The first is the unwatchfulness of the Christians themselves. They get into a careless state, they sleep; and the enemy comes and sows tares. This began at an early epoch in Christendom. We find the germs even in the Acts of the Apostles, and still more in the epistles. 1 Thessalonians is the first inspired epistle that the apostle Paul wrote; and the second was written shortly after. And yet he tells them that the mystery of iniquity was already at work; that there were other developments to follow, such as the apostasy and the man of sin; and that when the lawlessness should be fully manifest (instead of working secretly), then the Lord would put an end to the lawless one and all concerned. The mystery of iniquity seems akin to the sowing of the tares spoken of here. Some time after, "when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit" -- when Christianity began to make rapid strides in the earth, "then appeared the tares also." But it is evident that the tares were sown almost immediately after the good seed. No matter what the work of God is, Satan is always close upon its heels. When man was made, he listened to the serpent, and fell. When God gave the law, it was broken even before it was committed into the hands of Israel. Such is always the history of human nature.

So the mischief is done in the field, and never repaired. The tares are not for the present taken out of the field: there is no judgment of them. Does this mean that we are to have tares in the church? If the kingdom of heaven meant the church, there ought to be no discipline at all: you ought to allow uncleanness of flesh or spirit there, swearers, drunkards, adulterers, schismatics, heretics, antichrists, as much as the rest. Here is the importance of seeing the distinction between the church and the kingdom. The Lord forbids the tares to be taken out of the kingdom of heaven:

> Let both grow together until the harvest (Matt. 13:30),

that is, till the Lord come in judgment. Were the kingdom of heaven the same as the church, it would, I repeat, amount to no less than this; that no evil, let it be ever so flagrant, or plain, is to be put out of the church till the day of judgment. We see, then, the importance of making these distinctions, which too many despise. They are all-important for truth and holiness; nor is there a single word of God that we can do without. .

What, then, is the meaning of this parable? It has nothing to do with the question of church communion. It is "the kingdom of the heavens" that is spoken of -- the scene of the confession of Christ, whether true or false. Thus Greeks, Copts, Nestorians, Roman Catholics, as well as Protestants, are in the kingdom of heaven; not believers only, but also bad people professing the name of Christ. A man, who is not a Jew nor a Pagan, and who outwardly professes Christ's name, is in the kingdom of heaven. He may be ever so immoral or heretical, but he is not to be put out of the kingdom of heaven. But would it be right to receive him at the table of the Lord? God forbid! The church (i.e., the assembly of God), and the kingdom of heaven are two different things.

If a person falling into open sin were in the church, he ought to be put out of it; but you ought not to put him out of the kingdom of heaven. In fact, this could only be done by taking away his life; for that is meant by the rooting up of the tares. And this is what worldly Christianity did fall into, in no very long space of time after the apostles were departed from the earth. Temporal punishments were brought in for discipline; laws were made for the purpose of handing over the refractory to the subservient civil power. If they did not honor the so-called church, they were not to be suffered to live. In this way, the very evil our Lord had been guarding the disciples against, came to pass: and the emperor Constantine used the sword to repress ecclesiastical

---

21. ◆ Q. -- Matt. 13:25. What is the true force of the word (ζιζάνια) translated "tares" in the A. & R. Versions? Is there any ground for the strange notion, among many of old to our day, that the noxious weed intended is degenerate wheat? CARESSED.

A.-.—The word beyond doubt means "darnel," which is in Latin "lolium," or "I. temulentum" because of its deleterious properties. The "tare" or vetch is in Latin "vicia," and, far from being a noxious weed, a leguminous grain wholesome in itself and useful to the agriculturist in spring and winter for feeding his cattle. There is no more ground in natural science to confound tares with darnel than there is in philology. The things are as distinct as the terms. Nor is there the smallest evidence, since man began to observe, that wheat ever degenerated into either. It is a mere and baseless fancy. Yet so farmers talked and fathers wrote, to say nothing of natural philosophers like Pliny of old, and grave divines, as Dr. J. Lightfoot down to Abp. Trench, who goes so far as to treat as a Manichean error that wheat and tares (or rather darnel) are different in kind, and their spiritual counterparts incapable of passing from the one into the other As his assumption is not the fact in natural history, so it is a mistake doctrinally to deduce from our Lord's words that the sons of the kingdom and those of the evil one are interchangeable. They are viewed as the results of the respective sowings. It is still more palpably the error of ancients and moderns to overlook our Lord's interpretation of "the field" as "the world." To regard it as "the church" opens the door to confusion and evil without end, as every Christian ought to see (*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:159). ◆

offenders. He and his successors introduced temporal punishments to deal with the tares, to try and root them up.

Take, again, the church of Rome, where there is so thoroughly the confusion of the church with the kingdom of heaven. They claim, if a man is a heretic, to hand him over to the courts of the world to be burned; and they never confess, or correct, the wrong, because they pretend to be infallible. Supposing even that their victims were tares, this is to put them out of the kingdom. If you root a tare from the field, you kill it. There may be men outside professing, yet profaning, the name of God; but we must leave them for God to deal with.

This does not destroy Christian responsibility towards those who surround the Lord's table. You will find instructions as to all this in what is written about the church. "The field is the world"; the church only embraces those accepted adequately as members of Christ's body. Take 1 Corinthians, where we have the Holy Ghost laying down the true nature of ecclesiastical discipline. Let us suppose there are professing Christians, guilty of any sin you please; such persons are not to be owned, while they are going on in that sin, as members of Christ's body. A real saint might fall into open sin, but the church, knowing it, is bound to intervene for the purpose of expressing God's judgment about the sin. Were they deliberately to allow such a one to come to the Lord's table, they would in effect make the Lord a party to that sin. The question is not whether the person be converted or not. If unconverted, men have no business in the church; if converted, sin is not to be winked at. The guilty are not to be put out of the kingdom of heaven; they are to be put out of the church.

Thus the teaching of the word of God is most plain as to both these truths. It is wrong to use worldly punishments to deal with a hypocrite, even when he is detected. One may seek the good of his soul, but this is no reason for punishing him thus. But if a Christian is guilty of sin, the church, though called to be patient in judgment, is never to suffer it; but we are to leave guilty people, who are unconverted, to be judged by the Lord at His appearing. This is the teaching of the parable of the tares; and it gives a very solemn view of Christianity. As sure as the Son of man sowed good seed, His enemy would sow bad, which would spring up along with the rest: and this evil cannot, for the present, be got rid of. There is a remedy for evil which enters the church, but not yet for evil in the world.

This is the only Gospel containing the parable of the tares. Luke gives the leaven. Matthew has the tares also, which parable particularly teaches patience for the present, in contrast with Jewish judicial dealings, as well as with their just expectation of a cleared field when the millennium arrives under the reign of Messiah. The Jews would say, Why should we allow enemies, ungodly, heretics? Even when our Lord was here below, and some Samaritans received Him not, James and John wished to command fire to come down from heaven to consume them. Theirs was the natural thought of dealing with the tares at once, but the Lord rebuked them for it. They did not know what manner of spirit they were of; "for," He added, "the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." This illustrates our Lord's will about the tares. To kill them is contrary to Christianity, whose real power is all of the Holy Ghost, and not in mere force. The sword is outside.

But we have further instruction.

> Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn (v. 30).

Thus the heavenly saints are to be gathered into the Lord's barn, to be taken out of the earth to heaven. But "the time of the harvest" implies a certain period occupied with the various processes of ingathering. In that scene of "the harvest," the Lord will say to the reapers, "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." It is not said that the wheat is to be bound in bundles in order to be taken to heaven. There is no intimation that there is to be any special, preparatory work about the saints before they are taken up. But there is such a dealing of God with the tares. The angels are to arrange them in special ways, before the Lord clears them out of the field. I do not pretend to say how that will be, or whether the systems of associations in the present day may not pave the way for the final action of the Lord as regards the tares. But the principle of worldly association is growing apace. When the time approaches for the judgment of the quick, there will be the preliminary work, entrusted to the angels, of binding the wicked in bundles to burn them. How itwill be done I do not pretend to affirm, merely keeping to what is said in the chapter before me.

The parable of the wheat-field had fully proved, what must have been an unexpected blow to the thoughts of the disciples, that the dispensation just opening would turn out as complete a failure, as regards man's maintaining the glory of God, as the past one. Israel had dishonored God; they had wrought, not deliverance, but shame and confusion in the earth; they had failed under law, and would reject grace so thoroughly that the King would be obliged to send His armies to destroy those murderers, and burn up their city {Matt. 22:7}. But it might not have been so clearly understood, that if there was to be a new work which was to take the form of gathering disciples to the name of Jesus by the word preached to them, this new work would be spoiled in the hands of man. As far as the salvation of souls is concerned, it is independent of the creature at any time, whose trial by God turns out now, as ever, a complete failure.

Man came short of the glory of God in Paradise, and outside he corrupted his way and filled the earth with violence. Afterwards God chose a people to put them to the test, and they broke down. And now came the new trial. What would become of the disciples who professed the name of Christ? The answer has been given: While men slept, the enemy sowed tares. And a solemn announcement declares that no zeal on their part could remedy the evil. They might be faithful and earnest themselves; but the evil that has been

done by the introduction of the tares -- false professors of Christ's name -- will never be eradicated.

The Lord evidently speaks of the vast field of Christian profession, and of the sad fact that evil was to be introduced from the very beginning; and, once brought in, it would never be turned out till the Lord Himself returns to judgment, and by His angels gathers the tares in bundles to burn them, while the wheat is gathered into the barn. Thus we saw tares from a very early period were to be mingled with the wheat -- not necessarily with the church, for the field is not the church, but the world; and the meaning is, that there might be those bearing the name of Christ who were clearly wicked persons. We know that such people have managed to get, and even to keep, a footing within a great deal that bears the name of the Lord; but the field -- mark it well -- is not the assembly, but the scene of outward adhesion to Christ.

If we only think about the church in reading Matt. 13, we shall never understand the chapter. "The field is the world," the sphere where the name of the Lord is professed, and extending much beyond what could be called the church. There might be -- there are -- many persons, neither heathens, nor Jews, nor Mahometans {Muslims}, who would call themselves Christians, and yet show by their ways that there was no real faith in them. These are called "tares."

It is not necessary that they should be conscious hypocrites. They might, or might not, be; but they are unregenerate professors of the "the Lord," and "one faith"; baptized persons who have no appreciation of Christ, no care for His glory -- destitute, consequently, of life -- not born of water and of the Spirit, but withal bearing the name of Christ, and zealous, it may be, for the faith after an outward sort. These are now found everywhere in the western world, as once in the east. There are many, whom nobody believes to be born of God, who, nevertheless, would be shocked if they were regarded as infidels. They acknowledge Christ as the Savior of the world, and as the true Messiah, be it is as entirely inoperative upon their souls, as theirs was who, in Jerusalem, believed in Christ when they saw the miracles which He did (John 2). Jesus does not commit Himself to such now, any more than He did then.

The next parable intimates that the evil would not be merely the intermingling of a false profession, but something quite different surely to follow. It might be connected with the tares and grow out of them; but another parable was required in order to set it forth. Beginning with the smallest possible nucleus, most humble as regards this world, there was to be that which would assume vast proportions in the earth, which would strike its roots deeply among the institutions of men, and rise up into a system of power and earthly influence. This is the mustard-seed springing into a great tree, into whose branches the birds of the air come and lodge {Matt. 13:31-33}. These last the Lord had already explained as the wicked one, or his emissaries. (Compare vv. 4 and 19). We must never depart from the meaning of a symbol in a chapter, unless there be some fresh and express reason for it, which in this case does not appear. Thus we have the smallest of all seeds that grow into anything like a tree; and from. this exceedingly petty beginning there comes a stem; with boughs sufficiently capacious to yield a shelter and a home to the birds of the air. What a change for the Christian profession. The destroyer is now housed in its bosom.

Then follows the third parable, again of a different nature. It is not a seed, good or bad It is not the small now becoming lofty and large, a protective power in the earth, and for what? But here we find that there would be the spread of doctrine within, assimilating to itself whatever came in its way. "Leaved" is used in the Gospel of Matthew, as well as occasionally elsewhere, for doctrine. For instance, we have "the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees," which is called "leaven." No doubt, there the Lord speaks of hypocritical doctrine. The thought here is, not to characterize the doctrine, whether good or evil, but rather, it would appear, to symbolize that which spreads and permeates what is exposed to itself.

> The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three treasures of meal, till the whole was leavened (Matt. 13:33).

The three measures of meal are not legitimately assumed to mean the whole world; they are, I suppose, a certain defined space devoted to the action of the leavening doctrine, throughout which the doctrine spreads entirely. Whether the result is a good or a bad state when the whole is indoctrinated, we must judge by the word of God in general, and not merely by a particular figure or expression. It is not usual to find the truth make such way. We know what the heart is, and we may infer that the, doctrine which is so thoroughly spread under the name of Christ, must be very far departed from its original purity when it becomes welcome to any considerable "mass" of men. We have, moreover, seen the tares, which do not imply anything good, mingled with the wheat. We have had the mustard-seed grown into a tree, and strangely harboring the birds of the air, which first preyed on the seed that Christ sowed. Again, whenever "leaven" occurs symbolically in the word of God, it is never employed save to characterize corruption which tends to work actively and spread: so that the point here must not be assumed to be the extension of the gospel.

The meaning, I doubt not, is a system of doctrine which fills, and gives its tone to, a certain given mass. of men. What sort of doctrine it is must be decided by other considerations; but leaven, assuredly, would be an unwonted symbol of good. On the other hand, the. gospel is the seed -- the incorruptible seed -- of life, as being God's testimony to Christ and His work. It may be taken away, or trodden Down; but wherever the gospel is lodged in the heart, there it issues, through grace, in a new nature. Leaven has nowhere, and nothing, to do with Christ or giving life, but expressly the contrary. Hence there is not the smallest analogy between the action of leaven and the reception of life in Christ through the gospel.

I believe that the leaven here sets forth the propagandism of dogmas and decrees, after that Christendom became a great power in the earth (answering to the tree, which was the

case, historically, in the time. of Constantine the Great). We know that the result of this was an awful departure from the truth. When Christianity grew into respectability in the world, instead of being persecuted and. a reproach, crowds of men were brought in. A whole army was baptized at the word of command. Now the sword was used to defend, or enforce, Christianity; more frequently earthly reward and imperial favor might quicken the downfall of heathenism. All this was, no doubt, that which prepared the way for the spreading of the leaven; but not for the sound truth of God, nor for His grace.

Observe too, that thus the interpretation flows on harmoniously. We have parables devoted to distinct things, which may have a certain measure of analogy one to another, and yet set forth distinct truths in an order which cannot but commend itself to a spiritual, unprejudiced mind. Much depends on a due understanding of that which is meant by the "kingdom of heaven." Let us not forget that it is simply the authority of the Lord in heaven, acknowledged upon the earth. Whoever may own it, whether born of God or not, they are in the kingdom of heaven. Some are really renewed, while others have merely adopted Christianity as a good creed, and a sound moral code. When it becomes a thing the world takes cognizance of, as a civilizing power in the earth, weighed in the scale of man's wisdom, it is no longer the mere field sown with good seed, which the enemy may spoil with bad, but the towering tree, and the wide and deeply working leaven (and such is the very unexpected disclosure which our Lord makes); what the multitude might admire, but the wise would understand. If the disciples looked for everything going on according to the mind of Christ, they were quite mistaken. They were informed that there was to be a state of things wholly different from what they expected according to the prophets, who discoursed in glowing strains of a time when there would be universal peace, blessing, and glory on the earth. Here they find that, although the Messiah was come, He was going away; that, while He should be in the heavens, the kingdom would be introduced in patience, not power -- mysteriously, and not yet to sight; and that therein, consequently, the devil would be allowed to work just as before, only taking his usual advantage of the fresh truth revealed of God.

So far, then, these parables show the gradual growth of evil. First, there is the mingling of a little evil with a great deal of good, as in the case of the wheat field. Then the rising up of that which is high, and mighty, and influential from the lowly origin of early Christianity. Instead of having in the world tribulation, the Christian body becomes a patron or benefactor in its exercise of authority, and hence the place to which the most aspiring of the world betake themselves for what they want. After that a great propagation of doctrine follows, when the folly of Paganism and the narrowness of Judaism became so much the more apparent to men, as their interests carried them there also.

Mark a change now. The Lord ceases to address Himself to the multitude. Who could fail to see that the Lord was Himself sowing the wheat? Who could not perceive the growing up of the mustard tree, and the spread of the leaven, when the facts were there and the application made? But the Lord now turns aside from the multitude, who had been in view thus far. As it is said,

> All these spake Jesus to the multitude: and without a parable spake he not unto them {Matt. 13:34}.

But now Jesus sends the multitude away, and goes into the house. I would call your attention to this, because it divides the parables, and inaugurates a distinct set. The parables which follow were not such as man could see, or enter into. Anyone might take in the others. It is the world's wisdom, that Christianity is an institution to be proud of, but in creed, like another, involving no moral responsibility -- a leaven, in fact, that assimilates to itself, either from birth, habits, colonization, &c.

But although these parables represent different aspects and states, the preaching of the word of the kingdom might be going on all the time. This has a place to itself; just as among the Jews there were many feasts, but the Sabbath was a constantly recurring one, repeated week after week. Here we come to a great distinction, and there is a like analogy in those feasts, for they, too, are divided. After the passover, and the unleavened bread, with the feast of weeks, following one another, you have an interruption, after which come the feasts of trumpets, of atonement, and, finally, of tabernacles. As the apostle teaches, Christ our passover has been sacrificed for us; so that we have to celebrate the feast of unleavened bread inseparably connected with it. Nor is this all. We read in Acts 2:1, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come." There you have the feasts that are accomplished in us Christians. The feast of trumpets, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles, it would be absurd to apply to the Church; their application (save what we enjoy in the way of earnest by the Spirit) is to the Jews.

Thus, as in the middle of Lev. 23 the break indicates a new order of subjects, so in this chapter there is another just as marked; and while the first parables apply to the outward profession of Christ's name, the final ones pertain especially, and intimately, to what concerns real Christians. The multitude could not enter into them. They were the secrets of the family, and,: therefore, the Lord calls the disciples within, and there He unfolds all to them.

But before He enters upon the new ground, He gives us further information touching' the old. The disciples ask Him,

> Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field (Matt. 13:36).

Ignorant as they might be, still they had confidence in their Lord, and that what He had spoken He was willing to explain.

> He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man: the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one (Matt. 13:37, 38).

The Son of man and the wicked one, it has been well remarked, are opposed to each other. As in the Trinity, we

know there is a suited part which each blessed Person bears in their work of blessing, so the sad contrast appears in evil outside. As the Father brings out specially His love, and separates from the world through the revelation of it in Christ; as you have the Holy Ghost, in contrariety to the flesh, the, great agent of all the Father's grace, counsels, and ways; so scripture holds forth Satan always acting as the chief, personal antagonist of the Son. The Son of God is come that He might destroy the works of the devil. The devil makes use of the world to entangle people, to excite the flesh, stirring up the natural liking of the heart for present honor and ease. In opposition to all this, the Son of God presents the glory of the Father, as the object for which He was working by the Holy Ghost.

Discrimination runs strongly through the Lord's explanation to the disciples in the house. In the first of the parables, the good is thoroughly separate from the evil, but in the last of the three all is merged into an undistinguished lump. At first, however, all was plain. On the one hand, there is the Son of man, and He sows the good seed, and the result is the children of the kingdom. On the other hand, there is the enemy, and he is sowing his bad seed, false doctrines, heresies, &c.; and the result of this is the children of the wicked one. The presence of Christianity in the world has given the devil an opportunity for making men a great deal worse than if there never had been any fresh and heavenly revelation. The infidel historian has put the result in an awful light "the annals of Christianity are the annals of hell." We know that this arises from his confounding the nominal system, which is Babylon, with the true Church. In God's sight, that which bears the name of Christ is a more wicked thing than any other in the world. There never, elsewhere, has been so much righteous blood shed as at the hand of religion so-called. Is not this solemn? What we have had in popery is merely the full carrying out of earthly religion. Every religious system of the world tends to persecute whatever falls not in with it. This is seen even now, where there is a measure of faithfulness to Christ. The bitterness and opposition towards those who are seeking to follow the Lord in our day is the same kind of thing that broke out into the horrors of the dark ages, and lingers still in the "holy office" of the inquisition, when, and where, ever it holds up its head.

To continue, however --

> The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels (Matt. 13:39). [22]

"The world" in Matt. 13:38 must not be confounded with "the world" in v. 39. They are totally distinct words and things. "The world" in v. 39 means the age. It is a course of time, and not a geographical sphere. In v. 38 the sphere is intended, wherein the gospel goes forth; in v. 39 it is the space of time in which the gospel is either advancing, or is hindered by the enemy's power. The harvest is the consummation of the age, that is of the present dispensation [23] -- of the time while the Lord is absent, and the gospel is being proclaimed over the earth. Grace is actively going forth now. The only means which God employs to act upon souls are of a moral or spiritual sort. The angels introduce providential judgment, and deal with wicked people to destroy them, while the gospel lays hold of poor sinners to save them. The Lord intimates here that an end will be put to the present sending out of the word of the kingdom, and that a day will come when the effects of Satan's working must be fully developed and judged. The reapers are the angels." We have to do -- not with the judicial part, but -- with the spread of the good; the angels, with the judgment of the wicked. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. (Matt. 13:40). The same word is used for "world" in v. 40 as in v. 39. Unfortunately, our version gives the same English word in all three verses.

Many scriptures show a state of things to come at a future time for the world, totally different from what the gospel contemplates. I will refer to one or two in the prophets. Take Isa. 11, which speaks first of our Lord under the figure of a branch out of the roots of Jesse. It is plain that this is true of Christ, whether at His first or second advent. He was born an Israelite, and of the family of David. And again, as to the Holy Ghost resting upon Him, we know that this was true of Him when He was a man here below; but in v. 4 we find another thing:.

> With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.

If you argue that this applies now, because in the kingdom of heaven the Lord acts upon the souls of the meek, etc., I ask you to read a few words more:

> And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay

22. ◆ Q. How may Matt. 13 be reconciled with 2 Thess., upon the following points? In the prophetic teaching of the Lord Jesus, when on earth, in Matt. 13, there is *no* present hope, but a *prolonged* exhortation, at the end of the age, when the wheat is gathered into the garner; whereas, in the teaching of the Holy Ghost from the ascended Lord, the Church is besought "by the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto him," as a *present* hope. Were the Thessalonians "wheat" -- or rather are Christians, as such, in Matt. 13 as well as in the epistles? If so, how can the same persons have a present hope, and a protracted one? B.

A. I am not aware of anything that justifies the contrast thus drawn between the parable of the wheat and tare-field, and the instruction in 2 Thess. 2 and elsewhere. The angelic intervention under the authority of the Lord is to gather together first the tares and bind them in bundles with a view to their yet future destruction, before the wheat is gathered into His barn. But why should this be styled a prolonged expectation? Why should it interfere with the constant hope of the coming of the Lord to receive us to Himself? This parable, like all others, is constructed, as it appears to me, expressly to keep up the habitual looking for the closing scene. One could not collect from it anything to forbid that first generation of disciples expecting to be called away to their heavenly mansions {abodes -- of nearness to the Father}. Of course, the same thing applies to all that followed. Thus I see no reason to doubt that the wheat includes the Thessalonian believers with all other Christians. "In the time of harvest" is not a single point of time with previous events protracting the hope, but the general season of gathering in the saints, executing judgment on the tares already disposed by the angels with a view to it, and then the appearing of the saints in glory, which closes this age and introduces the new one (*The Bible Treasury* 7:64). ◆

23. {Strictly speaking, the church is not either an age or a dispensation. It is heavenly, being above and outside the earthly ages, not being an earthly thing. Its responsible testimony is here, of course.}

> the wicked.

Is the Lord doing this now? Clearly not. Is He not sending a message of mercy throughout the earth? Instead of slaying the wicked with the breath of His lips, is He not converting the wicked by the word of His grace? -- all in entire contrast with what is described here. The breath of His mouth is sometimes applied to the gospel; but let us see how this suits Isa. 30:33:

> For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

I find there a most valuable help to the understanding of ch. 11. What is He said to do with the breath of His mouth there? He slays the wicked one. "The breath of Jehovah," as interpreted by the Holy Ghost, forces us to the conviction that it means the execution of the Lord's judgment on the wicked. The Lord Jesus came to save; but the time is at hand when He shall come to destroy.

> He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

The Revelation also gives us the key, where He is seen with a sword proceeding out of His mouth. It represents righteous judgment executed by the bare word of the Lord. As He spoke the world into being, so He will speak the wicked into perdition.

Taking this as the indubitable meaning of the verse, what follows? A state of things quite unlike what we have now under the gospel:

> Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed: their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.

All this is not contemplated now; for whether we look at the Gospels, or at the Epistles, when the Holy Ghost is speaking about the preaching that goes on now, the effect we have to anticipate is this -- some believing, but the great majority rejecting. Besides, it is added, that in the latter days perilous times should come; and that which is most prevalent in the last time is, not the truth of Christ, but the lie of Antichrist (1 John 2); not the triumph of the good, but of the bad, till the Lord puts to His own hand; and this is what is reserved for His appearing and kingdom.

> He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked {Isa. 11:4}.

As the consequence we see all those blessed effects. The Lord is not smiting the earth now. He has opened heaven -- by-and-by He will take the earth.

In the Revelation you have the vision of the mighty angel, with his right foot upon the sea, and his left on the earth. It is the Lord taking the whole universe under His own immediate government. Now the mystery of iniquity is left unjudged. Evil is allowed to go on rampant in the world. But this will not be forever. The mystery of God is to be finished. Then will begin this amazing change, "the regeneration," as our Lord styles it, when the Spirit of God shall be poured out, and the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. But till these times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord, scripture calls the intervening space the evil age. So in Gal. 1:4, not the material world is meant, but the moral course of things, that is, "this present evil age." The new age, on the contrary, will be glorious, holy, and blessed.

In the very next verse of Isa. 11 we have the restoration of God's ancient people foretold, the gathering in of all Israel as well as of Judah. At the return from the Babylonish captivity such was not the case. A very inconsiderable fraction. of Judah and Benjamin came back, and none of Israel beyond a few individuals. The ten tribes are universally called the lost tribes; whereas

> it shall come to pass in that - day, that Jehovah shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of. Israel, and gather together the, dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west: they shall spoil them of the east together; they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And Jehovah shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea

-- a thing that has never been done, nor anything like it. The Egyptian sea exists just as it was; whereas, there would' be outward marks of the accomplishment of this prophecy, both spiritually and physically, had it ever taken place.

> And with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

Both in the Egyptian sea and in the Nile, there will be this great work of God, outstripping what He did when He brought the people out the first time by Moses and Aaron. This will be the age to come.

But as to the present age, [24] the tares and the wheat are to grow together till the harvest, which is the consummation of this age; and when it arrives, the Lord sends forth His angels, "and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity." The severing then takes place: the tares are gathered and cast into a furnace of fire, and "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Mark the accuracy of the expression, "then shall the righteous shine forth"; not "then shall they be caught up," because they will have been caught up before this epoch.

> When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory {Col. 3:4}.

So that the meaning is as plain as possible. It will be a new age, in which is no mingling of the good and bad: but the gathering out of the wicked for judgment closes this age, in order that the good may be blessed in the next. The righteous here spoken of shine forth as the sun, and are in a higher sphere; but the heavens and earth will then be a united system, though there be no confusion of its several parts. There will be the heavenly and the earthly glories. There will be those who shine above and others destined to rich blessing below. It will be all one kingdom; but there will be the heavenly and the earthly things, as the Lord distinguishes in John 3:12:

> If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

So here, we have the upper region called the kingdom of the Father, and the lower the kingdom of the Son of man.

> The Son of man shall seed forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity {Matt. 13:41}.

These are not even allowed to be on the earth, but are cast into a furnace of fire.

> Their shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father {Matt. 13:43}.

Both are "the kingdom of God." What a glorious prospect. Is it not a sweet thought that even this present scene of ruin and confusion is to be delivered? that God is to have the joy of His heart, not only in filling the heavens with His glory, but in the Son of man honored in the very place where He was rejected?

But let us now look at the next parable.

> The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure bid in a field, the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field (Matt. 13:44).

This is the first of the new parables within the house. The Lord. is there showing, not the state of things found under the public profession of the name of Christ, but the hidden things, or those which require discernment. It is a treasure hid in a field, which a man finds and hides, and for joy thereof sells all that he hath and buys the field. I am aware that it is the habit of persons to apply this to a soul finding Christ. But what does the man in the parable do? He sells all that he has to buy the field. Is this the way for a man to be saved? If so, salvation is "to him that worketh." It becomes, then, a question not of faith, but of a man giving up everything to gain Christ, which is not grace, but the law carried to the greatest excess. When a man has Christ, he would doubtless give up everything for Him. But these are not the terms on which a man first receives Christ for his soul's need. But this is not all. The whole field is bought; what do you make of that? "The field is the world." Am I to buy the world in order to obtain Christ? This only shows the difficulties into which we fall, whenever we depart from the simplicity of scripture. But where we really search, and try the scripture by scripture, the meaning is made plain. The Lord Himself confutes such an interpretation. He shows that there is one Man, and one only, who saw this treasure in the midst of the confusion? Who? It is the Lord -- the Lord who gave up all His rights in order that He might have sinners washed in His blood and redeemed to God; it was He who bought the world in order to acquire the treasure He valued. The two things are distinctly presented in John 17:2,

> As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

There is the treasure -- "as many as thou hast given him." But "all flesh" is no treasure at all. It is the outside thing that goes along with the bargain, if I may speak thus familiarly; but it is not the treasure for His heart. He buys the whole, the outside world, in order to possess this hidden treasure.

But, moreover,

> The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it (Matt. 13:45, 46).

The parable of the hidden treasure did not sufficiently convey what the saints are to Christ. For the treasure might consist of a hundred thousand pieces of gold and silver. And how would this mark the blessedness and beauty of the church? The merchantman finds "one pearl of great price." The Lord does not see merely the preciousness of the saints, but the unity and heavenly beauty of the assembly. Every saint is precious to Christ; but He

> loved the church, and gave himself for it {Eph. 5:25}.

That is what is seen here -- "one pearl of great price." Without in the least doubting that its spirit may be applied to every Christian, I believe it is intended to set forth the loveliness of the church in the eyes of Christ. It could not be fully said of a man awaking to believe the gospel. If we consider a sinner before he has received Christ, is he seeking goodly pearls? Is he not rather feeding on husks with the swine? Here it is One who seeks "goodly pearls," which no unconverted man ever really sought. There is no possibility of applying these parables, except to the Lord Himself, or to the working of His Spirit in His own people. How blessed it

24. {It is well to ever keep in mind that we are still in the Mosaic age, which age will be changed when the Lord appears in glory to introduce "the age to come," i.e., the millennium.}

is that, in the midst of all the confusion which the devil has wrought, Christ sees the treasure of His saints, and the beauty of His church, spite of all infirmities and failure!

Then we have all wound up by the parable of the net, which is thrown into the sea (Matt. 13:47-50). It is a figure used to remind us that our energies and desires must be directed after those who are floating about in the sea of the world. The net was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, "which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." Who are "they?" Never do we find angels gathering the good, but always severing the wicked for judgment. The fishers were men, like the servants in the first parable. But it is not only the gospel that we have here. The net gathers of every kind; but is not the putting the good into vessels more? is it not gathering saints according to God? It is shown us that out of every class, before the Lord returns in judgment, there is to be a mighty operation of the Spirit through the fishers of men, gathering saints together in a way quite unexampled. May not the spirit of this be going on now? The gospel is going out with remarkable power over all lands. But there is another action -- the gathering the good together and putting them into vessels. This is not what takes place in heaven. The bad are cast away; but this is not the end of them. Another thing is reserved for them -- the furnace of fire. But we have this additional information in the next verse, "The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just." The angels' business is always with the wicked; the servants' with the good. The severing of the wicked from among the just is not the fishermen's work at all; and their casting of the bad away is not the same thing as the furnace of fire.

In commenting on Matt. 8 and 9 of our Gospel, some striking instances of displacement have been already pointed out. Thus the incidents of crossing the lake in the storm rebuked at last, of the cured demoniacs, of the raised daughter of Jairus, and of the woman healed on the way, belong as. matters of history to the interval between the parables we have been lately occupied with, and the despising of our blessed Lord, which our evangelist proceeds to set down next in order. I have sought to explain the principle on which, as I believe, the Holy Spirit was pleased to act in thus arranging the events, so as to most vividly develop our Lord's Messianic ministry in Israel with His rejection and its consequences. Hence it is that, the intervening facts having been inserted in that earlier portion, the unbelief of Israel in presence of His teaching naturally follows. He was in His own country and taught them in their synagogues; but the result, spite of astonishment at His wisdom and mighty works, is the scornful inquiry,

> Is not this the carpenter's son? . . And they were offended in him.

A prophet He is, but without honor in His own country and in His own house. The manifestation of glory is not denied -- the vessel is not received according to God's will, but judged according to the sight and apprehensions of nature (Matt. 13:54-58).

Matthew 14

Nor is this the whole sad truth. About this time the twelve were sent forth. This we have had in Matt. 10, forming part of the special series of events transplanted into that part of the gospel; but in point of time, it followed the fleshly judgment which was now Messiah's portion. Their mission was beautifully given before by Matthew, so as to complete the picture of Christ's patient, persevering grace with Israel, as well as to testify to the rights of His person as Jehovah, the Lord of the harvest. Here consequently the fact is omitted, but the effect appears.

> At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him (Matt. 14:1, 2).

This gives occasion to the Spirit of God to tell the tale (Matt. 14:3-12) of the extinction of John the Baptist's testimony in his own blood. It was not only a blinded people, but in their midst ruled a false and reckless king, who feared not first to imprison, and finally to slay, that blessed witness of God. Not that he did not fear the multitude (Matt. 14:5), for his passions would have impelled him to do the deed; not that he had not sorrow and qualms when it came to the point (Matt. 14:9); but what can these restraints avail, in presence of the undiscerned wiles and the unremoved power of Satan? Bad as Herod was, he was not without conscience, and the preaching of John had reached it, so far at least as to render him uneasy. But the issue was what he might expect who knows that an enemy is behind the scene, hating all that is of God, and goading man on to be his own slave and God's foe, in the gratification of lust and the maintenance of honor worse than vanity. What an insight into the world, and the heart, we have here from God! And with what holy simplicity all is laid bare which it would be profitable for us to hear and weigh!

> Man being in honour abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning {Psa. 49:12, 13}.

So sang the Psalmist, and surely it was right, and of God.

> And he (the king) sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother (Matt. 14:10, 11).

Such is man, and such is woman, without God.

When word was brought to the Lord about John's death, He marks His sense of the act at once --

> he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him (Matt. 14:13).

There was no insensibility in Him, whatever His longsuffering and grace. He felt the grievous wrong done to God, to His testimony, and to His servant. It was the harbinger of a storm still more violent, and of a deed of blood darker far -- the awful sin of His own rejection. He would not hurry the moment, but retires. He was a sufferer, a. perfect sufferer, as well as sacrifice; and while His sufferings rose to their height in that most solemn hour, when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, it would be to ignore much if we limited our thoughts and feelings of His love and moral glory to His closing agony. The Lord, then, so the much more felt the evil, because of His unselfish love and unstained holiness. It is ever felt most in God's presence, where He felt everything. The work of rejection goes on.

Did this deep sense, in His spirit, of the growing power of evil in Israel interrupt the course of His love? Far from it.

> And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick (Matt. 14:14).

Let murderous unbelief act as it may, He was Jehovah, and present here below in humiliation, but in divine power and grace.

The disciples poorly profit by His grace, and leave small space for the display of His beneficent power. So, when it was evening, they

> came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals (Matt. 14:15).

"Send the multitude away!" Away from Jesus! What a proposal! The greatness of the strait, the urgency of the need, the difficulty of the circumstances, which to unbelief are so many reasons for men to do what they can, are to faith just so much the more the plea and occasion for the Lord to show what He is. "Jesus said unto them, They need not depart: give ye them to eat." O the dullness of man! -- the folly and slowness of heart in disciples to believe all! And yet, beloved friends, have we not seen it? Have we not proved the self-same thing in ourselves? What lack of care for others! What measuring of their waists, in the forgetfulness of Him who has all power in heaven and on earth, and who, in the same breath that assures us of it, has sent us forth to meet the deepest necessities of sin-darkened souls!

> And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes {Matt. 14:17}.

Ah! were they, are we, so blind as to overlook that it is not a question of what, but of whom we have? Jesus is nothing to the flesh even of disciples.

He said, "Bring them hither to me." Oh! for more simplicity in thus bringing every lack and every scanty supply to Him whose it is to provide, not for us only, but for all the exigencies of His love; to reckon on Him more habitually as One who cannot act beneath Himself.

> And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass; and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and

> gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children (Matt. 14:19-21).

How blessed the scene, and how the perfectness of Christ shines through it all! In nothing does He depart from grace, spite of the recent display of murderous hatred in Herod. His very retiring apart before it is but a further step in the path of His sorrow and humiliation; and yet there, in the desert,: to this great multitude, drawn out by their wants, comes forth this striking testimony. Should they not have assuredly gathered who and what He was? Jehovah had chosen Zion -- had desired it for His habitation -- had said, This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. But now an Edomite was there, the slave of a ravening Gentile; and the people would have it so, and the chief priests would shortly cry, We have no king but Caesar. Nevertheless, the rejected One spreads a table in the wilderness, abundantly blesses Zion's provision, and satisfies her poor with bread. The miracle may not be the fulfilment of Psa. 132:15, but it is the witness that He was there who could, and will yet, fulfil it. He is the Messiah, but the rejected Messiah, as ever in our Gospel. He satisfies His poor with bread, but it is in the wilderness, whither He had withdrawn apart from the unbelieving nation and the wilful, apostate king.

But now a change opens on our view. For

> straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone (Matt. 14:22, 23).

The crown was not yet to flourish upon Himself. He must leave His ancient people because of their unbelief, and take a new position on high, and call out a remnant to another state of things also. Rejected as Messiah on earth, He would not be a king by the will of man to gratify the worldly lusts of any, but go above and there exercise His priesthood before God. It is an exact picture of what the Lord has done. Meanwhile, if the masses of Israel ("the great congregation") are dismissed, His elect are ushered into a scene of troubles in the absence of their Master during the night of man's day.

> The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary (Matt. 14:24).

Such were some of the consequences of Christ's rejection. Apart on high, and not in the wilderness, He prays for His own; locally severed, and yet in truth far nearer, He prays for the disciples left alone to outward appearance. They are "such as should be saved," the chosen ones, companions of His own humiliation, while the nation despised Him.

> And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? (Matt. 14:25-31).

Without dwelling now on the moral lesson, with which we are all more or less familiar, a few words on the typical instructions conveyed by the passage may be welcome.

He will leave His intercessional place above and rejoin His disciples when their troubles and perplexity are deepest. The mountain, the sea, storm and calm, darkness and light, are all, as to security, alike to Christ; but His taking part in the distress is the terror of the natural mind. At first, even the disciples "were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear," only hushed by the sign of His speedy presence. This hardly goes beyond the circumstances and condition of the Jewish remnant. If there be any part which does, it is set forth in Peter, who, on the word of Jesus, quits the ship (which presents the ordinary state of the remnant), and goes to meet the Savior, outside all support of nature. It is our part to cross the world by divine power; for we walk by faith, and not by sight. The wind was not hushed, the waves were as threatening as ever. But had not Peter heard that word "Come"; and was it not enough? It was ample from the Lord and God of all.

> And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.{Matt. 14:29}.

As long as Jesus and His word were before his heart, there was no failure any more than danger.

> But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Peter failed, as the church has failed, to walk towards Christ, and with Christ; but, as in his case, so in ours, Christ has been faithful, and has "delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver."

> And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God (Matt. 14:32, 33).

Jesus now rejoins the remnant, and calm immediately follows, and He is owned there as Son of God. And not this only, for

> they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole (Matt. 14:34-36).

The Lord is now joyfully received in the very scene where before He had been rejected. It foreshadows the blessing and healing of a distressed and groaning world, consequent on His return in acknowledged power and glory.

Matthew 15

We find in this chapter striking evidence of the great change which was now fast coming in through the rejection of Jesus by Israel. For, first, we have certain religious guides, "Scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem," who had the best spiritual opportunities of their nation, and who came clothed with all that savored of antiquity and outward sanctity. These men put the question to our Lord, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." The Lord proceeds to deal with the conscience. He does not enter into an abstract discussion about tradition; nor does He dispute with them as to the authority of the elders; but He at once lays hold of the plain fact, that, in their zeal for the tradition of the elders, they were setting themselves point-blank against the clear, positive commandment of God. This I believe to be the invariable effect of tradition, no matter whom it may govern. If we take up the history of Christendom and consider any rule that was ever invented, it will be found to carry those who follow it in opposition to the mind of God. It may seem to be the most natural thing possible, mid growing out of the new circumstances of the church; but we are never safe in departure from God's word for any other standard.

Not that one contends for the bare literal interpretation of scripture. A certain course that the word of God binds upon His saints in dealing with one evil may not be their duty at some other crisis. New circumstances modify the path the church ought to pursue. Were you to apply the directions given for judging immorality to fatal error touching our Lord's person, you would have a very insufficient measure of discipline. False doctrine does not touch the natural conscience as gross conduct does. Nay, you may too often find a believer drawn away by his affections to make excuses for those who are fundamentally heterodox. All sorts of difficulties fill the mind where the eye is not really single. Many might thus be involved who did not themselves hold the false doctrine. If I accept the principle of dealing with none but him who brings not the doctrine of Christ, it will not do; for there may be others entangled by it. What is any individual, what is the church even, in comparison with the Savior, the Son of the Father? Accordingly, the rule laid down by the Spirit for vindicating Christ's person from blasphemous assailants or their partisans, is infinitely more stringent than where it is a question of moral corruption, be it ever so bad.

Again, there is a strong tendency to stereotype our own previous practice, and when some fresh evil comes in to insist on what was done before, or is done generally, without inquiring afresh of God, and searching into His word in view of the actual case before us, and of our own responsibility. The spirit of dependence is needed in order to walk rightly with God. There is in the written word of God that which will meet every claim; but each case should be a renewed occasion for consulting that word in the presence of Him who gave it. People like to be consistent with themselves, and to hold fast former opinions and practices.

Our Lord, in this place, asserts that deference to mere human tradition leads into direct disobedience of God's will. Washing the hands might have seemed to be a most proper act. Nobody could pretend that scripture forbade it; and, no doubt, the Jewish doctors could press its moral significance. They might very well argue how calculated it was to keep before their minds the purity God insists on, and especially that we ought never to receive anything from His hand without putting away all defilement from ours. They might reason thus to a people who loved all outward routine. At all events they might say, What was the harm of such a tradition? What mischief could it do for persons to wash their hands, while it might do so much good? But our Lord simply comes to this issue: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" It was not in spite of, but by, their tradition that God was disobeyed.

This is illustrated by a very important relationship in Israel. The apostle Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, cites the command to honor the father and mother as the first commandment with promise. Other commandments had the threat of death annexed to them; but this commandment was one that God singled out to crown with long life on earth. The apostle's reasoning is, that, if a Jewish child was not only bound, but encouraged by such a promise; to venerate his parents, how much more is a Christian child now? He was to obey them in the Lord -- not merely in the law, but in the Lord. This is the instance taken up here also,

> God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother; and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death {Matt. 15:4}.

That is, on the one hand, the honor was valued by God; on the other, disrespect was deadly in His sight.

> But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father or his mother . . .

The Jews had brought in a cheat for their consciences by which they might free themselves from the obligation to meet filial duties. They had only to pronounce the word, "It is a gift" (Corban), and a parent might be forgotten! Doubtless, it was out of their authorized traditions, and for the priest's profit; but it was as undoubtedly an unhallowed act in God's sight, and a direct infringement of His command.

> Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

This is a solemn thing to be remembered; for it is not merely applicable to this class of human relationships, but if any will take the trouble to examine every kind of religious rule introduced, not only in popery, but in Protestantism, they will find the same thing invariably true. To add to scripture is ruinous: it does not matter by whom it may be done, nor that men allege the holiest motive; for God is jealous about it, and will not have His word enlarged or amended. Revelation is complete, and our simple business is to be obedient to the

word of God.

Thus it matters not what example, any may propose. Take one of the commonest possible -- the choice of a minister. People, Christians, say, We must send for ministers, and choose between them who is to be ours.

I am willing to concede care and conscience in exercising their judgment without partiality or prejudice. But where is the warrant for choosing anyone whatever to preach the gospel, or to teach the church? Is there one precept, one instance, in all the New Testament? Did God, then, not foresee the difficulties and the wants of congregations? Surely He did. Why, then, is there an absence of all such directions for them? Because it was a sin to do it -- not only not His mind but contrary to it. There is not a single case, nor anything like it, from the time the Holy Ghost was sent down at Pentecost till the canon of scripture was closed. And yet you have multitudes of churches spoken of in the scripture. What, then, is a congregation to do when they want a minister? Why not search and see the scriptural way of meeting such a dilemma? The difficulty arises from their being in a false position already. The central truth of the church is the presence of the Holy Ghost.

We are speaking now of the Christian assembly, wherein the Spirit is personally present to act according to His own will in the midst of disciples, there gathered for the purpose of glorifying God and exalting Christ. Where the meeting is thus carried on, the question of choosing a minister could not arise. Where there are but three meeting upon God's principles (that is, church-ground), it is, if I may so say, church, if not the church. If there were three thousand real saints met, but not on God's principles, they would not be the church nor church either, though all members of Christ. So that, if you take this common Protestant tradition of choosing a minister, it. is decisive. It puts the persons who use it in distinct opposition to the word of God. It might be good for a Christian assembly to feel their weakness. There might be none with any special gift among them: some might be able to help in worship and prayer, though not in preaching or teaching. But the blessed comfort is that, if there were not some one specially gifted in the word, the Holy Ghost is able to edify the saints without him. If the assembly could have any amount of gift, and have it in a wrong way, the blessing would be impaired, and the will and glory of God so far set aside. But if there were not one with a special gift, there might be real blessing, provided the eye were towards the Lord.

The object of the Holy Ghost is to put the souls of the saints in direct connection with the Lord. God in His wisdom may be pleased not to raise up any in a particular assembly, or He may send there two, three, or more to minister. I do not believe that any one man has sufficient gifts for the church. The notion of having a single person to be the exclusive organ of the communications of God to His people is a wrong to them, and above all, to the Lord. In every respect it opposes, and destroys, the will of God about His church. There might seem to be a great many good reasons why people should choose a minister, but never listen to any apology for that which you do not find in the word of God. We are bad judges of what would be best for us. Men may make great mistakes; but faith goes upon the ground that God can make none. He provides for everything in His word. God is pressing that upon us at this very moment. At the Reformation the point was to get the Bible to all, so that there might be the possibility of poor souls learning Christ for their salvation. But there nearly all that was known of the truth ended. The Reformation never touched the true question of the church. The Reformers had to deal with a very rough enemy. They had to blow up the masses of rock in the quarry; and we must not find fault if they could not fashion the stones, nor build them, with equal skill. But we ought not to stop at their hewings.

Tradition ought never to be held in any shape whatever. Here it was not merely following one another, but using tradition to indulge hypocritical selfishness. "Ye hypocrites," says our Lord,

> well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto. me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me {Matt. 15:7}.

Those who pretended such zeal for the law were destroying its very foundations all the while. The father and mother stand at the head of the relative precepts which have to do with men. Thus, by their tradition, which allowed their dishonor, God's own authority was made null and void -- and that, too, in the very highest earthly relationships in Israel. Isaiah shows that, as they, had got rid of the law by their tradition, so the prophets condemned them. "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Having despatched this matter, He calls the multitude, and says to them,

> Hear, and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man {Matt. 15:10, 11}.

It is the chiefly religious leaders that occupy themselves with tradition. The great general snare is denying the evil of men. The constant weapon which Satan uses now is the idea that man is not so bad but that moral culture may improve him. The progress of the world is astonishing, they say. There are societies for promoting every philanthropic object, even down to preventing cruelty to animals. Here is a word that pronounces on these efforts of men in the gross. "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." The real secret of man's deplorable condition is his heart. This affects all that comes out.

It is not in any wise what God made. Man is now merely a corrupt creature, whose corruption is imparted to what he takes in. Therefore mere restraining of the flesh is entirely useless in God's sight, and essentially false. The Lord says to the multitude, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." Observe, He has done with the question of Jerusalem and of tradition. He speaks of what touches human nature. Man is lost. But no one thoroughly believes this about

himself, till he has found Christ. He may believe he is a sinner, but does he believe he is so bad that no good can be got out of him? Is not the prevalent theory and effort to better man's condition? But our Lord declares here that it is not by what you put in, or what you keep from man, that he is made better. The heart is bad; and till the heart is reached, all else is vain. But "the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." God's way of dealing with the heart ought to be the nearest thing to a Christian. What so simple, so blessed, so mighty, as the gospel? Who says that the gospel wants a handmaid? The handmaid has lost her mission and is discharged. As Hagar was sent out of the house, so all that you get by Hagar is merely Ishmael -- the son born after the flesh, that mocks the child of promise. Man is not now in a state of probation. The trial has been made. God has pronounced upon men that the flesh is utterly worthless; and yet man is trying the question again, instead of believing God.

The disciples came to speak to our Lord about it. They did not altogether relish what He had been saying. They came and said unto Him, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?" They might not be offended themselves, but were. disposed to sympathize with the people who were. We might have thought the multitude would be most offended. But no; the Pharisees, standing upon tradition, have no more notion of the true ruin of man's nature in the sight of God than even the poor multitude in all their ignorance. Nothing so blinds the mind as tradition. The Pharisees, then, were offended, and the disciples were trying to act as mediators between them and our Lord. But our Lord answers still more sternly,

> Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up {Matt. 15:13}.

There needs a new life from God, not an improving of the old one. A plant must be planted, then, and the heavenly Father must do it. Every other plant shall be rooted up. "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind." We are not to spend our time reasoning with these Pharisees: it is altogether vain. They require first principles, and the work of God in their souls; and therefore all discussion is premature and thrown away. "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind." He did not apply this to the multitude, but to the leaders that were stumbled by the doctrine of man's total corruption. Such are best left to their own devices. "Let them alone." And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

But the Lord does not leave the disciples where they were. Peter answers and says unto Him, "Declare unto us this parable." This is evidently instructive. What did he mean by calling it a parable? He did not understand it himself. Here was one, the very chief of the twelve apostles, and he cannot understand what our Lord means when He tells them that man is altogether wrong -- his heart most of all; that what comes out of him is what is so bad, not that which goes in. And this is a parable! The difficulty of scripture arises less from difficult language than from unpalatable truth. Truth is contrary to people's wishes; and they cannot see it because they do not like to receive it. A man may not be always conscious of this himself, but it is the real secret that God sees. The obstacle consists in man's dislike of the truth. Peter says, "Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?" Think where a disciple was when he could find a dark saying in our Lord's sentence upon man as utterly bad and worthless!

> Do ye not yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the heart, . . . they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies {Matt. 15:17-20}.

The source of man's evil is from within. And, therefore until there is a new life brought in -- till man is born again, of water and of the Spirit -- all is useless. "These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." There closes our Lord's blessed and weighty instruction, announcing that the day of outward forms was past, and that it was now a question of the reality of man's state in the sight of God. And this He brings out with the greatest possible clearness for the disciples who could not understand: all very suggestive indeed to us.

But now we find our Lord turning to a different thought. He goes away from these scribes and Pharisees to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, that is, to the very extremity of the Holy Land, and to that particular quarter of the borders of it which had been expressly the scene of the judgments of God. In Matt. 11 our Lord had referred to them, and said, that it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for the cities where His mighty works had been done. They were proverbial as the monuments of God's vengeance among the Gentiles. There our Lord is met by a woman of Canaan coming out of the same coasts. If there was one race in all these borders more particularly under God's ban, it was Canaan. "Cursed," said Noah, "be Canaan" -- such a deep character of evil had come in by the youth Canaan, who seems to have been specially the leader of his father in the wickedness against his grandfather Noah.

> Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren {Gen. 9:25}.

And so, when Israel was brought into the land, the Canaanites were to be exterminated without mercy. They were persons whose abominations had gone up to heaven with a cry for vengeance from God. Here this woman came out of. the coasts of Canaan, and cries unto Jesus, saying,

> Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon (Matt. 15:22).

If we could have conceived any case most opposed to what we had before -- scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, full of learning and outward veneration for the law -- we have it in this poor woman of Canaan.

The circumstances, too, were dreadful. Not only was it in Tyre and Sidon, recalling the judgments of God, but the demon had taken possession of her daughter. All these circumstances together made the case to be as deplorable a one as could be found. How was the Lord going to deal with her? The Lord shows, in meeting her case, a great change in

His ways. We have seen the Jews pronounced hypocrites; their worship intolerable to God, and declared such through their own prophets.. For if the Lord pronounced these men to be hypocrites, He did it out of the lips of their own prophet Isaiah. Now comes one that had not the smallest tie with Israel. In former times, the obligation of Israel had been to kill the Canaanites. How would the Messiah deal with her? She cries unto the Lord, saying,

> Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon. But he answered her not a word {Matt. 15:22, 23}.

Not a word! Why was this? She was on totally wrong ground. What had she to do with the Son of David? If the Lord had acted as the Son of David, what could He have done with her except order her to be executed? Had the Lord been merely the Son of David, could He have given her the blessing He had in His heart? She appealed to Him as if she were one of a chosen people who had claims on Him as their Messiah. Was it ever promised that Messiah was to heal the Canaanites? Not a word about it. When the Messiah does come as Son of David, the Canaanites will not be there. Look at Zech. 14, and you will find, when our Lord shall be King over all the earth, "In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts." So that it is plain that the judgments which were not thoroughly executed by Israel, because they were unfaithful to the trust of the Lord, are to be executed by-and-by when the Son of David will take His inheritance. This woman was altogether confused about it. She had the conviction that He was much more than the Son of David, but she did not know how to bring it out.

It is, I think, in much the same way that many persons now, anxious about their sins, have tried the Lord's Prayer, and have asked the Father to forgive them their sins as they forgive others. They go to God as their Father, and ask of Him to deal with them as children. But this is the very thing which is not yet settled. Are they children? Can they say that God is their Father? They would shrink from it. It is that which they chiefly desire, but they fear it is not so; that is, they have no right to draw near to God on the footing of a relationship which they do not know to exist. So that when persons are thus confused, they never get thorough peace to their souls. Sometimes they are hoping they are the children of God, sometimes fearing they are not, cast down with the sense of the evil within them. The fact is, they do not understand the matter at all. They are quite right in wishing to turn to God, but they do not know how to do it. They are not willing to go to God in all their need -- just as they are — giving up all thought of having promises, or anything else. This may explain the wrongness of an anxious soul seeking after God on the ground of promises. A good deal is said about sinners "grasping the promises"; but have you any real title to grasp the promises? For whom were they? In the Old Testament they were for Israel; in the New for Christians. But you are not an Israelite and you are not sure you are a Christian in the sense meant. No wonder that you feel confused.

It is good for a soul to be brought to this: -- I have no claim upon God for anything; I am a lost sinner. If God shakes a person from what they have no right to, if He strips them of everything, it is for the purpose of giving them a blessing that He has a right to give them. People forget that now it is the righteousness of God -- God's right to bless through Christ Jesus, according to all that is in His heart. It is no right of theirs: sin has destroyed that. The cross has come in. Men are lost. But they are afraid to confess the true ruin in which they are found. This is what the Lord was dealing with in the poor woman of Canaan. He was bringing her down to feel that she had no right to the promises. As Son of David He had promises. He was to do all kinds of things for Israel: but where were any promises to the Canaanites? Thus, on the ground of promise, on the ground of His being the Son of David, it was impossible for the Lord to give her what she asked. She did not understand this. She thought that if an Israelite might go on the ground of promise she could. But it is a mistake. "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" {2 Cor. 1:20}. But who are the "us"? We who have the Lord Jesus. When we have got Christ without a promise, then we have a Christ in whom all the promises of God are yea and Amen. We go to Him as sinners, naked and bare, without the smallest help even of a promise. But when we have Christ as sinners, then we find that in this Blessed One all the promises of God are found to be ours. But we find Him as lost sinners first, and there are no such things as promises to lost sinners. Not a soul has a right to a promise till he receives Christ; and when we have Christ, we have in Him all the promises. So God will deal with Israel by-and-by; not on any claims that they profess, for He has allowed them to forfeit these by rejecting Christ now.

> For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! {Rom. 11:32}.

The poor woman thus made it meet not to answer her. If the Lord had spoken to her, it must have been with a rebuke. It was grace and tenderness that led Him not to answer her: He remains silent till she drops the ground that she had first taken. But the disciples were not silent; they wanted to get rid of her importunity; they did not like the trouble of her. They "came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us." But the Lord confirms what has been already said as to the wrongness of her plea. He says, as it were, She does not belong to the house of Israel: I cannot give her a blessing on the ground she takes, but I will not send her away without a blessing. He stands for the special privilege of the sheep of the house of Israel, and she was not a sheep. She could not get the blessing on that ground.

> He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel {Matt. 15:24}.

Then the Canaanitess came and "worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me." She drops the words "Son of David." She no longer uses the title which connects Him with Israel, but acknowledges generally His authority. Now He answers her, though she is not yet down low enough. When she appeals to Him as Lord; which was a suitable title, He answers,

> It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast

> it to dogs {Matt. 15:26}.

The moment that this is uttered, all the secret is out. "Truth Lord," she says, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." She takes the place of being a dog. She acknowledges that Israel was, in the outward ways of God, the favored people, as children eating of bread upon the table; whereas the Gentiles were but the dogs underneath. She acknowledges it, and it is very humbling. People do not like it now. But she is brought down to it. The Lord may, for the purpose of leading us into deeper blessing, bring us down to the very lowest point of the truth about ourselves. But was there no blessing even for a dog? She falls back upon this truth: Let it be that I am a dog, has not God some blessing for me? No one could fancy that there ever were promises for dogs! yet this was the place she took. When she is brought down to her true place, the Lord gives her the full blessing. He even meets her with the strongest approbation of her faith --

> O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt {Matt. 15:28}.

When He had pronounced the sentence upon the nation of the Jews, who were only hypocrites, the Lord goes out to the Gentiles. Faith meets with richest mercy. The faith, that penetrates through outward circumstances, and bears the discovery that we have not yet got down to the lowly place we ought to take, only receives blessing deeper and more enduring than ever. The poor woman was blessed even to her heart's content.

> Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

This was grace; and grace dealing with the most extreme case of a Gentile under special curse is that which occupies the Lord on His turning away from Israel.

But there is more than this. It is not the Lord retiring after He has fed the multitude, but the Lord coming down from the mountain in sovereign goodness.

> Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there (Matt. 14:29).

It is now the Lord, who had been away visiting the Gentiles, when the multitude can approach Him.

> Great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel (Matt. 15:30, 31).

This again is a picture of Israel feeling their real condition. They are coming to Jesus, looking to Him, and saying, as it were, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." They are to speak thus by-and-by; and the Lord declared they should not see Him till they should say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. What they saw in Jesus led them to glorify the God of Israel. Thus the Lord will have relations with Israel. They come, not now in controversy, but as a poor, maimed, blind, and miserable multitude; ° and the Lord heals them all. But this is not all. He feeds them as well as heals them; and we have the beautiful second miracle of the loaves.

But mark the differences. In a former case, the disciples were for sending the multitudes away; and the Lord allowed them to show out their unbelief. In the present instance, it is Christ Himself who thinks of them and purposes to bless them. "I have compassion," says He,

> on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way (Matt. 15:32).

You may remember that it is said in Hosea 6,

> After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

It is the adequate time of the trial of the people. Literally it was the time our Lord lay in the grave; but it is connected also with the future blessing of Israel.

> I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

How slow they are to learn the resources of Christ, as before they were to learn the worthlessness of man!

> Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes (Matt. 15:34).

It is not now five loaves and twelve baskets full left; but with seven loaves they begin, and with seven baskets full they end. The reason is this: seven is always the number of spiritual completeness in scripture, and this is intended to denote the fulness with which the Lord makes the blessing flow to His people -- the fulness of provision that they have in Him.

> He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude (Matt. 15:36).

Can one doubt that this is the picture of the Lord providing amply for the Jews -- for the beloved people of His choice, whom He never can abandon, to whom He must accomplish His promises, because He is the faithful God? Here the Lord, out of His own heart, fully provides for their refreshment, even for their bodily refreshment. This will be the character of the millennial day, when not only the soul will be blessed, but when every kind of mercy will abound, God vindicating His earth from the hand of Satan, who had long defiled it. Even here below, there will be the flowing out of divine compassion toward them, and giving them all they need. In the seven loaves before they ate, and the seven baskets of fragments taken up after they had eaten, you have the idea of completeness, an ample store, as for the present, so for wants to come.

Matthew 16

In the last chapter, which introduces a new part of the subject of St. Matthew, we saw that the two great pictures introduced were, first, the hypocritical disobedience of those who boasted of the law, completely exposed out of their own prophets, as well as by the touchstone of the Lord Himself; and, secondly, the true nature of grace shown to one whose circumstances demanded nothing but sovereign mercy, if she were to be blessed at all. I need not enter more into a chapter already looked at; but I would recall also the particular manifestation at the close of the Lord's patient and perfect grace towards Israel, spite of the condition of the Jewish leaders. If He compassionated the Gentiles, His heart still yearned over the people, and He marked it by repeating the great miracle of feeding thousands in the wilderness, though this was not intended to be the figure of His dispensational retirement from earth, which, as we saw (Matt. 14), followed the first miracle of feeding the multitudes -- the type of our Lord's occupation at the right hand of God.

Now we have another picture quite distinct from the last, though akin to it. It is not the flagrant disobedience of the law through human tradition, but the source of all disobedience -- unbelief. Hence, in the language employed by the Holy Ghost, there is only a shade of difference between the words unbelief and disobedience. The former is the root of which the latter is the fruit. Having pointed out the gross systematic violation of God's law, even by those who were religious leaders in Israel, and having convicted them of it, even about the highest earthly relationships which that law bound, and encouraged, them most of all to honor, a deeper principle is now brought out. All that disobedience to God flowed from unbelief of Himself, and, consequently, misapprehension of their own moral condition. These two things always go together. Ignorance of self flows from ignorance of God; ignorance of both ourselves and God is proved by despising Jesus; and what is true in full of the worldly man or the unbeliever applies partially to Christians who in any measure slight the will and person of the Lord. All these are only the workings of that heart of unbelief, of which the apostle warns even believers. The grand provision against this, the operation of the Holy Ghost, in contrast to the working of the natural mind of man, comes out plainly here.

> The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him, that he would shew them a sigh from heaven (Matt. 16:1).

They were beginning the same story over again; but now it is higher up the source, and, of course therefore, worse in principle. It is an awful thing to find opposed parties with one only thing that unites them -- dislike of Jesus; persons who could have torn each other to pieces at another time, but this is their gathering point -- tempting Jesus. "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting," &c. There was nothing in conflict between the scribes and Pharisees, but a wide chasm separated the Sadducees and Pharisees. Those were the freethinkers of the day, these the champions who stood up for ordinances and for the authority of the law. But both joined to tempt Jesus. They desired a sign from heaven. The most significant token that God ever gave man was before them in the person of His Son, who eclipsed all other signs. But such is unbelief, that it can go into the presence of the full manifestation of God, can gaze at a light brighter than the sun at noonday, and there, and then, ask God to give a farthing candle.

But Jesus

> answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red, And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? (Matt. 16:2, 3).

Their own moral condition was the sign and proof that judgment was imminent. Doubtless, for those who could see, there was the fair weather, the day-spring from on high that had visited them in Jesus. They saw it not; but could they not discern the foul weather? They were in the presence of the Messiah, and were asking Him who consummated all signs in His person to give them a sign from heaven! The God that made heaven and earth was there, but the darkness comprehended it not.

> He came unto his own, and his. own received him not {John 1:11}.

Nothing could be more awful; they were utterly blind; they could' discern physical changes, but they had no perception of moral and spiritual features then actually before them.

How truly

> a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed (Matt. 16:4).

Such was His word to them. Men constantly err as to the character of Jesus. They imagine that He could use no strong language, and feel no anger; but yet there it is in the word, written in the light. It is the same thing now as ever. Unbelief is always blind, and betrays its blindness most against Jesus. The same kind of unbelief that could not then discern who and what Jesus was sees not now Jesus coming, and discerns not the signs of the times nor of their own impending ruin. It is the moral condition of men, no matter where they are, only the more remarkably manifested where the light of God is. If England be now the focus where God's light is more displayed than in any other place, it is this which makes all the more glaring the unbelief of men, who perhaps are engaged in His work, who are professing to help it on, one way or another, and at the same time are utterly careless as to whether they are walking according to His will as revealed in the Bible. Clearly we have no right merely to follow the word of God in what suits us, but the word of God as a whole, for our own souls first, and for all the children of God

next, as far as in us lies. This is what we have gravely to consider. If we cannot act upon people's consciences, at least let us keep our own unsullied. There is always the question of personal allegiance to the Savior, and this, above all, is what puts us to the test. Precept is most weighty when commended by our own example.

Here we have our Lord who does not hesitate to touch the evil with unsparing hand. He was the perfect fulness of love: but do men remember He is the one who said, "wicked and adulterous generation," "generation of vipers," &c.? It flows from true love, if men would but think so, and bow to the truth that convicts them. To submit, at God's word, to the truth in this world is to be saved; to be convicted of the truth only in the next world is to be lost for ever. Christ was the Faithful Witness; He brought God face to face with men, and caused His perfect light to shine upon them. Why, then, could not He grant them a sign? God, full of love as He is, never does anything to the disparagement of Him who made Himself known. Jesus can meet a soul in its ruin; He may eat with publicans to show that He is able to receive sinners, and to forgive sins to the uttermost; but He will never give any sign to satisfy the unbelief which rejects Jesus. These Pharisees and Sadducees did not hear His voice of grace. They listened only with their outward ears; but they were compelled to hear their own sentence from the Judge of all the earth: and shall not He do right? "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." Had Jesus not been there, to ask for a sign would not have been so wicked; but His presence made it audacious unbelief and frightful hypocrisy. It was flying in the face of what God had already vouchsafed, and asking for something altogether inconsiderable in the presence of His best gift. So now, the death and. resurrection of Christ is preached to. a soul that turns away from it He says, salvation is not so easy a thing as all that; I must do something myself. It is asking a sign, and this not even from heaven, but from his own heart And what is his heart? God declares that from his heart proceeds everything that is wicked. Yet he still clings to the fatal delusion, that some good thing must be got out of that which God pronounces only, and always, evil: and so he turns away from Jesus and God's righteousness in Him, which has been perfectly brought out, because Jesus is risen and at the right hand of God. When you find very high religious pretensions along with disparagement of Jesus, what can be more offensive to God? "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." And what was this? The sign of one that disappeared from the earth, that passed into the figure of death away from the Jewish people, and after a while was given back to them. It was the symbol of death and resurrection, and our Lord immediately acted upon it. He "left them, and departed." He would pass under the power of death. He would rise again, and would carry to the poor Gentiles the message which Israel. had despised.

But there are other forms of unbelief; and the next scene (Matt. 16:5) is with His disciples: so true is it that what you find working in its. grossest shape in au unconverted man may be traced, in another way perhaps, in believers.

> Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Matt. 16:6).

They did not understand Him; they reasoned among themselves; and whenever Christians begin so to reason, they never understand anything.

> They reasoned among themselves saying, It is because we have taken no bread (Matt. 16:7).

There is such a thing, of course, as sound and solid deduction. The difference is that wrong reasoning always starts from man and tries to rise to God, while right reasoning starts from God towards man. The natural mind can only infer from the experience of men what they think or feel, and thus forms within a sort of image of what God must be. This is the basis, the aim, and the character of human speculation in divine things; whereas God is the source, strength, and guide of the thoughts of faith.

How do I know God? In the Bible, which is the revelation of Christ from the first of Genesis to the end of the Apocalypse. I see Him there, the keystone of the arch, the center of all scripture speaks of; and unless the connection of Christ with everything is seen, nothing is understood aright. There is the first grand fallacy, the leaving out of God's revealing Himself in His Son. It is not the light behind the veil as under the Jewish system, but infinite blessing how that God has come to man and man is brought to God. In the life of Christ I see God drawing nigh to man, and in His death man brought nigh to God. The veil is rent; all is out, of man on the one hand, and of God on the other, as far as God is pleased to reveal Himself to man in this world. All stands in the boldest relief in the life and death of Christ.

But disciples are apt to be very dull about these things, now as ever; and so when He warned them about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they thought that He was merely speaking of something for daily life -- very much like what we see at the present time. But our Lord

> said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? (Matt. 16:8).

Why did they not think of Christ? Would they have troubled themselves about loaves if they had thought of Him? Impossible! But what may there not be in a believer's heart, even before Him in whose hands is the earth and the fulness thereof? They were anxious, or thought Him so, about bread!

> Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How, is that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Matt. 16:9-12).

And this is what disciples even now often misapprehend. They do not understand the hatefulness of unsound doctrine.

They are alive to moral evil. If a person gets drunk, or falls into any other gross scandal, they know, of course, it is very wicked; but if the leaven of evil doctrine works, they do not feel it. Why is it that disciples are more careful of that which mere natural conscience can judge, than of doctrine which destroys the foundation of everything both for this world and for that which is to come? What a serious thing that disciples should need to be warned of this by the Lord, and even then not understand! He had to explain it to them. There was the working of unbelief among the disciples, making the body the great aim, and not seeing the all-importance of these corrupt doctrines which menaced souls in so many insidious forms around them.

But there is another way, and scene, in which unbelief works. This chapter is the dissection of the root of many a form of unbelief. "By faith we understand," says the apostle to the Hebrews. The worldly man tries to understand first and then to believe; the Christian begins with the feeblest understanding, perhaps, but he believes God: his confidence is in One above himself; and thus. out of the stone there is raised up a child unto Abraham. The Lord now questions the disciples as to the real gist of all the matter, whether among Pharisees, Sadducees, or disciples themselves.

> He asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?

It is now Christ's person which comes out; and this, I need hardly say, is deeper than all other doctrine.

> Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets (Matt. 16:13, 14).

There are so many opinions among men, unbelief argues, that certainty is impossible. Some say one thing and some another: you talk of truth and scripture; yet, after all, it is only your view.

But what says faith? Certainty, from God, is our portion, the moment that we see who Jesus is. He is the only remedy that banishes difficulty and doubt from the mind of man. "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?" (v. 15). This was for the purpose of bringing out what is the pivot of man's blessing and God's glory, and it becomes the turning point of the chapter. Among these very disciples we are to have a blessed confession from one of them -- the power of God working in a man who had been rebuked for his want of faith before, as indeed he was just after. When we are really broken down before God about our little faith, the Lord can reveal some deeper, higher view of Himself than we ever had before. The disciples had been relating the various opinions of men: one said He was Elias; another, John the Baptist.

> But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16).

Most glorious confession! In the Psalms He is spoken of as the Son of God, but very differently. There it is as One dealing with the kings of the earth, who are called upon to take care how they behave themselves. But the Son of the living God! The Holy Ghost now lifts up the veil to show that the Son of the living God involves depths far beyond an earthly dominion, howsoever glorious. He is the Son of that living God who can communicate life even to His enemies.

> Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee," &c.

First, there is the Father revealing; and the moment Christ hears Himself confessed as the Son of the living God, He also sets His own seal and honors the confessor. It is the assertion of One who at once rises up to His own intrinsic dignity.

> And *I also* say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it {Mark 16:18}. [25]

He gives Simon a new name. As God had given to Abraham, Sarah, &c., because of some fresh manifestation of Himself, so does the Son of God. It had been prophetically announced before; but now comes out for the first time the reason why it was affixed to him. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." What rock? The confession Peter had made that Jesus was the Son of the living God. On this the Church is built. Israel was governed by a law; the Church is raised on a solid, and imperishable, and divine foundation -- on the person of the Son of the living God. And when this fuller confession breaks from the lips of Peter, the answer comes, Thou art Peter -- thou art a stone -- a man that derivest thy name from this rock on which the Church is built.

In the early chapters of the Acts, Peter always speaks of Jesus as the holy child (or servant) Jesus. He speaks of Him as a man who went about doing good; as the Messiah slain by the wicked hands of men, whom God raised up from the dead. Whatever Peter might know Jesus to be, yet when preaching to the Jews, he presents Him to them simply as the Christ, as the predicted Son of David, who had walked here below, whom they had crucified and God had raised again. Then, at Stephen's martyrdom, a new term is used about the Lord. That blessed witness looks up and says,

> I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God {Acts 7}.

It is not now merely Jesus as the Messiah, but "the Son of man," which implies His rejection. When He was refused as the Messiah, Stephen, finding that this testimony was

---

25. ◆ Q. It is urged from Matt. 16:18 that the Church was future. If so, is it not equally true from Matt. 1:21 that no one who died previous to the cross was or could be saved? A SEEKER AFTER TRUTH.

A.. Matt. 1: 21 confirms, instead of weakening, the plainly future bearing of Matt. 16:18. For just as the one text shows us that no one, before Jesus came and died, could be said to be saved from his sins, so was no Church of Christ begun to be built before. Previously to that believers rested on a revelation or a promise; afterwards, on the work *accomplished.* Then, not before, it could be said, "By grace are ye saved through faith." Redemption becomes the basis not only of His own present salvation in Christ, but also of gathering in one (i.e., in the Church) Gods children who were before this scattered {John 11:52}. For this, too, the presence of the Spirit sent down from heaven was requisite to baptize into one body {Acts 1:5; 2:32, 33; 1 Cor. 12:23} (*The Bible Treasury* 6:288). ◆

rejected, is led of God to testify of Jesus as the exalted Son of man at God's right hand. When Paul is converted, which is given in the very next chapter but one, he goes straightway and preaches "Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." He did not merely confess Him, but preached Him as such. And to Paul was entrusted the great work of bringing out the truth about "the church of God."

So here, when the Lord hears Peter's confession, He says, "Upon this rock I will build my church." You understand the glory of My person; I tell you of the work I am going to accomplish. Mark the expression. It is not, I have been building; but I will build My Church. He had not built it yet, nor begun to build it: it was altogether new. I do not mean by this that there had not before been souls believing in Him and born of the Spirit; but the aggregate of the individual saints, that were born of God from the beginning to the end of time, it is an error to call "the Church." It is a common notion which, I am bold to say, has not got one word of scripture to give even the appearance of truth to it. The expression in Acts 7:38, "The church in the wilderness" means the whole congregation -- the mass of Israel -- the greater part of whose carcases fell in the wilderness. Can your call that "the church of God?" There were only a few believers among them. People are deceived in this by the sound. The word, "Church in the wilderness," merely means the congregation there. The very same word is applied to the confused assembly in Acts 19, which would have torn Paul to pieces. If it were translated like Acts 7, it would be the "Church in the theater," and the blunder is obvious. The word that is translated "church" simply means "assembly." To find out what is the nature of the assembly, we must examine the scriptural usage and the object of the Holy Ghost. For you might have a good or bad assembly: an assembly of Jews, or of Gentiles: or God's assembly, distinct from either and contrasted with both, as can be readily and undeniably seen in 1 Cor. 10:32. Now it is this last alone which we mean (i.e., God's assembly) when we speak of "the church."

What then, to return, does our Lord intimate when He says, "Upon this rock I will build my church"? Clearly something that He was going to erect upon the confession that He was the Son of the living God, whom death could not conquer, but only give occasion to the shining forth of His glory by resurrection. "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hades" -- the power of death -- "shall not prevail against it." This last does not mean the place of the lost, but the condition of separate spirits.

> And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens {Matt. 16:19}.

The church and the kingdom of the heavens are not the same thing. It is never said that Christ gave the keys of the church to Peter. Had the keys of the church, or of the heavens, been given to him, I do not wonder that the people should have imagined a pope. But "the kingdom of the heavens," means the new dispensation now taking place on earth. God was going to open a new economy, free to Jews and Gentiles, the keys of which He committed to Peter. One of these keys was used, if I may so say, at Pentecost, when he preached to the Jews, and the other when he preached to the Gentiles. It was the opening of the kingdom to people, whether Jews or Gentiles.

> I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:19).

The eternal forgiveness of sins has to do with God only, though there is a sense in which forgiving was committed to Peter and the other apostles, which remains true now. Whenever the church acts in the name of the Lord and really does His will, the stamp of God is upon their deeds. "My church," built upon this rock, is His body -- the temple of believers built upon Himself. But "the kingdom of the heavens" embraces every one that confesses the name of Christ. This was begun by preaching and baptizing. When a man is baptized, he enters "the kingdom of the heavens," even if he should turn out a hypocrite. He will never be in heaven, of course, if he is an unbeliever; but he is in "the kingdom of the heavens." He may either be a tare in the kingdom of heaven, or he may be real wheat; an evil or a faithful servant; a foolish virgin or a wise one. The kingdom of heaven takes in the whole scene of Christian profession.

But we have seen, when Christ speaks of "My church," it is another thing. It is what is built upon the recognition and confession of His person, and we know that he that believes "that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." And again, "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" overcometh the world. He has got the first workings of life in him if he acknowledges Jesus as Christ; but there is a deeper power of the Holy Ghost in acknowledging Him as Son; and the higher the acknowledgment of Christ, the more spiritual energy in going through this world and overcoming it. If one believer is more spiritual than another, it is because he understands the person of Christ better. All power, depends upon the appreciation of Christ. Mark our Lord's words

> Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven {Matt. 16:17}.

Christ must be found outside the church and before it; Christ must be discerned first and foremost by the individual soul; Christ and what He is must, before and above all, be revealed to the heart by the Father. He may employ persons who belong to the church as instruments, or may directly use His own word. But, whatever the means employed, it is the Father revealing the glory of the Son to a poor sinful man; and when this is settled with the individual, Christ says, "Upon this rock I will build my church" {Matt. 16:20}. Faith in Christ is essentially God's order and way before the question of the church comes in. This is one great controversy between God and the mystery of iniquity which is now working in this world. The aim of the Holy Ghost is to glorify Christ; whereas that of the other is to glorify self. The Holy Ghost is carrying on this blessed revelation that the Father has made of the Son; and when the individual question

is settled, then comes the corporate privilege and responsibility -- the church.

It is not therefore enough to say, I have got Christ, infinitely blessed as that is. If I know that He is the Son of God, I ought to believe also that He is building His church. Do I know my place there? Am I found walking in the light o. Christ -- a living stone ever in my place in that which He is building—in -healthy action as a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones? The building of the church is going on here. It was here that salvation was wrought, and here it is that the church is being built upon this rock; and the gates of hades, the invisible state or separate condition, shall not prevail against it. Death may come in, but the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. The Lord says in the Revelation that He has the keys of death and of hades. The death of the believer, the Christian, is in the hands of Christ; all is changed now. And He is the Lord both of the dead and of the living; death is not our Lord, but Christ.

> Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

The Lord has absolute command over us; and therefore death is robbed of all that makes it so terrible even to the believer who is looking at it with unbelieving eyes. The Lord here says that the gates of hades shall not prevail against His church. The book of the Revelation at the close brings us its blessed light. That book, which people commonly talk about as the most obscure in the Bible, is the very one to which we are most deeply indebted for light upon this and other parts. There you have the Lord with the keys of death and hades. He gave the keys of the kingdom of the heavens to Peter, because he it was who was to preach to Jews and Gentiles. The keys did their office; the door was flung open on the day of Pentecost first, and afterwards yet more widely when the Gentiles were brought in.

But, further, we have internal administration committed to Peter, both binding and loosing, authority vested in him by Christ to act publicly here below, with the promise of ratification above.

> Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven {Matt. 16:19}.

That is first said to Peter; and I presume, from what we have in Matt. 18:18 ("Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven") that the binding and the loosing belong to the other disciples: not, unless I am mistaken, to the apostles only, but to the disciples as such. Compare also the charge in John 20:19-23. On that principle people are received into the Christian Church, and on that principle wicked people are put away till restored on the acceptance of their repentance. The church does not forgive sins as a matter of eternal judgment, of course, which God alone has the power to do. But it is called of God to judge a person's state for reception into, or exclusion from, the circle which confesses the name of Christ here below.

In Acts 5, Peter bound their sin on Ananias and Sapphira. This does not necessarily prove that they were lost; but the sin was bound upon them and brought present judgment. Peter was not, nor was Paul, at Corinth; and there the Lord acts Himself, laying His hand upon the guilty: some were weak and sickly, and some falling asleep. Their sins were indeed retained; but this does not decide against their final salvation -- rather, indeed, the contrary. When they were judged of the Lord, they were chastened, that they should not be condemned with the world (that is, that they should not be lost). They might be taken away by death, and yet be saved in the day of the Lord. The church puts away a wicked prison. The man at Corinth, whom they were told to excommunicate {1 Cor. 5}, was guilty of appalling sin; but he was not lost. He was delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might "be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." In the next epistle we find this person so overwhelmed with sorrow on account of his fall, that they were charged to confirm their love to him.

Nothing is more simple than the binding and loosing which people often make so mysterious. The only sins that the church ought to judge are those that come out so palpably as to demand public repudiation according to the word of God. The church is not to be a petty tribunal of judgment for everything. We ought never to claim the assembly's intervention except about the evil that is so plain as to be entitled to carry the consciences of all along with it. This I take to be the meaning of binding and loosing. The former is applied when a soul comes under public discipline before the church, and the latter when he humbles himself and is formally restored. Eternal forgiveness of sins is another thing altogether. Therein popery has shown its wickedness -- confounding remission in this world with the absolute and eternal forgiveness which God reserves in His own power. Protestantism has thrown away the other truth -- the church's bounden duty to judge sins in this present life.

> Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was [26] the Christ {Matt. 16:20}.

What a remarkable change is here! Peter had confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God: now the Lord charges them that they were not to tell any man that He was the Christ -- not that He was "the Son of the living God." What is the meaning of this? It was as good as saying, It is too late; I am rejected as the Christ, or the Messiah, the Anointed of Jehovah. He is refused by Israel, and He accepts the fact. But mark another thing:

> From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day (Matt. 16:21).

If you compare this with Luke, it comes out more distinctly. There we are told (Luke 9:20), "He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God." Is not this striking? "The Christ of God." The Son of

26. The word "Jesus" is omitted by the best authorities, which internal considerations evidently confirm.

the living God" is not mentioned in Luke: consequently, nothing is said about the building of the church. How perfect is scripture! The two things go together. But in Luke it is said, "He straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing [i.e., to tell no man that He was the Christ of God); saying, The Son of man must suffer many things," &c. He does not forbid them to tell this. There is a great distinction between "the Christ" and the "Son of man." The latter is the title of Christ, first as rejected, and then as exalted in heaven. This is the turning point in Christ's ministry -- where He forbids the disciples to tell that He was the Christ.

The meaning is that Christ drops His Jewish title. He speaks of His church. Before the fact, He says, "Upon this rock I will build my church." From that time He begins to show unto them how that He must

> go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day {Matt. 16:21}.

Luke adds that He must first suffer. All this is connected with the building of the church, which began to be built after Christ rose from the dead, and took His place in heaven. In Ephesians the church is not even named till after Christ's resurrection and His taking a new place in heaven have been brought out. We had God choosing the saints in Christ Jesus, but not the church. Election is an individual thing. He chose us -- you and me, and all the other saints of God, wherever they are. He chose us that "we should be holy and without blame before him in love" {Eph. 1:4}. But when Paul has introduced Christ's death and resurrection, he says that God "gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" {Eph. 1:22, 23}.

Christ was not so given till He was at the right hand of God. There His headship commences. His Sonship was from everlasting; He was a man in this world; and He was made Head of the church, after having accomplished redemption. The word of God is wiser than men: what men call foolishness is really the wisdom of God. It is our duty to give up our own theories, as much as the notions of other men. We must always bring ourselves up to the standard of God's word—not be always correcting other people, but ourselves. The word of God is what He has written for this purpose: it is, no doubt, very useful for others, but we must honestly use it for our hearts first. When the children of Israel were going to make war with the Canaanites, the Lord appears and lets them know that they must take the knife to themselves {circumcision} before they take the sword against others.

But mark the solemn fact that is here recorded. Immediately after Simon had made this glorious confession of the Lord Jesus, he is called, not Peter, but Satan! How could this be? Because he savored not the things that were of God, but those that were of men. He had not said one improper word according to human judgment. He had not even indulged in haste, as was often his wont. The Lord never called mere excitement "Satan"; but He so called Peter because he sought to turn Him away from suffering and death. The secret was this: that he neither fully felt what sin was, nor what the grace of God was. He stood in the way of the Lord's going to the cross. Was it not for Peter that He was going there? Had Peter thought of this, would he have said "Be it far from thee, Lord?" (Matt. 16:22). It was man; and when it is man thwarting Christ, He pronounces it Satan.

> He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men (Matt. 16:23).

Peter thus feeling and acting is the true foundation of the mystery of iniquity! Yet was it the same Peter who had just confessed what was taught not by flesh and blood but by God. Truly all flesh is but grass!

Our Lord turns to the disciples, and puts before them that not merely is He going to the cross, but they must be prepared to follow Him there. If I am to be in the true path of Jesus, I must deny myself, and take up' the. cross, and follow -- not the disciples -- not this church or that church, but -- Jesus Himself. I must go in the very teeth of what is pleasing to my heart naturally. I must be found compassed by shame and rejection in this present evil world. If not, depend upon it, I am not following Jesus: and, remember, it is a dangerous thing to believe in Jesus without following Him. The Lord states that it must be a man losing his life as it were. At the present time much confession of Christ is comparatively an easy matter. There is little opposition, or persecution. How it proves what the heart is! People imagine that the world is changed, and they talk of progress and enlightenment. The truth is, Christians are changed; the world is but restrained in the display of its evil. "He who now letteth {hinders} will let, until he be taken out of the way" {2 Thess. 2}.

When that day comes, it will not be merely the usual spirit of hatred that animates the world, but God sending men a strong delusion that they should believe falsehood, and should thus be ready to receive the antichrist, the man after their own hearts. I am not foreboding woes and troubles of my own imagination, but what we find in the word of God. There is a great calm before an earthquake. The cry is of peace and safety, but there approaches fast this time of dissolution of all that men count settled and secure. That we, Christians, shall be taken up to be with our Savior before that day comes, need not be doubted. We must look at the bright side -- the coming of Jesus to take us to be in the Father's house. But for the little while that we are here, the important thing to remember is that, as Jesus must needs go to the cross for our deliverance, each Christian has got his cross too. Do we desire to be faithful in this? If so, we shall be sure to find it out. Let us ask ourselves whether we are found shirking our cross and not following Jesus.

> If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and takes up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it (Matt. 16:25).

What lessons for our souls! The flesh easily arrogates superiority over the Spirit; and indulgence in the path of ease

comes in (though of Satan) under the specious plea of love and kindness. Is the cross of Christ our glory? Are we willing to suffer in doing His will? What a delusion for His follower is present honor and enjoyment!

> {Verily I say unto you, There are some of those standing here that shall not taste of death at all until they shall have seen the Son of man coming in his kingdom (Matt. 16:28).} [27]

27. ◆ Matt. 16:28 . . . I am of opinion that the application of these words to the destruction of Jerusalem is entirely unfounded, and that their true connection is with the scene of the transfiguration. They are consecutive in all three of the first evangelists; and 2 Pet. 1 treats that scene, it appears to me, as a manifestation of Christ's power and coming, -- a sample of His future glory. James and Peter did taste of death, the one long and the other shortly before Jerusalem was destroyed.

Mr. ALFORD is not correct in making ἡ γενεὰ αὐτη = "this race," because the race of Israel is not to pass away when all these things are fulfilled; but on the contrary Israel is then to reach its full blessing and glory as a people here below. The true force is, "this (Christ-rejecting, unbelieving) generation of Israel," not the mere existing generation, but such as bore the same moral fruits as those who then refused the Messiah. So they have continued, and will till after the last delusions and judgment of Anti-Christ, when "there shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." " So all Israel shall be saved" {Rom. 11:26}, when every threat of God has been accomplished, and grace has converted a new generation -- "the generation to come." The moral bearing of the phrase, permit me to add, simply and satisfactorily accounts for God's righteous judgment, in consequence of the blood shed from Abel downwards. Mr. A.'s remark is sound against the application of it to the mere existing generation; but it almost equally disproves his own sense. Those who stood in the place of witness for God, as did Israel, not only suffered the consequences of despising His last testimony to them in Christ, but had required of them all the righteous blood shed from the beginning downwards. The same principle applies to Babylon in the Revelation: "In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" {Rev. 18:24}. In consequence of the position assumed, God will hold her responsible even for evil done before her existence. It is the principle of God's corporate judgments: individually, each bears his own judgment.

WILLIAM. KELLY.

(*Christian Annotator* 1856, p. 337). ◆

Matthew 17

The chapter last looked at has shown us Jesus rejected as Christ, or Messiah, confessed as the Son of the living God, and about to return in glory as the Son of man. But along with the glory in which He is to come and reward each according to his works, we have His suffering: not merely rejection, but His being put to death -- raised no doubt, the third day, but still the suffering Son of man, and, as the Son of man, returning in glory. Following up the subject of His Father's glory, in which He declares He is to come with His angels and judge in His kingdom, we have now a picture given on the holy mount: a picture most striking, and this in a twofold point of view. The glory, as we saw, of the kingdom, depends upon His being the Son of man, the exalted Man who had erst suffered, and into whose hands all glory is committed -- who had, at every cost, retrieved the honor of God, and is to make effectual the blessing of man -- who, by virtue of His suffering, has already brought to nought the power of Satan for those who believe, and who eventually, when the kingdom comes, is to expel Satan altogether, and bring in that for which God has been waiting -- a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world. Accordingly, "After six days "(type of the ordinary term of work here below),

> Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart (Matt. 17:1).

That is, He takes chosen witnesses; for it was merely a testimony to the kingdom -- not exactly the kingdom, but the sample of it that He had referred to when He said,

> There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom {Matt. 16:28}.

The point there is the Son of man coming, rather than the kingdom itself; and what follows in our chapter is only a partial view of it, as illustrative of the glory of the rejected Son of man. But partial though it be, nothing could be more blessed, save the thing itself; and faith brings us into a very real present realizing of that which is to be. It is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The kingdom, of course, of which our Lord spoke, is not yet arrived. When it is said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" {John 3:3}. He appears to speak of a kingdom which we do enter now. For St. John does not present it as a thing of mere outward manifestation, but gives a deeper revelation of the kingdom, as it is true now, into which every one that is born of God comes, and which shall yet be displayed with its heavenly and its earthly things. But St. Matthew, who takes up the Jewish part, or Old Testament prediction of the kingdom, sketches us the presentation of the Son of man coming in His kingdom.

The Lord, accordingly, fulfilling His word, takes these disciples

> up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light (Matt. 17:2).

The sun is the image of supreme glory, as that which rules the day.

> And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him (Matt. 17:3).

Moses was the personage by whom the law was given; Elias, the grand sample of the prophets, who recalled the people to a broken law. They were thus the pillars of the Jewish system, to whom every true Israelite looked back with the deepest feelings of reverence: one of them singled out as the only Jew taken to heaven, without passing through death; the other, lest he should become an object of worship after his death, having the singular honor of being buried by the Lord.

These two appear in the presence of our Lord. They were known to be Moses and Elias: there seems to have been no difficulty in recognizing them. So, in the resurrection-state, the distinction of persons will be kept up thoroughly. There will be no such thing as that kind of sameness which blots out the peculiarities of each. Though there will be the termination of earthly relationships, and no peculiar links will survive in heaven which connected one with another, no matter how closely, on earth; yet each will retain his own individuality -- with this mighty difference, of course, that all saints will bear the image of the heavenly. All men are after the pattern of the earthly now; for we all in the body resemble fallen Adam, yet are we not all lost in one common undistinguishable throng. We each have our own proper character and our peculiar conformation of body. So in glory each will be known for what he is. Moses and Elias are seen as glorified, but as Moses and Elias still; and the Lord is transfigured in their midst.

> Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias (Matt. 17:4);

showing that he perfectly well knew which was which.

> While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him (Matt. 17:5).

Herein, I conceive, lies the depth of the whole passage. Peter, meaning to do honor to his Master, but in a human way -- Peter, still savoring in a measure the things of men and not of God, proposes to put his Master on common ground with the heads of the law and of the prophets. But it must not be. The Father at once breaks silence. New revelations were about to follow, and indeed were being made. Whatever might be the value of Moses, whatever the special charge of Elias, who were they, and what, in the presence of the Son of God? The Son may make nothing of Himself; but the Father loves the Son. Peter would put Him on a level with the most honored of mankind; but the Father's purpose is that every knee shall bow to Him -- that all men

shall honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. Man never does this -- seeing simply man in the Son -- in no adequate way honoring Him with divine homage. Faith does; for it sees God in the Son, hears God in Him, and also finds Him in the peculiarly blessed relationship of Father. For if Jesus were conceived to be simply God, and not the Son, it would be an incomparably less blessed revelation than that which we actually have. If such a thing could be, as divine nature without the blessed relationship of sonship before the Father, we should lose the very sweetest part of our blessing. For it is not merely the deity of Jesus that has to be owned -- though this lies at the bottom of all truth; but the eternal relationship of the Son with the Father. Not merely was He Son in this world: it is most dangerous to limit the Sonship of Christ thus, for it is from all eternity. People reason, that because He is called Son, He must have a beginning in time, subsequently to the Father. All such argumentation ought to be banished from the soul of a Christian. The scripture doctrine has no reference to priority of time. He is called Son in respect of affection and intimate nearness of relationship. It is the pattern of the blessed place into which grace brings us through union with the Lord Jesus Christ, though, of course, there are ineffable heights and depths beyond in Him. But if we are simple about it, we gather from it the deepest joy that is to be found in the knowledge of the true God -- and that in His Son.

The Father, then, interrupts the word of Peter, and answers Himself. The bright cloud that overshadowed them, Peter well knew to be the cloud of Jehovah's presence: but the Father adds,

> This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased {Matt. 17:5}.

It is not, This is your Messiah, though of course He was so; but He brings out the grand New Testament revelation of Jesus. He reveals Him as His own beloved Son; and, further, He asserts His unqualified delight in Him. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him" -- this last is also a statement of all importance. What was Moses, and what Elias now? They are entirely left out in the words of the Father. I need not say that every one who heard Jesus was the Son of God would be very far from despising Moses and Elias. They who understand grace have a far deeper respect for the law than the man who muddles grace and law together. The only full way to value anything that is of God is in the intelligence of His grace.

I do not understand myself, nor God, till I know His grace; and I cannot know His grace, except as I see it in the person of His Son. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." He was full of grace and truth.

The Father therefore directs attention to Him. He says, "Hear ye him." It is no longer, Hear Moses, or, Hear Elias, but "Hear ye him." Could anything be more startling to a Jew? All must give place to the Son. The dignity of the others is not denied, nor is their due position slighted. To assert the glory of the sun that shines every day is in no way to despise the stars. God made Moses to be what he was, and Elias received in like manner what He saw fit; but what were they compared with His Son? How plain and sad that men should be at this present moment making two tabernacles -- one for Moses (if not for Elias), and one for the Lord Jesus! What Peter was rebuked for doing is what men have continued to do. They talk about God being the unchangeable God. But He who ordained the night made the day; and as surely as He once spake the law, He has now sent the gospel. I see there the display of the glory of God, showing out now one part of His character and now another. This is not changing. God gives us to see His different attributes, and His various wisdom, and His infinite glory; but I must see each in its own sphere, and understand the intent for which God has given each. Moses and Elias were the two great, cardinal points of the Jewish system; but now there is One who eclipses all that system -- Jesus, the Son of God; and in presence of Him not even the representatives of the law or the prophets are to be heard. There is a fulness of truth that comes out in the Son of God; and if I want to understand the mind of God, as it concerns me now, I must hear Him. This was most difficult for a Jew to enter into: and, indeed, it was, if possible, more important for him to heed the call than for anyone else; because he had already a religion based upon the law and the prophets. Now the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father Himself expresses His perfect satisfaction, is commended to all. "Hear ye him."

As Jesus, the Son of God, is the object of the Father's infinite love, so He is the means of that same love reaching even to us. If I see Him to be the beloved Son of the Father, my soul rests upon Him, and enters into communion with the Father. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" {1 John 1}. What is fellowship? It is our having common joy in a common object which we share with one another. Our joy now we share with the Father and with the Son. The Father bids me hear the Son, and the Son declares the Father. We have fellowship with the Father, who points out to our hearts Him in whom He Himself delights; we have fellowship with the Son, inasmuch as He makes known to us the Father. How shall I know the Father? how know His feelings? But by one way. I look at His Son, and have now seen the Father. The Son speaks, and I have heard His voice also. I know how He acts -- His love can go out to the very vilest. Such was Christ; and now, I am sure, such is the Father also. I know what God the Father is when I follow the Son and listen to the Son. It is the Father He is revealing, not Himself: the Son came to make known what the Father is in a world that knew Him not.

Even those who had faith, what thoughts had they about the. Father? We have only to look at the disciples, to see that there was no answer to the Father's heart, and no sympathy with it. Although they were born of God, yet to this time it was just what Philip said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Not that he did not divinely know Jesus as the Messiah; but he had not entered into the blessedness of what He was as the Son revealing the Father. It was only after the Holy Ghost came down after the Son's departure to heaven, that they acquired the consciousness of the grace wherein they

stood.

So, yet more, the apostle Paul says,

> Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more {2 Cor. 5:16}.

To know Christ at the right hand of God—to appreciate what He is there -- is to know Him far better than if we had heard every discourse, and seen every miracle, of His upon earth. The Holy Ghost brings it out more and more fully through His word. I am not saying now how far we enter practically into what the Holy Ghost is teaching, because this must after all, and rightly, depend on the measure of our spirituality. But the Holy Ghost is here to take of the things of Christ and show them to us -- to make known His glory and His sufferings, as it is the Father's delight that He should he known. But there were many things that they could not then bear. When the Holy Ghost was come, He should lead then into all truth.

Such is the object of the Father. He takes advantage of the very glory of Jesus, seen as Son of man, to make known that a still deeper glory attaches to Him. The kingdom of Christ by no means exhausts the glory of His person: and it is as connected with His deeper glory that the existence of the church is brought out. So the confession of His Sonship elicited the word, "Upon this rock will I build my church." This is the pith of the New Testament revelation -- it is the Father revealing His Son, and the Spirit enabling us to receive what the Son is, both as the image of the invisible God, and, as introducing us into fellowship with the Father. It is not God merely known as such, but the Father in the Son made known by the Holy Ghost. Hence it is, then, that here, in a Gospel especially written for Jewish believers, the Holy Ghost takes particular pains to mark this. (Compare the close of Matt. 11). When Peter would have put the Son of God on an equal ground with the most exalted and favored servants of God, a higher object is brought out. When before Him, Moses and Elias rejoice to take the place of mere servants. The Son is commended of God to us as the One whom we are to hear.

This is a truth of all importance, in order to a soul's getting thoroughly settled on Christian ground. Christians are often afraid of distinguishing between the ways of God, and shrink from accepting the full place of our Lord. But to give Jesus His rightful glory is the first duty of the soul; even as the Father Himself proclaims it. He spoke of Jesus as God the Father speaking of God the Son. We want more singleness of eye, a more fervent spirit, and greater intelligence, to give increasing honor to the Son of God. All heresy has for its root the slighting of Christ. So, one man makes doing good his object, another the Gospel, another the Church, each rising perhaps above the other; but he is practically nearest to God who makes everything a question of Christ. This is the highest spirituality, because it is the most simple reproduction of God's own mind, feelings, and word.

The disciples, confounded by what they hear, fall on their faces and are sore afraid. There was no communion with it yet. For the present they enter into it but slightly, though it was afterwards recalled to them by the Spirit of God.

> And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only (Matt. 17:7, 8).

The heavenly vision had passed away for a time: they were on the mount alone with Jesus. What a joy that, if it vanish, He abides!

Let us just refer briefly to the account of this scene as given in the other Gospels. In Mark 9 we have this same vision of glory, and it is opened in a similar manner. I am not now going to enter into all the points of difference, for there are several. But what was chiefly on my mind was this: In what the Father says about Christ, the words "in whom I am well pleased" are left out. The emphatic point, forgotten nowhere, is that He was the Son; and in Mark, as in Matthew, He is the Son (not a servant only, though truly such) who is to be heard. But the Holy Ghost by Matthew adds "in whom I am well pleased." The satisfaction of the Father in the Son is given as the ground why He should be heard, as the full expression of His mind. In Luke we have another thing.

> Behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias (Luke 9:30).

They are called "men" here in a distinct manner, this Gospel having been written more particularly in view of man at large. These men "appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." There we have the subject of their conversation -- a thing of the deepest interest for us to learn. The death and sufferings of Jesus are the great theme on which men in glory converse with Himself, the Son of God. And Jerusalem, yea Jerusalem, would be the place of His death instead of welcoming Him to reign! But then we find the sad traits of human weakness: Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep. There again we find the Father's affection for His Son. The highest glories of Judaism wane -- the Son is to be heard. The moral features are prominent throughout.

Now there is another thing to be observed. John leaves out the transfiguration altogether; because his proper work was to dwell, not upon Christ's outward manifestation to the world as Son of man in His kingdom, but on His eternal glory as the only-begotten Son of God; or, as he says himself, "We beheld his glory, glory as of an only-begotten with a Father."

In 2 Peter we have a most interesting allusion to this scene. It is said there, "He received from God the Father honor and glory (2 Pet. 1:17) -- confirming the remark, that this scene does not show us so much His essential glory, as that which He received from God the Father -- "when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory" (or the cloud, which was the known, external symbol of Jehovah's majesty {i.e., the Shekinah}), "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But, mark, "Hear ye him" is omitted here. This is very striking. In the three Gospels, not one of them omits the words "Hear ye him." In the Second Epistle of Peter they are omitted. Matthew gives us the fullest

account -- All that God the Father said --

> This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him {Matt. 17:5}.

But the others, that is, Mark and Luke, give "This is my beloved Son: hear him"; while Peter himself, who was an eye-witness of the scene, omits the words "Hear him." Matthew shows us the complacency of the Father in Jesus, for the purpose of specially raising the hearts of the Jewish disciples above His mere place as Messiah to the Father's peculiar delight in Him as the Son; and this as a ground for valuing His word above all. Peter leaves out "Hear ye him," because now (the revelation of Jesus having come out) the point that remains is the Father's delight in Jesus. I do not pretend to say how far the inspired writers knew all the mind of God in such a thing: they wrote as moved by the Holy Ghost.

There are two ways, I would observe, of looking at these differences in the accounts that are given us: the one is the infidel view, and the other the Christian. The infidel way is to suppose that Matthew, Mark, and Luke did their best as men; but that they sometimes made mistakes. Now infidelity is always the most foolish thing in the world. It is not only unworthy of God, but also, I repeat, as absurd as possible when the facts are quietly looked into. How came it to pass that the man who wrote the first Gospel gave this scene the most fully? If he had written after the others, I could conceive his remembering and registering what the others had forgotten; but Matthew gives both the first and minutest account. Mark and Luke leave out some parts, and Peter leaves out what they had all put in -- "Hear him." Such criticism, therefore, is not merely pride of heart, but it is the folly of spoilt children against the word of God.

But, again, let us look at it in the believing way. We are ignorant; we know nothing as we ought to know. Let us believe that what God says is perfect -- that everything He has given us in His word is perfect; and that in the very differences there is a divine object. Matthew, writing to those who were under Jewish prejudices, brings out the Father's good pleasure in Jesus as His Son, which is the grand means of lifting up the soul from earth. And as it was the Evangelists who were the first to bring out this new and blessed truth, they all put in "Hear him." But Peter, writing long after, makes the person of the Son to be the prime object, and not His revelation. What does Peter mean to teach us, when he says that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation? You cannot understand prophecy if you take it merely piecemeal, and by itself. A prophecy confined to particular circumstances and persons loses its chief value. Christ is the substance of prophecy. It is His glory that the prophecies bring out. They are not connected merely with England or France or any other country you may fancy; but one must see the connection of the prophecies with Christ: when you do, you have a sure light. God is thinking of His beloved Son, and commending His Son to us. He wants to have our hearts filled with His Son, and not with thoughts about our country, or great men. The Son of God is the object of the Father. This is what the Holy Ghost is insisting upon here. He says that prophecy is a lamp which shines in a dark place, but not when it is severed from the object of God. Take it in connection with its due aim, and all is bright; but connect it with self, and you turn the very prophecy of God into a false light which will lead you astray. Let me, therefore, settle it for my soul, that I am to trust in every word of God; to lay up and consider each word and thought, confiding in the Holy Ghost to lead me into all truth. I must wait upon God to see what the particular design and object of the Holy Ghost is: God is faithful who has called us unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And if He has called us into fellowship with His Son, what will He not tell us about His Son? The Son is before Him; and the Lord grant that He may be before us.

As the disciples came down from the mount, the Lord charges them, saying,

> Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead (Matt. 17:9).

It was no longer a question of testifying to the kingdom of Christ. This was rejected. The vision was for the disciples, for strengthening their faith in Jesus. The Lord was occupying Himself with the souls of believers, not with the world. There is always a period when testimony of an outward kind may close. You may remember the time when Paul separates the disciples that were at Ephesus from the multitude, and leads them into what more particularly concerned them. Now for the present time till the Holy Ghost was given, till the Lord was risen from the dead, and power came from on high to make these things a fresh starting-point, it was of no use to speak of them any further.

> His disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed (Matt. 17:10-12).

He shows that to faith Elias was come. If the nation had received the word, Elias would have come in person, according to the prophecy in Malachi; but the nation refusing Jesus, the disciples were instructed to regard the testimony of John the Baptist as being virtually that of Elias. This accords with the statement that we have in Matt. 9, where it was said, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come"; showing that it was not Elias actually and literally, but the spirit and power of Elias in the person of John the Baptist. The Messiah is coming in glory by-and-by, and Elias is coming too. But the Messiah was come in weakness now, and in humiliation; and His forerunner had been put to death. It was Elias who was come in the person of the suffering John the Baptist, and his testimony was despised. The disciples are let into the secret of this:

> Elias is come already, and they . . . have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spike unto them of John the Baptist (Matt. 17:12, 13).

But now another thing is noticed. The working of Satan is in no wise put aside by the effect of the glory of Jesus being revealed upon the mountain. At the foot of that same mountain where the Lord displayed the glory of the kingdom, Satan displayed his power. It was not broken yet. The kingdom was only a matter of testimony. The disciples failed to draw on the resources of Christ to put down the power of the enemy. It came out thus: A man comes to the Lord, kneeling down to Him and saying,

> Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed; for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water (Matt. 17:15).

The most opposite trials were thus brought together.

> And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the demon, and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour (Matt. 17:16-18).

When the disciples wanted to know how it was that they could not cast him out, He tells them, "Because of your unbelief."

It is a serious consideration, but nothing can be more sure, than that unbelief is at the root of the difficulties Satan foists in. He has lost his power over those that have faith. A believer could never, if walking with the Lord, fall under anything of the sort. We must distinguish a slip into sin from falling into the power of Satan; which latter I believe to be his influence in sapping all confidence in the goodness of God. Hence, when a man is put away from the church, he is delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, though the aim be that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord {Jesus}. Whenever a person is really, and rightly, put away from the table of the Lord {1 Cor. 5} (until there is a restoration of spirit, which can only be when the snare of Satan is defeated), exceeding power is acquired over the soul.

But here we have it as to the body. This child is described as a lunatic, and sore vexed. But unbelief entirely misses the power of God, which ought to have been at the command of the disciples.

> If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place (Matt. 17:20).

The very least working of faith in the soul is so far available for present difficulties. The power of the world, the settled power of anything here, which is what the mountain sets forth, would completely disappear before the faith of the disciples.

> Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting (Matt. 17:21).

There must be dependence in the conflict with the power of evil. It was Christ's moral glory; it is our secret of strength. The assumption of power because of association with Jesus simply fails anti turns to shame. There must also be self-emptiness, and self-denial, that God may act. When Jesus descends, all Satan's power is broken and vanishes.

Then comes another declaration of His sufferings, but I will not dwell upon this now, beyond remarking that, as in Matt. 16:21, we had His suffering through the Jews (elders, chief priests, and scribes), so here it is rather Gentile rejection: "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men." This follows the manifestation of His glory as Son of man, while the other followed the confession of His still deeper glory as Son of God.

In conclusion, let us look at the instructive tale of the piece of money demanded for the temple. Peter there answers quickly according to his usual warmth of character. When the tax-gatherer came, who was connected with the temple, and the usual fee was demanded {Matt. 17:24}, [28] Peter answered very hastily, that of course his Master would pay the tribute. His mind went not beyond their Jewish position. But our Lord anticipates Peter when they come to the house, and says to him,

> What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute, of their own children, or of strangers? {Matt. 17:25}.

It was not that any king of the earth was demanding tribute now of them; here the payment was for Jehovah's temple. Peter answers truly enough, Of strangers. Then Jesus says to him, "Then are the children free."

Nothing can be more beautiful. For the truth taught us here is that, whatever be the glory of the kingdom which is coming, whatever the power of Satan which disappears before the word of Jesus, whatever the faith which can remove mountains, nothing can take the Son of God out of the place of grace. It my be that there is no claim, no right to ask -- the children are free. It would be an absurdity to suppose that among the kings of the earth, the children would come under the same circumstances as strangers in the payment of tribute. They are exempt. Jesus takes that place, and most sweetly too He puts it in a general form. The principle of it would be true of others, as well as of Himself: the children were to be free. He puts it in the broadest form, in order to give an idea of the place of blessing into which the children of the kingdom would be brought -- the children of Him in

---

28. ◆ Q. -- How are we to reconcile the Sept. version of Ex. 30:13, 15 with the Greek of Matt. 17:24? The latter seems double the former. X.

A. -- It is an interesting result and evidence of the version being made in Alexandria, where the drachm had just twice the value of the Greek or Attic drachm. Hence half the former was the equivalent of the latter, which is intended in the Gospel, answering to the Hebrew half-shekel. Theophylact, Abp. of Bulgaria in the latter part of the 11th century, seems to have been ignorant that the stater, or shekel, found in the fish's mouth, was the tetradrachm of later Greek writers, as distinguished from a gold coin and a heavier silver one earlier known, both so-called. He says that some thought it to be a precious stone found in Syria. Singularly enough, Clem. Alex. and Origen, Augustine and Jerome, are all wrong in confounding the ransom tax with a civil due. But Hilary and Chrysostom were right; not so the Jesuit C. à Lapide, or the Lutheran J. C. Wolff, and down to Wieseler, though the Jesuit Maldonat, and J. Albert Bengel, with Hammond, and J. Lightfoot &c., had long pointed out the truth (*The Bible Treasury* 17:24). ◆

whose name this demand might be made.

> Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee (Matt. 17:27).

This is the great wonder of Christ, and the practical wonder of Christianity, that while we have the consciousness of glory, and ought to pass through this world as sons of glory, as well as sons of God, for this very reason the Lord calls us to be the humblest and meekest, taking no place upon the earth: I do not mean claiming no place for Christ. It is our business to live for nothing but for Christ and the truth: but where it is a question of ourselves, to be willing to be trampled on and counted as the filth of the world, and the off scouring of all things. Flesh and blood cannot like it; but it is the power of the Spirit of God raising us above nature. It is not hastiness of feeling; still less is it persons talking about their rights or anything of the kind. Here we have the consciousness that the children were free -- fulness of privilege their portion, but at the same time,

> lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea . . . thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

This is the place of a Christian: not contending for anything that pertains to ourselves, yet earnest for what pertains to God; but in what concerns ourselves, the willingness to suffer.

See the manner in which our Lord provides for all demands for this tribute. He directs Peter how to find the piece of money, and says, "That take, and give unto them for me and thee." What a joy to think that Jesus associates us with Himself, and Himself provides for everything if we would only let Him; that Jesus, who proves Himself in this very thing to be God the Creator -- displaying divine knowledge, having the command even of the restless deep -- and, as such, working this most extraordinary miracle (making a fish to provide the money needed to pay the tax of the temple), should thus give us a place with Himself, and undertake for all our need. Nothing can more beautifully show us how, with the consciousness of glory, our place should ever be that of the bending and lowliness of Christ. How blessedly the Son stooped to be the servant, and leads the children into the same path of grace!

The Lord grant us to know how to reconcile these two things. We can only do it so far as our eye is upon Christ.

Matthew 18

In Matt. 16 we had two subjects connected with the revelation of the Lord's person to Simon Peter: one of them entirely new, or for the first time divulged; the other the familiar subject of the kingdom of heaven. We shall find in the chapter before us that these two topics are again brought together, but of course not confounded, or identified. We are called to see the kingdom and the church in their practical bearing. We heard already that the Lord was to build the church upon the rock of the confession of His person -- "Upon this rock I will build my church." Afterwards, He promised to give the keys of the kingdom of the heavens to Peter. Now we find, and I think connected with our Lord's showing the practical principle which actuated Himself, the consciousness of glory, and of the absolute command of all that He had made (for He was the Lord of heaven and earth, if He paid the tribute of the temple): it was not a question of rights. Had it been a mere matter of right, the children were free: He was the Lord of the temple, so that there was no claim possible on that ground. But "lest we should offend them," &c.

It is plain, then, that grace gives up its rights; at least, it does not seek to claim, and exercise, then for the present. And in the very consciousness of the possession of all glory, it can bow in this evil world. But, then, carefully observe that what it teaches the soul that understands it is never to yield God's rights, but our own. We must be as unbending as a flint wherever God is in question. Grace never surrenders the true holiness, the claims or the will of God; in fact, it is the only thing that, as far as man is concerned, strengthens any soul to value them, or assert them, or walk in them: and grace does this. It is God's own way from the gospel upwards.

> What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}.

The practical lesson follows --

> that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

That which the law claimed, but never produced, is accomplished by the power of grace acting upon the heart of man.

Christ does not so much demand as give the power. It is all of His goodness. And grace consists not merely in forgiving sins, but in giving power to be, and to do, that which is entirely contrary to nature, and above it. The law never even sought this. The law addressed itself to man as he was, supposed him to be a sinner, to have evil lusts and passions, and forbade them; but what more could it do? It claimed the heart of man, the very last thing he would, or could, give. He might give his body to be burned, and all his

goods to feed the poor, but never his heart to love God. I am speaking now of man as man. When yon speak of a Christian, what makes him a Christian? Not the law, which never made a Christian since the world began, nor ever was intended so to do. It condemns a man, because he is a sinner and does not like to obey God: but it does not even hold out what a Christian ought to be. It never proclaims that a man should forego his rights, and be willing to suffer: a Christian is one who does this, being called to go far beyond what the law asked; and if he does not, he is not walking as a Christian. So that, in both ways, looking at the law, whether as dealing with an ungodly man, it cannot save him; and in dealing with a godly man, it never puts before him the full character of the holiness which Christ enjoins. What, then, is it God has given the Christian? If he is not under the law, under what is he? He is under Christ, under grace; under Christ as the very fulness of grace and truth.

This is what comes out here. And it is a very beautiful feature of the chapter we are about to look at just now. We find the grace of the gospel is the pattern of the spirit that is to actuate the Church and its members in everything that merely concerns ourselves. There is often a great practical difficulty that people do not understand. While you are called upon to walk in nothing but grace, as to your own relations with God, it is a misuse of grace to suppose it to be an allowance of evil, or indifference to it. Grace, on the contrary, while it meets a man in his ruin, and forgives him, spite of his sins, imparts a power that he had not before, because it reveals Christ, strengthens the soul, gives a new life, and acts upon that life so as to carry him forward in the obedience, as well as in the enjoyment, of Christ. Our Lord shows that this ought to govern everything. But, first, we have the spirit that befits us.

> At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? {Matt. 18:1}.

This furnishes an opportunity for our Lord to indicate the spirit that becomes the kingdom of heaven.

> Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:2, 3).

Now this is what is wrought in a soul when it is converted: there is a new life given, even Christ. Hence there is much more than an entire change. That would be very far short of the truth as to a Christian. Of course the Christian is a changed man, but then the change is because of something still deeper. A Christian is a man born again, possessing a life now that he possessed not before. I do not mean merely that he lives after a new sort, but that he has a new life given to him that he had not as a man. It is in this way that he becomes a little child. Then this new life has to be cultivated and strengthened. Our natural life as men grows up, or it may be checked and hindered by various circumstances. So it is with the spiritual life, though it be eternal.

Our Lord here sets out the characteristic moral feature that suits the kingdom of heaven; and this in opposition to Jewish thoughts of greatness. They were still thinking of the kingdom of heaven, according to certain Old Testament delineations of it. When David came to the kingdom, his followers that had been faithful before were exalted according to their previous worth. You have the three great chiefs, and then thirty other warriors, and so on; all of them having their place determined by the way in which they had carried themselves in the day of trial. The disciples came with similar thoughts to our Lord, full of what they had done and suffered. Peter afterwards gets rebuked for this very thing. The same spirit broke out on many occasions, even at the last supper.

Our Lord here makes evident that the spirit He loves in His disciples is to be nothing -- to be without a thought of self, in a spirit of lowliness, dependence, and trust, that does not think about itself. This is the natural feeling of a little one. It may be spoilt; but naturally it looks up to its parents, and thinks there is nobody like them; and as long as the child is unsophisticated, so it goes on. In the spiritual child, this self-forgetfulness is exactly the right feeling. The little child is the standing witness of true greatness in the kingdom of heaven. In our Lord Himself this was shown fully. The wonder was that He who knew everything, who had all power and might, could take the place of a little child; and yet He did. And indeed you may be sure that the lowliness of a child is in no wise incompatible with a person being deeply taught in the things of God. It is not a lowliness that consists of phrases or forms, but the reality of meekness that confides, not in itself but, in the living God; and this has the respect which God Himself loves there should be toward those around it. Perfect humility was just as much a feature of our Lord Jesus, as the consciousness of His glory. The two things may go well together; and you cannot have becoming Christian humility unless there be the consciousness of glory. To behave ourselves lowlily, as children of God, the Lord is here putting before us.

> Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 18:4).

It is not merely the becoming like little children, as begotten of God, and brought into the family, but there is here the practical work of humbling ourselves. But then comes another thing: not only the humbling ourselves, but how we feel towards others:

> Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me (Matt. 18:5).

Whatever may be the lowliness of the Christian, he should be viewed with all the glory of Christ, which is inseparable from receiving him in the name of Christ. It is a person that does not defend his rights, nor assert his glory in any way, but is willing to bend and make way for anyone; and yet conscious of the glory that rests upon him. There may be the sad opposite of this -- “Whoso shall offend one of these little

ones [29] which believe in me." What is meant by this? Such a one as fears not to shake their confidence in Christ, to put a stumbling-block in their way. It does not mean anything said in faithful love to their soul. People may take offence at this; but a great evil is spoken of here. It is what tends to shake the confidence of the little one in God Himself.

> Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea (Matt. 18:6).

These things are constantly occurring in the world. Therefore, says the Lord,

> Woe unto the world because of offence-s! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! (Matt. 18:7).

What is to be done? The Lord shows in two forms the way to guard against these stumbling-blocks. The first is this -- I must begin with myself. This is the most important means of not stumbling another.

> Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee.

It may be in one's service, or in one's walk; but if hand or foot become the occasion of stumbling (something in which the enemy takes advantage against God), deal resolutely, and at once, with the evil. thing.

> It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire (Matt. 18:8).

The Lord always puts the full result of evil before the soul. In speaking of the kingdom of heaven, He takes into account that there may be false persons in it as well as true. He therefore speaks generally. He does not pronounce upon them and say, If you really belong to the kingdom, you have nothing to fear. But He looks at the kingdom of the heavens; and there are persons who enter that kingdom, some of whom may be truly born of God, others who are not. The Lord solemnly puts before them, that such as are indifferent about sin are not born of God at all. It is impossible fora soul to be born of the Holy Ghost, and habitually careless about that which grieves Him. Therefore He puts before them the certainty of such being cast into everlasting fire. Of no one begotten of God could this be said. But as there. may be in the kingdom of heaven a false profession as well as a true, so a grave thing for the believer to look well to is, that he does not allow sin in any of his members.

> And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hellfire (Matt. 18:9).

It may cost ever so much, but God is not a hard master; none is so faithful and loving. And yet it is God giving us His full mind by the Lord Jesus, who warns that this is the only way of dealing with an occasion of sin. (Compare Eph. 5:5, 6.)

The fertile source of offence to others, which must be first removed, is a stumbling-block to our own souls, We must begin with self-judgment. But there is also the despising the little ones that belong to God. "Take heed," our Lord says,

> that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels [30] do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost (Matt. 18:10, 11).

What rich grace; specially as here it is evidently so broadly stated by our Lord, as to take in a real literal little child, as well as the little ones that believe in Him. I believe this chapter was meant to give encouragement touching little ones. The plea on which our Lord goes is, not that they were innocent, which is the way in which they are so often spoken of among men, but that the Son of man came to save that which was lost. It supposes the taint of sin, but that the Son of man came to meet it: so that we are entitled to have confidence in the Lord, not merely for our own souls, but for the little ones too.

But our Lord goes farther.

> How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? and if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish (Matt. 18:12-14).

No doubt we can embrace all those that are saved on the same principle, and St. Luke does so in another chapter. The Gospel of Luke gives us (ch. 15). a like parable applied to any sinner. But here the Lord is taking it up in connection with the foregoing, namely, right feelings for one who belongs to the kingdom of heaven. Starting from a little child, whom He sets in the midst, He carries the thought of the little one all through this part of His discourse. And now He closes with the proof, in His own mission, of the interest which the

---

29. ◆ Q. -- Matt. 18:5; 19:13-15. Is it a little one only, or a believing one, or both? R. M.

A.-.—The Lord at the beginning of the chapter corrects the ambition of the disciples by the figure of a little child as far as possible from any such thought. But it is certain from v. 6 that He goes forward to the "little ones that believe on Me." But it seems worthy of Him before closing the subject to give us comfort in a more distinct way than elsewhere respecting "little ones" like the one that He called and set in the midst of them. How many die at an early age? Do they perish? We are not left to spiritual instinct, or to reasoning from general principles. Nor is it the unbelieving and unspiritual plea that they are "innocent." They do belong to the fallen race, for whose sake the good Shepherd came and died: " even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Are we not entitled to look beyond those that believe to "these little ones" for assurance that, if called before believing could be, they are not to perish? Compare also Matt. 19:13-15 (*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:159-160). ◆

30. ◆ Not the spirits, but the angelic representatives, of the little ones. Compare what is said of Peter in Acts 12:15. It is well however to abide within the limits of what is revealed without prying beyond. See Col. 2 *(The Bible Treasury* NS 3:159).◆

Father takes in these little ones.

But more than this: He now applies it to our practical conduct. Supposing your brother does you wrong, something that may be very hard to bear, perhaps; an evil word, or an unkind action done against you; something that you feel deeply as a real, personal trespass against you: the man has done it deliberately, and of course it is a great sin. Nobody knows it but himself and you. What are you to do? At once this great principle is applied. When you were ruined and far from God, what met your case? Did God wait till you put away your sin? It never would have been done at all God sent His own Son to seek you, to save you.

> The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. [31]

This is the principle for you to act upon. It is not merely that this is the way in which God acted. You belong to God; you are a child of God. Your brother has wronged you: go you to him, and seek to set him right. It is the activity of love which the Lord Jesus now presses upon His disciples. They are to seek the deliverance, in the power of divine love, of those who have wandered from God. It is not the flesh feeling its wrong, and resenting what has been done against itself. The law would enable even a Jew to judge this. But now it is grace, and grace does not shroud itself up in its own dignity, and wait till the offender has come, and humbled himself, and owned the wrong. The law executes punishment upon the guilty. If I have to do with the law at all, I am a lost man.

But now Another has come in -- not the law, but the Son of man, the Savior of the lost. Nor is this all. I want you, He says, to be walking after the same principle, to be vessels of the same love. As you have received your life from Me, so I want your walk to be characterized by grace, going out after that which has sinned against God -- grace to seek the man that has gone astray. This is a great difficulty, unless the soul is fresh in the love of God, and enjoying what God is for him. How does God feel about the child that has done wrong? It is the loving desire to have him right. When the child is near enough to know the Father's heart, he goes out to do the Father's will. It may have been a wrong done against him, but he does not think about that. It is his brother who has slipped into evil, and he sorrows over him. It is a real desire of heart to have the person righted who had gone astray; and this, too, not in order to vindicate self, but that his soul may be restored to the Lord.

"Moreover" (says the Savior)

> if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone (Matt. 18:15).

He could not bear that another should know it. It is not here the case of a sin known to a great many, but some personal trespass only known to you two. Go, then, to him, and tell him his fault between you and him alone: a thing, no doubt, very contrary to the flesh, which would ever demand that the offender should first come and humble himself, or which would act on the worldly ground of not troubling itself about the man, but let him go from bad to worse. Love seeks the good even of the one that has done ever so wrong. "If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Love is bent on gaining the brother. It is always so to him that understands, and feels with Christ. It is not the offender, but thy brother, that is the thought before the heart. "Thou hast gained thy brother."

> But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established (Matt. 18:16).

Is it possible for him to resist one or two who come to him, witnesses of the love of Christ? He has refused Christ pleading by one; can he refuse Christ now that He pleads by more? He is sought again. Will he refuse? It may be, alas, that he will.

> And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.

The church means the assembly of God in the place to which these all belonged.

> If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican (Matt. 18:17).

It does not mean what people call "a" church now; there is no such thing in the word of God. Scripture never knows any thing but God's church; the churches scripture recognizes were simply His assembly in each city, or analogous place. And therefore all the terms of men that have been brought in through departure from His mind are entirely unknown in scripture. "A church," separate from others and independent, has no warrant except in the will of man. Every Christian person is bound not only to have done with these names, but with the thing itself, because God is looking for reality, and we are bound to act upon the truth of God. His will is that we should not belong to a church of the world, or to a voluntary association of our own.

Nothing is more simple than for a Christian to act as a Christian. It is only pleasing the flesh whenever we depart out of the path of God. It is evident that this passage contemplates a known assembly to which these persons belonged. It was the church -- the only assembly which we are called upon to acknowledge in the place we live in. The assembly, then, are told of the guilty person's fault. The thing has been solemnly investigated and pressed home; and the church now pronounces upon it. The church warns and entreats this man, but he refuses to hear; and the consequence is -- "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." A most solemn issue! A man, who is called a brother in the verse before, is to me as an heathen man and a publican now. We are not to suppose that the man was a drunkard or a thief; but what he has evinced is utter hardness of self-will, and self-justification. It might have arisen out of small circumstances; but such unbending pride about himself and

31. {In Matt. 18:11 we read, "For the Son of man has come to save that which was lost" (JND). "Seek" is not found here. "Seek" implies active wandering of those of accountability, which is not the point here.}

his own fault is that on which the Lord requires him to be "to thee" as a heathen man and a publican: that is, you can no more acknowledge him in his impenitent state as a Christian. [32]

In the case of drunkenness, or any other grievous sin (as in 1 Cor. 5), there would be no necessity for adopting any such mode of dealing with it. If there were no question on the mind of anyone as to the person's guilt, the duty of the church is clear: the person is put away. He might not have been seen by a number of persons; there is no absolute need for this. Nor would there be reason in such a case for going one at a time, and then one or two more. This is only where it is unknown to anyone but the individual against whom the trespass has been done. But the Lord shows here how, out of a little spark, a great fire may be kindled. The end of this personal trespass might be the sorrowful conviction that the man displays not a trace of Christian life in his state.

> Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven {Matt. 18:17, 18}. [33]

It is not a mere question of agreement. What gives validity is that it is done in the name of the Lord. (See 1 Cor. 5:4).

> Whatsoever ye shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven. [34] Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:18-20}.

Whether for discipline, or for making requests of God, the Lord lays down this great principle, that where two or three are gathered together unto His name, He is in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}. Nothing could be more encouraging to the weak. And I am persuaded that the Lord had in view the present ruin of the church, when there might be ever so few gathered aright. No company of saints is thus gathered, unless it assemble in obedience to the word of God and nothing else -- founded and carried out according to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. Any sect may contain good people and have good preaching; but these things do not make it to be the church. Unless it be upon the foundation of the word of God, and subject to the Lord by the energy of the Holy Ghost, it is not such.

But a person may ask, Do you mean to say that any are upon that ground? I can only say that the Christians who fall back on scripture, owning the faithful presence of the Spirit in the assembly on earth, are taking an immense deal of trouble for a delusion if they are not. They are very foolish in acting as they do, unless they are sure that it is according to the mind of God. Ought you to have more doubt how Christians should meet together for worship or mutual edification, and that you are doing so, than about any other directions in the word of God? Not being restrained by rules, there is nothing for it but the word of God; and there is the most entire liberty to carry out that word. But while one speaks thus confidently, on the other hand ought not one to take, indeed, a low place? When members of Christ's body are scattered here and there, humiliation alone becomes us, and this not because of others' ways only but because of our own. For what have we been to Christ and the church? It would be unbecoming and wrong to call ourselves the church; but if only two or three meeting {being gathered together -- by the Spirit} in {to} the name of Christ, should we not have the same sort of blessing as if we had the twelve apostles with us? If, through unbelief and weakness, the church at large were broken up and scattered, and if, in the midst of all this confusion, there were only two or three who had faith to act upon the Lord's will, for them the word would still be true,

> Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}. [35]

32. {That being so, such a one has no place at the Lord's table.}

33. {It is remarkable that what is a personal trespass, with all private admonishment failing, brings in the words, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth . . ." That refers to assembly action, and it appears coupled with this failure to gain the offender. Is it true that the assembly was not to take action regarding the self-willed, contumacious person. Is it true that one is to break bread with another that he is told in the Word of God to regard as one of the nations and a tax-collector? i.e., as a Jew would regard such a person?}.

34. ◆ Q. Matt. 16:19; 18:18 -- What is the true force of the future with the perfect part. in these texts? Does it teach, what has been drawn from it and apparently by more than one Christian recently, not a ratification in heaven. consequent on the binding on earth, but that what was bound on earth had then previously bound in heaven? W.

A. I am of opinion that there is no ground grammatically, any more than in the scope of our Lord's doctrine, to suppose that the participle *δεδεμένο* expresses time past relatively to that which is signified by the future *ἔσται.* The idea is that of a certain condition viewed abstractedly from consideration of actual time. "Whatever thou mayest bind on the earth shall be a thing bound in the heavens," &c. It is well known that, according to the grammarians, the futurum III or exactum in many verbs (*as διω κόπτω παύω πιπρά*) supplies the place of the simple future passive, as may be seen in Jelf's Gr. Gr. second ed. Vol. II. p. 71. The difference, I would add, is that the complex form before us views the result as permanent (*δεδεμένο*) but, beyond doubt, of a future act (ἔσται). Had the meaning contended for been meant, care would have been taken to express it distinctly, as *ἤδη δεδεμένο ἔσται ἐν τ. οὐ.*, or *ἔσται τὸ δεδεμένο*, or in some other way quite different from the actual construction, which appears to me to admit of no other translation than that which is given in the Authorized Version (*The Bible Treasury* 6:304). ◆

35. ◆ Q. -- Eph. 4:4; Matt. 18:20. Do we meet as Christians on the ground of the one body, or as gathered to the Lord's name? What about 1 Cor. 12, 14? J.C.L.

A. -- I see no right reason to regard any one of these and other like scriptures exclusively. None can be forgotten or overlooked without loss. The others treat of the essential and abiding truth of God's assembly; whereas the word in Matt. 18:20 supplies the resource given by the Lord to assure of His presence, if we are gathered to His name as the center, in times however difficult or disastrous. Those so gathered in faith of His presence may not be intelligent as to the church's privileges or the Spirit's action therein; but they could not be thus gathered truly, if they resisted the truth by indifference or by independency. They might need and would welcome instruction in the truth, so clearly revealed and deeply concerning God's honor and their own obedience; but they could not, if dependent on the Lord, oppose God's will, and they would humble themselves and correct their fault, if they mistook through haste, influence, or error of any kind. Departure from the unity of the Spirit is fatal; and refusal of just discipline

The whole thing is wound up with this grand truth. It is the presence of Christ that gives sanction to their acts {1 Cor. 5:4}. If the church has fallen into ruin, the business of those who feel this is to depart from known evil: "cease to do evil; learn to do well." We always come to first principles when things get astray. This is the obligation of a christian man. He is never to go on doing what he knows is wrong. Where a man makes up his mind to do even a little wrong, he is an Antinomian. If people think they may sin in the worship of God, they deceive themselves. "God is not mocked."

There is one other thing to close with. Peter says to our Lord,

> How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? {Matt. 18:21}.

We had instruction how we were to act in the case of a personal trespass. But Peter raises another question. Supposing my brother sins against me over and over again, how often am I to forgive him? The answer is, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." In the kingdom of the heavens -- not under the law, but under the rule of the rejected Christ -- forgiveness is unlimited. How wonderful! to think that holiness, the deeper holiness that Christianity reveals, is at the same time to go forth with the deepest possible love. So we find here. "I say not unto thee, Until seven times," which was Peter's idea of the largest grace, "but, Until seventy times seven." Our Lord insists that there really was no end to forgiveness. It is always to be flowing out. But remember this, it is a sin against you: it is a person that does wrong to you. We are not to forgive a wrong done to the Lord till the Lord has forgiven it; and the Lord only forgives upon confession of sin. [36] I am not now speaking of the grace that meets a man in his unconverted state: the case here is that of a brother. When a man is converted, he has to confess his sins day by day. What a wretched state of soul if a person breaks down in his daily path without confession to God: But what we learn here is that, if it is some sin done against you personally, and it is a question how often you are to forgive, the answer is, "Till seventy times seven." God will never be outdone in His perfect love; but even a man upon earth is called to forgive after this truly divine pattern.

> Therefore is the kingdom of the heavens likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants (Matt. 18:23).

To illustrate this, two servants are brought before us. The king forgives one of them who had been very guilty (who owed him ten thousand talents: practically, a debt that never could be paid by a servant). The king forgives him. The servant goes out from the presence of the king after the debt is remitted, and he meets a fellow-servant who owes him a hundred pence -- a..small sum indeed in comparison with that which had just been forgiven to himself. Yet he seizes his fellow-servant by the throat, saying, "Pay me that thou owest." But the king hears of it through the sorrow of the fellow-servants, and summons the guilty man before him. What is taught by this? It is a comparison of the kingdom of the heavens: and this particular one refers to a state of things established here below by God's will. While we may take the principle to ourselves, much more is taught than this. Taken in the larger way, the servant that owes the ten thousand talents represents the Jew, who was peculiarly favored of God, and yet had contracted the enormous debt that he never could pay. When the Jews had completed this debt by the death of the Messiah, a message of forgiveness was sent them --

> Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out {Acts 3:19}.

The Holy Ghost presses on them a message of repentance. They had only to repent, and their sins would be blotted out: God would send the Messiah again, and bring in the times of refreshing. The Holy Ghost answered the prayer of our Lord upon the cross, and Peter was entitled to tell them of forgiveness for them. "I wot, brethren," he says to them, "that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers"; even as the Lord had said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Thus the servant had heard the sound of forgiveness to himself, but he had no heart appreciation of it. For he goes out and casts a fellow-servant into prison for what was comparatively a very small debt. This is the way in which the Jews acted toward the Gentiles. After rejecting the message of mercy for themselves, the Jews followed the apostle Paul wherever he went, in order to stir up hatred against him. When the apostle told them he was sent to the Gentiles, the word was, "Away with such a fellow from the earth." Such answers to the catching of the fellow-servant by the throat. It was the hatred of the Jew toward the Gentile. And thus all the debt that God had forgiven them came back upon them. The lord says to the servant,

> O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also

---

is rebellion against the Lord (*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:208). ◆

◆ Q. What is the connection, and what the difference, between the promised presence of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 18: 20) and the promised presence of the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-19)? J. P.

A. I apprehend that it is by virtue of the Holy Ghost's presence, (as in John 14) which is actual and personal, that the presence of Jesus is made good to an assembly, if it consisted of but two or three, as in Matt. 18. The former is absolutely and always true; for as Christ prayed the Father, so He sent that other Comforter. The latter demands faith in the presence of the Spirit and that the assembly be subject to the Lord by the Holy Ghost left free to act therein according to the Word of God. The presence of Jesus is there where His saints are thus met in dependence on Himself through the Spirit, identified with His interests and with the glory of His name. In short, Matt. 18 speaks of the presence of Jesus in spirit, and not as a literal fact like that of the Holy Ghost since Pentecost, who is present in person, and of this John witnesses (*The Bible Treasury* 2:63).◆

{Heb. 8:1, 2 shows us the Christ is *minister of the sanctuary above*, while Heb. 2:12 shows He sings in the assembly, and Heb. 10:19 shows that we have entry to the holies *above* by the blood. This all tells us that the assembly worships in the sanctuary above. This is, of course, in spirit, by the power of *the* Spirit.}

36. {This is true also for the case when one sins against another. Forgiveness *follows* repentance, not given before it. See Luke 17:3. Of course, the same is true regarding assembly discipline (2 Cor. 7). "Oh, let us just forgive him" is flesh, not holiness.}

> have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him (Matt. 18:32-34).

Without doubt, you may apply this to an individual who has heard the gospel, and who does not act according to it. The principle of it is true of any mere professor of the gospel in these days, who acts like a worldly man. But taking it on the broader economic scale, you must bring in the dealings of God with the Jews and the Gentiles. The Gentile had indeed treated the Jew badly: but what was all his debt compared with that which God had forgiven the Jew? The Jew therefore is cast into prison; and he will not leave it until he has paid all that was owing. The day hastens when the Lord will say that Jerusalem has received of His hand double for all her sins. Jehovah in His grace will count that Jerusalem has suffered too much. He will apply to them the blood of Christ, which can outweigh the ten thousand talents and more. But the unbelieving generation of Israel are cast into prison, and will never come out; the remnant will, by the grace of God; and the Lord will make of the remnant a strong nation.

Meanwhile, for us the great principle of forgiveness is most blessed, and a thing that we have need to remember. We have specially to remind our souls in the case of anything that is against ourselves. May we at once look steadfastly at what our God and Father has done for us! If we can, in the presence of such grace, be hard for some trifling thing done against ourselves, let us bethink ourselves how the Lord judges here. Sometimes a soul goes on well for a time. If there be not life from God, a slight circumstance happens which brings out a man's true state; and then you have such a turning back from Christ as proves that there is nothing of grace in the man's soul. But where there is life and a heart for Christ, taking the place of self, the warning of God is heeded.

May the Lord grant that His words may not be in vain for us, that we may seek to remember the exceeding grace that has abounded towards our souls, and what God looks for from us!

Matthew 19

Thus far the Holy Ghost was pleased to give us the Lord's announcement of the church and the kingdom of the heavens. We have seen then, not only as distinct, though connected, objects in Matt. 16, but also (in Matt. 17), the practical ways which suit them. It was necessary also to bring out the relation of the kingdom to God's order in nature. There are certain relationships which God has established, entirely apart front the new creation, some of which may be carried on when a soul enters the new creation. The believer is still a man here below, although as a Christian he is called not to act on human principles, but to do the will of God! It was therefore of much importance to know how the new things affect the recognition of that which had been already set up in nature.

Accordingly, this chapter largely reveals the mutual relations of what is of grace and what is in nature. I am, of course, using the word "nature" now, not in the sense of "the flesh," i.e., as expressive of the principle and exercise of self-will, but of that which God ordained in this world before sin came in -- what God, consequently, would have to survive all the ruin here below. Now the man that understands grace alone can enter into, and thoroughly recognize, the outward, natural order in the world. Grace never leads a person to slight anything God has introduced, it matters not what it may be.

Take for example the law, what a profound error it is to suppose that the gospel weakens, or annuls, God's law! On the contrary, the apostle Paul teaches in Rom. 3, that by faith "We establish the law." If I am on legal ground, there is terror, anxiety, darkness; the dread of meeting God as a Judge: the law keeps up all these thoughts as long as I am there; and very properly. If I, a sinner, am under it, I reap the bitter consequences in a sense of condemnation and guilt. I shall not know what confidence in God's love to my soul is. I may have hopes at times, very much more frequently fears; perhaps a sort of excitement of joy overcoming one for awhile; but this soon passes away, and the reaction is greater than before. Hence it is only the man who knows that he is saved by grace, and who is entirely lifted above the region to which the law applies its death-stroke, who can gravely, yet in peace, look at all, because he is in Christ before God, and above all condemnation. A believer can do it, just because he is not under the law; if he were, "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" {Gal. 3:10}. That is, if he has to do with the law himself for his own walk and communion, and not only his standing before God, he must be miserable, the more so in proportion as he is honest in referring the law to his own case. The attempt to be happy under the law is a vain and painful struggle, with the danger, too, of deceiving ourselves and others. From all this grace delivers the soul, setting it on a new ground, outside the spirit of the world, the ways of men, and nature, too, even in its best estate. But it is not at all as if the believer did not honor, and admire, all God has laid down. He can look with delight, and see the wisdom and holiness of God which shine in His every arrangement, and in all His moral government. Still it is very plain that the law is a testimony to what God forbids or wishes, but not the revelation of what He is. This you cannot find outside Christ. The law does indeed hold up the standard of that which God demands of man. It shows His intolerance of evil, and the necessary judgment of those who practice it. But we should be helplessly, and hopelessly, miserable if this were all; and it is only when the soul has laid hold of the grace of God that it can take pleasure in His ways.

This chapter, then, surveys the relationships of nature in the light of the kingdom. The first and most fundamental is that of marriage.

> The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? (Matt. 19:3).

There you have the conduct of such as are on legal ground. There is really no respect for God, no genuine regard for His law. The Lord at once vindicates from the word the institution and the sanctity of marriage:

> Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female? (Matt. 19:4).

That is, He shows that it is not a mere question of what came in by the law, but He goes to the source. God had first established it; and, far from dissolving the tie as men list, He made a single pair, and therefore only to be the one for the other. All other relationships were expressly to be light in comparison with this closest tie -- even union.

> For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh (Matt. 19:5).

Next to the relationship of marriage is the tie of a child to its parents. Still it is said, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife." It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of marriage as a natural institution. Who would talk of a child leaving his father and mother for any cause? The Pharisees even would not think of such a thing. The conclusion is irresistible:

> What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Matt. 19:6).

They were ready with an answer, of course, even to our Lord Himself:

> Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? (Matt. 19:7).

There was really no such command: a divorce was simply allowed.

Thus, even where men boast of the law most loudly, it is only grace that gives a man to understand it. The very teachers of the law never understood what it meant, nor whereof they affirmed. So the apostle Paul reproaches those that desired to be its doctors in his day. But our Lord draws the distinction with the most perfect truthfulness. Moses suffered certain things not according to the original archetypal intention of God. Nor should this be matter of wonder: for the law made nothing perfect. A solemn word this: which says, not that the law was anything but what was good but, that it made nothing perfect. It was good in itself, but it could not impart goodness. The law might be perfect for its own object, but it perfected nothing, nor was it ever the intention of God that it should. But more than this -- there were certain concessions contained in the law which did not at all express the divine mind; for God was therein dealing with a people after the flesh. The law does not contemplate a man as born of God; Christianity does. So far as there were men of faith during the law, they were, of course, born of God. But the law itself drew no line between regenerate and unregenerate; at least, it addressed all Israel, and not believers only, and hence it suffered certain things in view of the hardness of their hearts. So that our Lord, while intimating a certain consideration of Israel's condition in the flesh, at the same time vindicated God's law from the corrupt deductions of these selfish Pharisees.

> From the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Matt. 19:8, 9).

Here our Lord adds what was not in the law, and brings out the full mind of God touching this relationship. There is but one just cause for which it may be dissolved; or rather, marriage must be dissolved morally in order to terminate as a matter of fact. In case of fornication, the tie is all gone before God. Such a union is incompatible with that sin; and then the putting away of the wife merely proclaims before others what has already taken place in His sight. All is made perfectly clear. The righteousness of the law is established as far as it goes, but it stops short of perfection by admitting in certain cases a less evil to avoid a greater. And then we have our Lord supplying the needed truth -- going up to the very beginning, and on to the end also. Thus it is that Christ, the true light, alone, and always, introduces the perfect mind of God, supplying all deficiencies and making all perfect. This is the aim, work, and effect of grace. Nevertheless,

> His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry (Matt. 19:10).

Alas! the selfishness of the heart even in disciples. It was so much the custom then to dismiss the wife because of petty dislike, &c., that it shocked them to hear the Lord insisting on the indissolubility of the marriage tie.

But, says the Lord,

> All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it (Matt. 19:12).

There, I apprehend, He is making known that whatever may be the sanctity of the institution of marriage naturally, there is in the last, or spiritual instance, a power of God that can raise people above it. The apostle Paul was acting in the spirit of this verse, when he gives us his own judgment as one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. Doubtless he was called to a remarkable work, which would have made due attention to family relationship out of the question. His business lay, and took him, everywhere. Wherever there were churches to take care of, wherever souls cried, Come hither and help us,' nay, far beyond the calls of saints or men, the Holy Ghost laid it on his devoted heart. A work which might summon him at a moment's notice to the ends of the earth would hardly have consisted with the care that devolves upon a husband and father. Had it been sought to

unite the two, either the natural relationships must have been neglected, or the work of the Lord could not have been so thoroughly done. Hence the wise and gracious judgment of the apostle, not imposed as a command, but left to weigh on the spiritual mind.

The last of the three classes in the verse is figuratively expressed: it means, plainly, the living unmarried for God's glory. But mark, it is a gift, not a law, much less a caste. Only such receive it "to whom it is given." It is put as a privilege. As the apostle pressed the honorableness of marriage, he was the last to lay the smallest slur on such a tie; but he also knew that there was a higher and all-absorbing love, an entrance, in its measure, into the affections of Christ for the church. Still this is not an imposed obligation, but a special call and gift of grace in which he rejoiced to glorify his Master. The appreciation of the love of Christ to the church had formed him in its own pattern. Observe here, it is "made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake" {Matt. 19:12} -- that order of things which depends on Christ now in heaven. And hence, strong in the grace that shines in Him at the right hand of God, they to whom it is given walk above the natural ties of life; not, I need not say, despising them; honoring and calling all honor to them, yet individually surrendering themselves to that goodly portion which shall not be taken from them.

But there is another aspect of nature that comes before us -- that of children; and something that is apt to be despised. What in this world is so helpless, such a picture of utter weakness and dependence, as a babe?

> Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray (Matt. 19:13).

The disciples thought it an annoyance, or a liberty, and

> rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid then not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence (Matt. 19:14, 15).

So completely were met all the demands of love, even where the desire seemed ever so unreasonable! For why should the Lord of heaven and earth occupy Himself with putting His hands upon little ones?

But the Lord would hear no miscalled reason: love never does, being in truth above all reasons. Charity, it is written, never faileth: [37] therefore surely not His, who, if appealed to, cannot refuse those who confide in it. He laid His hands on them and blessed them. The unworthy thoughts of the disciples were set aside, who thought babes unworthy of His notice. Ah! how little they knew Him, long as they had been with Him. Was it not worthy of Him so to bless the very least in man's eyes? The disciples, because their own hearts feebly entered into and enjoyed the grace of God, disdained the act of those who brought their babes to Jesus. But it was right: they knew enough to give them confidence in His love. They were quite sure He would not despise the little ones, nor refuse His blessing; nor did He. How important a lesson for our souls is this! It need not be one connected with ourselves; it might be another's child. Do we claim the Lord for it? What is His feeling? He is great, He is mighty: but He despises not any. Before His glory there is not so much difference between a world and a worm. The earth is a mere cipher, if God measures by Himself. But if He does, then He may look upon that which is a worm and no man; and there may be the object of His deepest love and care.

Our Lord looked at these babes, oh, with what interest! What was the globe compared with the destiny of a little babe blessed of Jesus? Each had a soul: and what was its value? What to be a vessel of grace in this world, and of glory in the bright eternal day? The disciples did not enter into these thoughts; and if any of us have in any measure, do we not often forget them? How little our souls are able to interweave the coming glory with the scenes of weakness, or misery, in daily life, and to act unwaveringly now on that which we believe will be manifested then! Can we take pleasure in infirmities, as well as in distresses, for Christ's sake? It is in weakness that His strength is made perfect. We must be made nothing of, if we are indeed to be strong. Let us bear the same thing in mind if we have to do with those we are in danger of despising. Jesus not only blessed the babes, but rebuked the disciples, who had misrepresented Him. Had they not given the impression of a Rabbi? But He says,

> Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven {Matt. 19:14}.

Oh, what a withering word for the pride of religion Were the disciples "of such" at that moment, or at least in that act? Had they not declared themselves practically outside the kingdom by the spirit they displayed toward the babes and those who brought them?

But this is not all. A young man, as it is said,

> came and said unto him, Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life {Matt. 19:16}. [38]

It is not now a question of marriage, or of a babe; but of one who combined in his person every quality that was estimable; and in his circumstances every advantage that the natural heart could desire: of one, who not only had all that men think productive of happiness in this world, but who was also most sincere in desiring to know, and to do, the will of God. His was evidently a lovely natural character. And, further, he was attracted by, and came to, Jesus. What did the Lord say to him? From another Gospel we know that Jesus loved him; and this, not because he believed in, and followed, Jesus, for

37. {Actually, the idea that "love always works" is not true. "Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:8) means that while it is true that prophesying and knowledge (i.e., the gifts) "shall be done away," and "tongues shall cease," love never ends. That is why love is greater that faith and hope (1 Cor. 13:13), which will be swallowed up by sight when He comes, but love continues on -- never ends -- never fails.}

38. Here and in v. 17 the most ancient authorities are followed, rather than the Text. Rec., though this has much support, and some of it far from modern. Probably our Gospel was assimilated to the text of Mark 10:17, 18, and of Luke 18:20, 21.

alas! we know he did not. There are various forms of divine love, beside that which embraces us as returned prodigals. This man went away sorrowful from Jesus; no person has a right to add that he ever came back glad to Jesus. I do not say that he did not, but scripture does not say he did; and, as scripture cannot be broken, so neither must it be added to.

While we have a special love for the children of God, and ought only to value in the things of God that which is of the Holy Ghost, it does not follow that we are not to admire a fine mind, or a beautiful character naturally. If we do not, it only proves that we do not understand the mind of God as here displayed in Jesus. Even as to creation, am I to look coldly, or not at all, at a river or a mountain, the sea, the sky, plains, valleys, forests, trees, flowers, that God has made? Ibis a total mistake that spirituality renders us dull to His outward works. But am I to set my mind upon these sights? Are we to travel far and wide for the purpose of visiting what all the world counts worthy to be seen? If in my path of serving Christ a grand, or beautiful, prospect passes before me, I do not think that He, whose handiwork it is, calls me to close my eyes or mind. The Lord Himself draws attention to the lilies of the field, brighter than Solomon in all his glory. Man admires that which enables him to indulge his self-love, his ambition, in this world. That is merely the flesh. But as to the beautiful, morally or in nature, grace, instead of despising, values all that is good in its own sphere, and does homage to the God who thus displayed His wisdom and His power. Make the creature the object, and there is the flesh abusing the truth of God. To admire when they are brought before us is a very different thing from making them our pursuit and our life. Grace despises neither what is in creation, nor what is in man. If I see benevolence, I admire it: it is a bad thing if I do not.

This young man the Lord loved, when certainly, as yet, there was no faith at all. He went away from. Jesus in sorrow: what believer ever did since the world began? His sorrow was because he was not prepared for the path of faith. Jesus desired him to follow Him, but not as a rich man. He would have been delighted to do "some great thing"; but the Lord laid bare self in his heart. He knew that (spite of all that naturally, and even tested by the law, was so beautiful in him) there was, if tested by Himself, self-importance at the bottom -- the flesh turning these very advantages into a reason for not following Jesus. But self must be brought down. As nothing at all, he must follow Jesus, making Him to be his all in all, or it is a mockery. "Good Master," said he, "what good thing shall I do that I may have life eternal?" He had not learned the first lesson a Christian knows -- what a convicted sinner is learning: that he is lost. He had no such idea in his mind. By being with Christians, one may adopt their language and thoughts; but he is sure before long to bring out something which betrays that he has no real understanding of the matter. The youth showed that he had never felt his own ruin. He assumed that he was capable of doing good. The sinner is like the leper in Lev. 13, who could not bring an offering to God, but only remain outside, crying, "Unclean, unclean." The young man had no sense of sin. His word is not "What must I do to be saved?" but "What good thing must I do to have eternal life?" He regarded eternal life as the result of a man's doing good. He had been doing the law; and, as far as he knew, he never broke it.

Our Lord says to him,

> What askest thou me of the good? One is the Good. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

He may take him up on that ground. This man had no idea that the One to whom he was speaking was God Himself. He merely went to Him as a good man. Now, on this footing the Lord would not allow Himself to be called good. As far as the man's own perception of His person was concerned, he was no more than man, and therefore not entitled to be called good: God alone is. Had he known Christ to be what He was, and is -- a divine person, He would not have refused, I conceive, to be so addressed. But in such a case, would the young man have put the question at all?

The Lord therefore first simply deals with him on his own ground.

> If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Matt. 19:17-19).

The Lord quotes the commands that relate to human affairs -- the second table of the law, as it is called. "All these," says the young man, "have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" (v. 20). Then says the Lord, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." (Matt. 19:21). And what then? "When the young man heard that saying, be went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." (Matt. 19:22). He loved his possessions better than he loved Jesus.

This gave our Lord an opportunity for unfolding another truth; and one most startling to a Jew, who regarded wealth as a sign of the blessing of God. It was in a similar spirit that the friends of Job also acted, though they were Gentiles; for, in truth, it is the judgment of fleshly righteousness. They thought that God must be against Job, because he had got into unheard-of trial. The Lord brings out, in view of the kingdom of heaven, the solemn truth, that the advantages of the flesh are positive hindrances to the Spirit. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly (that is, with difficulty; not he cannot, but "shall hardly") "enter into the kingdom of the heavens" (Matt. 19:23). Emphatically He repeats it, "Again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle" [39] (beyond

39. ◆ Matt. 19:24 -- The suggested explanation of a small side-gate of the city, termed "the needle's eye," does not appear to agree with the context. The Lord is describing something that is, humanly speaking, "impossible," which does not apply to the fact recorded by Lord Nugent. How much simpler to understand that the allusion is to a palpable impossibility, so far as man was concerned, conveyed, perhaps, in a familiar proverbial form?

nature, of course) "than for a. rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

> When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? (Matt. 19:24, 25).

The Lord's answer was perfect.

> Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible (Matt. 19:26).

If it were a question of man's doing anything to get into the kingdom, riches are only so much a burden that hinders him; for vain man would carry his riches with him And so it is with all else counted desirable. Whatever I have good in myself, whether it be moral ways, position, or what not -- these are but impediments as far as concerns the kingdom, and make it impossible, yes, utterly impossible, to man. But with God (ad we may bless Him for it) all things. are possible, no matter what the difficulty. Therefore God chooses in His grace to call all sorts and conditions of people. We read of a person called out of Herod's court; we read of saints in Caesar's household. A great company of the priests believed; so did Barnabas, the Levite, with his houses and lands; nay, above all, Saul of Tarsus, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. All these difficulties only gave God the opportunity to assert His own power and grace.

When Peter heard how hard it was for the rich to be saved, he thought it time for him to speak of what they had given up for the Lord's sake, and to learn what they should get for it.

> Behold, we have forsaken all, and have followed thee; what shall we have therefore? {Matt. 18:27}.

How painfully natural was this!

> Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19:28, 29).

There is nothing the believer does, or suffers, but what will be remembered in the kingdom. While this is consoling, it is also a very solemn thought. Our ways now, though they have nothing to do with the remission of our sins, are yet of all consequence as a testimony to Christ, and will bear decidedly on our future place in the kingdom. We must not use the doctrine of grace to deny that of rewards; but, even so, Christ is the sole motive for the saint. We shall receive for the things done in the body according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad, as the Lord implies plainly here. The twelve had followed the rejected Lord, albeit His own grace had given them the power. It was not they who had chosen Him, but He had chosen them. They are now cheered by the assurance that in the blessed time of the regeneration {Matt. 19:28; i.e., the new state of the millennium}, when the Lord will work a grand change in this world (for as in Him one is a new creation before he is raised from the dead, so He will, as it were, regenerate the world before the new heavens and earth are fully brought in), their work and sufferings will not be forgotten of Him.

Remember that what is spoken of here does not refer to heaven: there is still better work in heaven than judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Yet is it a glorious destiny reserved for the twelve apostles during the reign of Christ over the earth. A similar glory is destined for other saints of God, as we read in 1 Cor. 6:2, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" There it is used to mark the incongruity of a saint seeking the world's judgment in a matter between himself and another. This ought always to be the uppermost thing in the mind of the Christian -- to keep himself entirely apart from the world, true to the objects for which Christ has called him. Still, judging the world can hardly be what we shall do in heaven, but what we shall come out of heaven with the Lord to do as to the earth. You never can lose sight of a single truth of God without loss to the soul. It is a lower truth, but we cannot do without it. We must always draw our weapons from the quiver of the Lord, and we may be sure His arrows alone are effectual.

As to all the natural relationships and advantages of this life, if lost for His name's sake, the losers shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. The Gospel of John speaks of everlasting life as a thing that we possess now: the others speak of it as future. We have got the principle of it now in Christ, and we shall have its fulness in glory by-and-by.

> But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first {Matt. 19:30}.

What a hint to Peter to take care! A self-righteous claim is a ready snare, and soon finds its level under the mighty hand of God. The leaving of all, if valued, lost all its value. Thus, many who began to run well turned aside from grace to law; and Peter himself was blamed by the last (but first) of the apostles, as we know from the Galatians.

The Lord make His grace the strength of our hearts; and if we have suffered the loss of any, or of all, things, may we still count them dung that we may win Him!

The comfort is, that with God all things are possible, as the Lord adds.

(*Christian Annotator* 1854, p. 228).◆

{The notion that the eye of the needle referred to some narrow entrance into the city that a camel, if unloaded, might get through is absurd. That is an Arminian-izing of the text so as to get around the *impossibility*, since the *impossibility* for lost man to do anything to please God opposes the notion of moral free-will.}

Matthew 20, 21

The last chapter closed with the important doctrine that in the kingdom. the Lord will remember all suffering and service here for His name's sake. But it is evident that, though this be an undoubted truth of scripture, referred to in the epistles of St. Paul, and elsewhere in the New Testament, it is one which the heart would be ready to abuse to self-righteousness; and that a person might soon forget that all is of grace, and might be disposed to make a claim upon God by reason of anything which He had enabled a soul to do. Hence a parable is added which brings in a totally different principle -- where the prominent thought is the sovereignty of God -- for the express purpose, I think, of guarding against such effects for God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labor of love which we may have shown toward His name. But there must be a danger in our remembering it. It does not follow, because God will not forget what His people do for Him, that His people are to remember it themselves. We have but one thing to think of, and set before our souls -- Christ Himself: as the apostle Paul said,

> This one thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before {Phil. 3:13} --

forgetting our progress, rather than what we have done wrong: the very reverse of this will be even in glory. When there is not a vestige of humiliation, we shall have a more lively sense than ever of our manifold failures; but not as producing one feeling of doubt, or fear, or unhappiness. Such thoughts would be contrary to the presence of God. It is a good thing for the believer, holding fast his full blessing, to think of what he is -- to humble himself day by day in the sight of God; always remembering that true humiliation is on the ground of our being children of God. If we take the place of being still in our sins, and needing to start afresh, as it were, over and over again, there never can be proper christian experience, or progress: the starting-point and spring are yet unknown.

There is a great difference between the humiliation of a sinner and that of a saint, who, while he has an evil nature, has also a new nature in Christ. Humility is always right; but when we draw near in worship to God, it is no proof of this humility to be speaking about ourselves as poor sinners. We come together to enjoy Christ, to set forth what God is; and, after all, can there be a doubt that this, involving as it does the consciousness of our nothingness, really indicates the deepest and most genuine humility? A person who had some office about the queen, and who had proper respect for her, would be thinking of her, not of himself. How much more when we are in the presence of God! This ought to fill our souls with joy in the worship of the Lord. What is comely for the saint, what is most acceptable to God, is not the constant bringing in of ourselves in one way or another, right as this may be, in a certain sense, in our closet. But the praise of God for what He is, above all, in the knowledge of His Son and of His work, is the great end of all the dealings of God with His children.

This will be a test for the soul. Where there is a consciousness of habitual carelessness and lack of dependence, with their sad results, there will not be a preparedness of heart for worship. In such circumstances the Spirit makes the conscience active, instead of drawing out the heart. What does not the Lord deserve from us? When we go to praise Him, breaking bread in His name, it is not because we can take comfort from anything but Himself; and this will not arrest, but strengthen, our self-judgment. What is the word of God, and what is the Holy Ghost for? Is it not that we should be growing up into Christ in all things? The proper thought connected with the Lord's table is that I am going to meet with Christ, to praise Him, together with His saints: and this keeps a check upon our spirits, and brings before our souls what a thing it is to meet with Christ, and to be found in His presence. Worship is the soul finding itself in the presence of God in the Spirit. By-and-by we shall have perfect worship in heaven. Now we have it only in part, even as we know but in part. But in principle the worship of the believer is a heavenly thing, even while accomplished on the earth, as we ourselves are said to be "heavenly" also.

Certainly we ought not to forget our shortcomings, or be indifferent and light about them; but let a man discern, or examine, himself: inward discernment of the soul is enjoined. And what then? "So let him eat" {1 Cor. 11:28}. That is, the Christian, even if conscious that he has forgotten the Lord during the week, is not to distrust Him. What is he to do? To go to the Lord's table as if it were no matter at all? This would be sin. Is he, then, to stay away? Neither the one, nor the other. What, then, can he do? He is to judge himself, to confess his fault, to humble himself before God; and "so let him eat." This is God's way. A person staying away does not mend matters. I am as good as saying that I am not a Christian at all, if I keep away from the Lord's table; or that I have been behaving so badly that others would consider me not a Christian if they knew it. Constantly bringing it before the soul is one of God's ways for preserving from sin. But let it be done in the spirit of self-judgment at home, so that we praise when we come together in the name of the Lord.

In order to keep up this sense of grace, the Spirit of God recurs in this chapter to the sovereignty of God; the counteractive to the self-righteousness that is to be found even in the heart of a disciple. Peter might say, "We have left all, and followed thee," and the Lord might assure him that it would not be forgotten; but He immediately adds the parable of the householder. Here you find, not the principle of rewards, or God's righteous recognition of the service done by His people, but His own rights, His own sovereignty. Hence there are no differences here -- no one is specially remembered because he had won souls to Christ, or left all for Christ. The principle is this, that while God will infallibly own every service and loss for the sake of Christ, yet He maintains His own title to do as He will. There might be

some poor soul brought to the knowledge of Christ at the day of his death. Now, God the Father claims His own title to give what He may please; he may have done no work, but God's title is reserved to give to those who have not wrought anything at all -- as you may think -- just what is good in His own eyes. This is a very different principle from what we had in the last chapter, and exceedingly counter to the mind of man.

> The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard (Matt. 20:1, 2).

The common application of this parable to the salvation of the soul is a mistake. For this is that which Christ wrought for, suffered for, and lives for, independently of man. The poor sinner has just to give himself up to be saved by Christ. When brought to an end of himself, acknowledging that he deserves nothing but hell, how sweet that God brings before such a soul that Jesus Christ (and this is a faithful saying) came into the world to save sinners! When content to be saved as nothing but a sinner, and by nothing but Christ, there and then only is true rest given of Him. Wherever we have to contribute our part, it will be only uncertainty, and doubts, and difficulties. And where does the salvation of God shine forth? Christ alone is salvation. The man that is saved contributes nothing but his sins. But God is delighted (and not the less so because it is the fruit of His grace) to hear a poor sinner acknowledge that Jesus is worthy to bring him, freed from sin, to heaven. But in this parable the question is not this. There is nothing in it about believing in Christ or His work. It is positive work that is done. There you may think, surely the Lord will reward the work according to its kind and degree. This we have seen: but there is another principle not always understood -- God reserves in His own hand the right to do as He pleases, and He never makes a mistake. It may seem hard that a man should be toiling for fifty years, and that another, brought in just at the close of his life, should be honored in heaven as much as himself. But God is the only righteous, the only wise, Judge of what is for His own glory. If He please, He will put all upon an equal footing. He will reward the work that is done, but He will give as He will.

> When he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is *right* I will give you. And they went their way (Matt. 20:2-4).

It is not grace in the sense of salvation here. "Whatsoever is right I will give you." It is God that judges what is becoming. "Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise." And, singular to say, "about the eleventh hour he went out." What a heart this tells of! What infinite good, ness! that God, who recognizes every service and suffering done for Himself, yet keeps intact the prerogative of going out at the last moment to bring in souls, and occupy them with what might seem to be a little service! But He can give grace to do that little well.

> About the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first (Matt. 20:6-8) --

" beginning from the last" in the perfect wisdom of God. And why is it that "the last" are made so much of in this parable? What makes it the more striking is that, in the close of the preceding chapter, it was not so. There, "many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." But here the last are always spoken of first. So the steward is told to begin from the last unto the first. And again, when the master of the vineyard has to speak himself, it is the same thing: "the last shall be first, and the first last."

It is the sovereignty of grace in giving us He pleases; not alone in saving, but in rewarding in the time of glory; for this is what is spoken of. Of course the last received their wages thankfully. But when the first heard about it, they began to think themselves entitled to more -- they who had borne the burden and heat of the day. But the master reminds them that all was a settled thing before they entered upon their work. In their selfishness, they forgot both the terms and the righteousness of him with whom they had to deal. If, out of the liberality of his heart, the householder was pleased to give others, who had worked the twelfth part of what they had done, as much as he gave themselves, what was that to them? It was his affair entirely. God maintains His own rights.

It is of the greatest importance for our souls that we hold to the rights of God in everything. Persons will argue as to whether it is righteous for God to elect this person or that. But if you go upon the ground of righteousness, all are lost, and lost for ever. Now, if God is pleased to use His mercy according to His wisdom, and for His glory, among these poor lost ones, who is to dispute with Him? Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? {Rom. 9:20}. God is entitled to act according to what is in His heart: and "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Is He entitled to act from Himself? He cannot act from man on the grounds of righteousness. There is no foundation on which He can thus deal; it is entirely a question of His own good pleasure. And we must remember that there is not a man that is lost but rejects the mercy of God -- despises it, or uses it for his own selfish purposes in this world. The man that is saved is the only one that has a true sense of sin, the only one that gives himself up unto God as really lost; but then he falls back upon His infinite mercy in Christ to save a lost sinner.

In the case we have here, when the first came and complained to the goodman of the house, he answered them,

> Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? (Matt. 20:13-15).

There comes out the whole secret. Man, yea, a professing disciple of the Lord, a laborer in His vineyard, may be disputing because he is to have no more than another who, in his opinion, has done little as compared with himself. It was the same principle that made the Judaizers so jealous about the Gentiles being brought in. So, says the Lord, "the last shall be first, and the first last."

Let me just ask, Why in the last chapter is it,

> Many that are first shall be last, and the last first {Matt. 20:30},

and here

> The last shall be first, and the first last? {Matt. 21:16}.

In speaking about rewards, according to the work done, the failure of man is intimated; for indeed weakness soon shows itself -- the first shall be last. But in this new parable is the sovereignty of God that never fails. Consequently here "The last shall be first, and the first last." "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." There was a first, we may say, who became last -- a laborer for the Lord, who had not given up Christianity, but had grown tired of the path of unremitting service for Christ. If, instead of honor now, the thousands of those who are engaged in the service of Christ were to receive only scorn and persecution, there would be no slight thinning of their ranks. The present return should be shame and suffering. This must be looked for by him who intelligently seeks to serve the Lord faithfully in this world. Demas may have been a believer; but the trial and reproach, the love of ease and other things all came strongly over his spirit, and he abandoned the service of the Lord.

> All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's;

there is a similar principle.

We have our Lord next seen going up to Jerusalem; and now He prepares them for still greater trouble.

> Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again (Matt. 20:18, 19).

And yet even after this, so selfish is the heart of man, that the mother of Zebedee's children comes to Him with her sons, who were among the apostles themselves. She pays her worship to Him and desires a certain thing of Him.

> And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom (Matt. 20:21).

Now comes out another principle; for, indeed, so perfect is the humiliation of Christ -- such the self-abandonment of the only One who had a perfect knowledge of all things, and a right to everything by His personal glory -- that He says, I have no place to give you in My kingdom. It is not Mine to give, save as My Father may desire. But I have something to give you now: and what is it? Suffering.

Yes, suffering is what Christ gives His servants now, and this as the highest privilege. When the apostle Paul was converted, he asks at once, "What wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord tells him what great things he should suffer for His name's sake. Suffering all is better than doing anything. It is the best portion a saint can have in this world. The highest honor we can have here is suffering with, and for, Christ. This our Lord lets the mother of Zebedee's children know, when she asks for a place for her sons on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom.

> Jesus answered and 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? They say unto him, We are able (Matt. 20:22).

He took in two different kinds of suffering: the cup, which is inward suffering; and the baptism, which expresses what we are immersed into outwardly. The two include every kind of trial, inward and outward.

Christ is not here speaking about the cross in atonement, for there can be no fellowship in this. But there might be the cross in rejection, though not as atonement. There may be the sharing of what Christ suffered from man, but not of what He suffered from God. When He was suffering for sin on the cross, He drops relationship, and bows in infinite grace to the place of judgment. He is made sin. He realizes what it is to be forsaken of God, making Himself responsible for the sins of men. He says therefore in that terrible moment on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" With this we have nothing to do -- no rejection because of sin. God forsook Jesus that He might not forsake us. There never can be God forsaking a Christian, or even hiding Himself from him. There is no such thing in scripture since the death of Christ as God hiding Himself from a believer. We have not a promise merely, but the accomplishment of it. The first principle, and present point, of the gospel is perfect forgiveness and reconciliation. We are brought nigh unto God through the blood of Christ, and are forgiven all trespasses.

The Lord then says that they knew not what they were seeking, and asks if they were able to drink of the cup that He should drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with. "They say unto him, We are able." They did not know what they said, any more than what they asked. For after this, when our Lord was only in danger of death, we find that they all forsook Him and fled. As for one of these two sons of Zebedee, if he did venture into the hall of judgment, it was merely, as it were, under the high priest's robe, that is, on the plea of being known to him. When Peter followed on his own ground, it was only to show his utter weakness. In presence of such a cup as this, and such a baptism, the Lord says, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with" (not Ye are able)

> 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" (Matt. 20:23).

I would just remark that the words which are put in the

Authorised Version in italics mar the sense very much. They are inserted without warrant. Leave them out, and the sense is better. It was His to give to those only to whom the Father destined it. Christ is the administrator of the rewards of the kingdom. He says, As I am now the servant in suffering, so I shall be in the glory. In everything Christ is the One who will turn all things to the glory of God. Every knee shall bow to His name, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; but then it will all be to the glory of God the Father.

> And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren {Matt. 20:24}.

A good deal of our indignation is no better than theirs. Their own pride was wounded. No doubt it seemed a very right thing to put down these two brethren who were so full of themselves. But why were they thus indignant? Because they, too, were full of themselves. Christ was not filled with indignation. It was a sorrow to Him: but they were moved with hot feeling against the two brethren. We have to take care. Often where we seek to pull down those that seek to exalt themselves, there is self on our part too. Supposing, too, we take one who has fallen into sin. There is often a good deal of strong feeling about it: but is this the best way of showing our sense of sin? Those who feel most for God have always the deepest feeling for poor sinners, and for saints who have slipped away from God

> If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted {Gal. 6:1}.

> But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over then; and they that are great exercise authority upon them (Matt. 20:25).

He put His finger upon that very love of greatness in themselves. They were loud in condemning it in James and John; but the feeling with which it was condemned betrayed that they had the same thought in their own hearts. He says,

> It shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant {Matt. 20:26}.

There is a difference between the two words. The word translated "minister" means a servant, but not necessarily a slave, though a person who might be hired. But in Matt. 20:27 it is a bondman, or slave. Do you want to be really great according to the principles of my kingdom? Go down as low as you can. Do you want to be the greatest? Go down the lowest of all. Whoever has least of self is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. For

> the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28).

He took the lowest place of all, and gave His life a ransom for many. Blessed for ever be His name!

The last verses properly belong to the next chapter, which is the approach of our Lord to Jerusalem by way of Jericho. And it is necessary to take the two chapters together, to have the proper connection of all that the Holy Ghost has given us here. But I cannot close even this part of the subject without recalling attention to the principles of the kingdom of God as shown us by Christ Himself. What a wonderful call it is for self-renouncing service! What a joy to think that everything that is now a trial will be found as a joy in that kingdom! There are those who may think that they are favored with few opportunities for serving the Lord -- who are shut out from what their hearts would desire. Let us remember that He who knows everything reserves His right to give as He will to His own and of His own. He will do the very best according to His heart. Our one business now is to think of Him who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. That is our prime call and need -- to be Christ's servants in serving each other.

In the transfiguration we had a picture of the coming kingdom; Christ, the Head and Center, with representatives of its heavenly and earthly things; on one side, Moses and Elias glorified; and on the other, the three disciples in their natural bodies. This was a turning point in the history of our Lord's course which John passes by, but it is given fully in the other three gospels. The cross, now that sin exists, is the foundation of all glory. There could be nothing stable or holy without it. It is the sole channel through which flows to us all our blessing; and Christ's decease, we know from Luke, was the theme on the holy mount. But John gives us nothing of that scene. The reason is because he is occupied with Christ as the Son; we find there, not the human side, but the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. His rejection by Israel, and Israel consequently rejected by God, are assumed from the beginning of John's Gospel: as we read, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" {John 1:11}. Now, the transfiguration does not bring out the deity of Christ, but His glory as exalted Son of man, owned withal as Son of God. This was a sample of the glory of the Lord in His future kingdom, with the types of some risen, and of others in their natural state. So will it be by-and-by. John does not show us the mount, but the Father's house. This is for the church. The world may see the glory, more or less, as foreshown on the mount, but this is not our best portion. We look for that blessed hope and the appearing of the glory. Our hope is Christ, to be with Him in the many-mansioned {many abodes -- of nearness to the Father} Father's house {John 14:1-3} -- a hope which is far beyond any blessing of the kingdom. Neither will it be displayed. The secrets of love and communion which the church will have with Christ in the Father's house can never be the subject of manifestation to the world. Who now could, or would, publish the tenderest feelings of his heart? Doubtless the glory, the external pomp, and the place of power which the church will possess in the coming kingdom will be displayed; for these form some of the chief features in the millennial reign. We shall reign with Christ, the glory of the Bridegroom enveloping, as it were, the Bride. If we discriminate what the scriptures distinguish, we may find a marked distinction between the proper position

and hopes of the church, and the glories of the kingdom, however real, which all the glorified share, when it is established in power. Thus the mount of transfiguration holds an important place in the three synoptic gospels, as showing Christ in the capacity of Messiah, Servant, and Son of man. As such, He will be displayed after the pattern in the mount, and accordingly, the three Evangelists, who present Christ in these three aspects, give us the transfiguration. Further, the thought of present reception by the Jews had been entirely given up, and. the new thing begins to be announced immediately before it. Christ must suffer and die: and those who follow Him during His rejection will be in the kingdom, but not as subjects; they will be kings with Him when He reigns. When responsibility and even individual privileges come in, "the kingdom" is the thought; but when our corporate place is intended, "the Church" is spoken of (Matt. 16, 18).

Here, in this chapter (21), and from v. 30 of ch. 20, a preface to it, we have the last formal presentation of, the King, though not with the thought of being received; but in order to the filling up of man's iniquity, and the accomplishment of the counsels of God, He presents Himself as such. We find first, that He is on His way to Jerusalem and sees two blind men who cry unto Him, "Have mercy upon us, thou Son of David!" {Matt. 20:31} If they knew nothing of the impending crisis, they, notwithstanding, were completely in the spirit of the scene. The Holy Ghost was acting upon them, that they might bear testimony to Jesus, who was now for the last time to be publicly presented as Heir to the throne. What a picture! The seeing ones, in their blind hardness of heart, rejecting their own Messiah, though owned of Gentiles as the born King of the Jews; and the poor blind ones, through faith, loudly confessing Him the true King. Perhaps their principal -- their one -- desire may have been to be healed of their blindness. Be it so; but God at any rate gave to their faith the proper object and the just confession for that moment, for He was guiding the scene. His hand was upon the spring; and whatever was the thought of the blind men in crying after the Lord, God's design was that there should be a suited testimony rendered to His King, the "Son of David." A Jew would well understand all that was implied in the title. What a condemnation of Pharisees who had rejected Christ!

The highest point of view is by no means always that which is most proper; a lower one is sometimes far more right. Thus the confession of Christ as "Son of David" was more in keeping here than if they had said, "Thou Son of God." This may sound strange where the various titles have not been weighed; but in hailing Him according to His Jewish glory, they uttered that which was in unison with what God was then doing.

And now, let me ask reverently, Why should the resurrection of Lazarus be omitted in the first three Gospels. Man, if these accounts had been his work, would not have omitted it; he would deem the insertion of it in each gospel as necessary for a full and truthful account. Besides, it would have been thought far too important an item to be left out under any consideration. The omission of so stupendous a miracle, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, points out clearly that it is the Spirit of God who wrought sovereignly and writes by each with a special purpose. If so, all which men call inconsistencies and imperfections finds no place here, unless God can make mistakes, which none will say. It was a part of the special purpose of God to omit the miracle; for He only presents those facts which suit His design in each Gospel. Now this miracle of raising Lazarus does not show us Jesus as the Messiah, or the Servant, or the Son of man, but as the Son of God, who gives life and raises the dead -- a grand point of doctrine in John 5 and there alone found in the Gospels.

There were other miracles of raising from the dead in the other Gospels; but the truth of His Sonship and present glory in communion with the Father is not in these others the prominent one. It is not, therefore, as Son of God that He appears in them. Take, for instance, the raising of the widow's son at Nain. What are the circumstances brought into emphasis there? He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Luke, or rather the Spirit, is careful to note this; for it is what gives point to the touching story. "He delivered him to his mother." It is the Lord's human sympathy, the Lord as Son of man, which is the object here. True, He must have been Son of God, or He could not have thus raised the dead. If the Godhead, and relation to the Father, of Him who was made flesh, had been the only truth to show, the attendant circumstances need not have been narrated; the Gospel of John might have sufficed, as it does, to display eminently the Lord Jesus as the Son.

All this manifests the extreme perfectness of the word of God in these Gospels. When the mind is subject to Him this is seen, and He teaches those who submit themselves, and confide in Him. There is a blind man healed in John ix.; it is not these near Jericho who appealed to Jesus, but as Jesus passed by He saw a man blind from his birth. Rejected of men, He was going about, seeking for objects on whom to bestow His blessing; the Son acting in grace and truth, who, unsought, saw the deep need and dealt accordingly. It was an opportunity of working the works of God. He waits for nothing, goes to the man, and the work is done, though it was the Sabbath-day. How could the Son of God rest in the presence of sin and wretchedness, whatever religious pride might feel? The Lord leaves him not until he can say "Son of God," and worship. Moreover, we may say, John never mentions a miracle simply for the display of power, but in order to attest the divine glory of Christ. In Matthew it is the rejected Messiah. Here (Matt. 20) the thought is, that, being despised by the nation, God makes two blind men bear testimony to Him as Son of David; and this, in the well-known spot of Israel's triumphant power, and alas! also of rebellious unbelief entailing a curse, now of the Messiah come in grace, and with equal ability and readiness to bless.

The place (near Jericho) was accursed. But if Jesus has come as Messiah, although the Jews reject Him, He proves Himself to be Jehovah -- not only Messiah under the law, but Jehovah above it; and so He blesses them even at Jericho, and

they follow Him. This was the place that Israel should have taken: they ought to have known their King. The two blind men were a witness for Him, and against them. There was a competent testimony -- two witnesses: "In the mouth of two," &c. Mark and Luke, whose object was not to bring out testimony valid according to the law, mention only one. There is, of course, no contradiction in this. One thing is certain, that they were both healed in the journey from Jericho to Jerusalem. Luke mentions simply the vicinity Jericho -- not as He was come nigh, but as He was nigh, which would be equally true when He left the place. The Authorized Version {KJV} has unwittingly increased the difficulty.

Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives. The Jews well knew what was prophesied concerning this mountain; they ought to have entered into the spirit of what the Lord was doing.

The sending for the colt is on the Lord's part as Jehovah, who has a perfect right to all.

> The Lord [Jehovah] hath need of him {Matt. 21:3}.

What more thorough than His knowledge of circumstances in the womb of the future? How evident His control over the owner's mind and feeling! Meek as He was, sitting upon an ass, the King of Zion according to the prophet, He was indeed as surely Jehovah, as Messiah coming in His name -- the "need" as amazing as the glory of His person. But the Lord goes onward to Jerusalem. And the multitude cry,

> Hosanna to the Son of David! . . . Behold, thy King cometh {Matt. 21:9}.

They apply Psa. 118 to Messiah, and they were right. They might be very unintelligent, and perhaps many of them joined later in the fearful cry, "His blood be on us"; but here the Lord guides the scene. He comes to the city; but He is unknown: His own citizens know Him not. They ask, "Who is this?" So little understanding had the multitude, who had just been saying "Hosanna to the Son of David!" that they answer,

> This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee {Matt. 21:11}.

But though they only see Jesus of Galilee, yet He shows Himself as King, and takes a place of authority and power. He enters into the temple, and overthrows the tables of the money-changers, &c. This may certainly be looked at as a miraculous incident; for it was astonishing that He, whom they knew only as the prophet of Nazareth, should so boldly enter their temple, and drive out all who were desecrating it. But they turn not upon Him. The power of the God of the temple was there, and they flee, their consciences doubtless echoing the Lord's words, that they had made His house a den of thieves. But here we see, not only the testimony of the crowd to the kingship of Jesus, but the response to it, as it were, in the act of Jesus. As if He had said, "You hail me as King, and I will demonstrate that I am." Accordingly, He anticipatively rules in righteousness, and cleanses the defiled temple. Into what a state had the Jews fallen! A clear testimony it was to them what Jesus thought about them; for what more severe condemnation than "ye have made it a den of thieves?"

There were two cleansings -- one before our Lord's public ministry, and the other at its close. John records the first, Matthew the last. In our gospel it is an act of Messianic power, where He cleanses His own house, or, at least, acts for God, as His King. In John it is rather zeal for the injured honor of His Father's house -- "Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." A collateral reason why John tells us of the first cleansing in the beginning of his Gospel is, that be assumes the rejection of Israel at once. Hence their rejection by Christ, set forth in this act, was the inevitable consequence of their rejection of Him {John 1:11}: and this is the point from which John sets out when he begins with the ways of the Lord before His ministry.

But now the blind and the lame come to Him to be healed. He healed their diseases and forgave their iniquities. Both these classes were the hated of David's soul -- the effect of the taunt upon David's soul. How blessed the contrast in the Son of David! He turns out the selfish religionists from the temple, and receives there the poor, blind, and lame, and heals them -- perfect righteousness and perfect grace.

On the one hand, there are the voices of the children crying, "Hosanna," -- the ascription of praise to Him as King, the Son of David; on the other, there is the Lord acting as King, and doing that which the Jews well knew had been prophesied of their King. He was there the confessed King; but not by the chief priests and scribes, who took umbrage, wilfully and knowingly rejecting Him -- "we will not have this man to reign over us." Naturally, therefore, they seek to stop the mouths of the children, and ask Jesus to rebuke them: "Hearest thou what these say?" But the Lord sanctions their praises: "Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes?" &c. (Matt. 21:16). The power of Jehovah was there, and there was a mouth to own it, though only in babes and sucklings. It is a wondrous scene. The Lord here quotes from Psa. 8, where He is seen as Son of man after His rejection as Son of David in Psa. 2 *et seq*. In Psa. 8 we have the suffering and exaltation of the Son of man. Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and Israel, gather, and do their worst. Refused, then, as the Messiah, He takes the higher place of Son of man, humbled first, and then glorified. The blind men owned Him in the first, and the babes in the last and deeper way. What has God wrought!

He left them -- a significant and solemn act. They rejected Him, and He abandons them, turning His back upon the beloved city.

As to the fig-tree, Mark says that the time of figs was not yet. Many have been perplexed at this, thinking that the Lord sought figs at a time when there could be none. The meaning is, that the time was not come for the gathering of figs; and consequently, if the tree had been bearing, the Lord must have found figs thereon, for the time to gather them -- the time of figs -- was not yet. There ought to have been a bearing of fruit, but there was no appearance, save of leaves -- outward profession. It was thoroughly barren. The Lord pronounces a curse upon it, and presently it withered away. Looking at Mark 11:12, you will see how Matthew disregards

time; for the circumstance occupied two days, which he puts together without distinguishing. The sentence on the fig-tree was an emblematic curse upon the people, inasmuch as it was the national tree. The Lord found nothing but leaves, and the word is that henceforth no fruit shall grow upon it forever. The nation had failed in fruit to God, when they had every means and opportunity for glorifying and serving Him; and now all their advantages are taken away, and it is not possible for them as the old stock. The remnant even now is excepted who believe in Christ, and so is "the generation to come." The disciples wondered; but the Lord further says to them,

> If ye shall say to this mountain [the mountain symbolizing Israel's political place among the nations, as exalted among them], be thou cast into the sea, &c. {Matt. 21:21}.

This has been done. Not only is there no fruit borne for God, but Israel, as a nation, has vanished -- cast into the sea -- scattered, and to appearance lost in the mass of people -- trodden down and oppressed under the feet of the Gentiles.

Here, then, in these miracles and scenes is a remarkable witness of the Lord's last presentation to the Jews, and an equally striking picture of the judgment of God on Jerusalem and on the Jews because of their rejection of the Messiah, who, according to Dan. 9, was cut off and had nothing, only to have all things far more gloriously by-and-by; and if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.

To the question about His authority, our Lord answers the chief priests and the elders of the people by inquiring their thought of John's baptism. He appeals neither to miracles, nor to prophecy, but to conscience. How evident the accomplishment of the ancient oracles in His person, life, ministry! How full the testimony of signs and wonders wrought by Him! Yet their question proved how vain all had been, as His question proved either their dishonesty or their incompetency. In either case, who were they to judge? Little did they think that they and every other class in Israel, who successively sought to canvass the Lord of glory, were in truth but discovering their own distance and alienation from God. So indeed it ever is. Our judgments of others and of all things, above all of what concerns Christ, are the unfailing gauge of our own condition; and equally are we laid bare, whether right or wrong, by our refusal to judge.

In this instance (Matt. 21:23-27) the want of conscience was manifest -- nowhere so fatal as in religious guides.

> They reasoned within themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all held John as a prophet.

God was not in their thoughts; and thus all was false and wrong. And if God be not the Object, self is the idol, and what is more debasing? These chief priests were, at the bottom of their hearts, the abject slaves of the people over whose faith, or superstition, they had dominion. "We fear the people." This at least was true. "And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell." This was as clearly false, the merest shift of men who preferred to allege their incapacity to judge in their own sphere, rather than own what they knew must convict them of fighting against God. They could tell, but would not, because of the felt consequences. In the hands of Satan they are the main energy of evil and enemy of good, their private interests being always opposed to the real interests of God's people.

Blind guides by their own acknowledgment! Infinitely worse the blindness, which, governed by no motive higher than present advantage and self-importance, overlooked God manifest in the flesh and threw away, as incredulity ever does, riches greater by far than the treasures in Egypt. To such as these the Lord with ineffable dignity declines to render an account of His authority: He had often borne witness to it before. To ask it of Him now, furnished of itself the best proof than an answer was useless. How explain color to men who never saw? to men who would not see, if they could?

But our Lord does more. In the parable of the two sons commanded to work in the vineyard (Matt. 21:28-32). He convicts these religious leaders of being worse before God than the most despised classes in the land. "

> Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not.

Decent lip-homage forms -- "I go, sir: and went not" -- such was the religion of those who stood highest in the world's estimate of that day. Self-will was unbroken and unjudged. As for people who disgraced the decencies of society in riotous, or otherwise disreputable, ways, they were more accessible to the stirring, searching appeals of John. Their very open and unrestrained evil exposed them to his righteous rebuke; and in fact, they, not the respectable devotees, "believed him."

Such as made a fair show in the flesh were not prepared to withdraw the veil of a fair reputation without, from a godless, self-pleasing course and character within: and as they rejected the counsel of God against themselves at John's summons, so they would not follow the example of the poor outcasts now repentant. Deaf to the call of righteousness, they were just as hardened against the operations of God's grace, even where it was most conspicuous.

> And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

Repentance awakens the sense of relationship to God as the One sinned against. The resolutions of nature begin, and end, in "I go, sir." The Spirit of God produces the deep and overwhelming conviction that all has been evil against Him, with neither room for, nor desire of, excuse. But it is lost for worldly religion, which, resisting alike God's testimony and the evidence of conversion in others, sinks into increasing darkness and hostility to God. The ordained Judge of living and dead pronounces these proud, self-complacent men worse than those they deemed the worst. They were no judges now: nay, they were judged.

But next the Lord sets forth, not merely man's conduct toward God, but God's dealing with man, and this in a

two-fold form: first, in view of human responsibility as under law; and secondly, in view of God's grace under the kingdom of heaven. The former is developed in the parable of the householder (Matt. 21:33-41), the latter in that of the king's marriage-feast for his son (Matt. 22:1-14). Of these let us now look at the first.

> Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it (Matt. 21:33, 34).

It is a picture founded on, and filling up, the sketch in Isa. 5 -- a picture of God's pains-taking dealings with Israel.

> What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?

Then He looked for fruit. All had been settled by His directions, every outward advantage afforded by His goodness and power under Moses, Joshua, &c. There was definite arrangement, abundant blessing, ample protection, and adequate assertion of His rights by the prophets.

> And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another (Matt. 21:35).

There was full patience, too.

> Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise (Matt. 21:36).

Was there a single possibility that remained, a hope however forlorn?

> Last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son (Matt. 21:37).

Alas! it was but the crowning of their iniquity, and the occasion of bringing out their guilt and hopeless ruin. For

> when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him (Matt. 21:38, 39).

They recognized the Messiah then, but only so as to provoke their malice and worldly lusts. "Let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." It was not only lack of fruit, persistent refusal of all the just claims of God, and robbing Him of every due return, but the fullest outbreak of rebellious hatred, when tested by the presence of the Son of God in their midst. Probation is over; the question of man's state and of God's efforts to get fruit from His vineyard is at an end. The death of the rejected Messiah has closed this book. Man -- the Jew -- ought to have made a becoming answer to God for the benefits so lavishly showered on him; but his answer was -- the cross.

It is too late to talk of what men should be. Tried by God under the most favorable circumstances, they betrayed and shed the innocent blood; they killed the Heir to seize on His inheritance. Hence judgment is now the only portion man under law has to expect.

> When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

Seared as the poor Jews were, they could not but confess the sad truth:

> He will miserably destroy those wicked men (Matt. 21:41).

The wickedness of the husbandmen failed to achieve its own selfish end, as surely as it had never rendered fruits meet for Him whose provident care left men without excuse. But the rights of the householder were intact; and if there was still "the lord of the vineyard," was He indifferent to the accumulated guilt of wronged servants and of His outraged Son? It could not be. He must, themselves being the witnesses, avenge the more summarily, because of His long patience and incomparable love so shamefully spurned and defied. Others would have the vineyard let to them, who should render Him the fruits in their seasons.

Thus the death of Christ is viewed in this parable, not as the ground-work of the counsels of God, but as the climax of man's sin and the closing scene of his responsibility. Whether law, or prophets, or Christ sought fruit for God, all was vain, not because God's claim was not righteous, but because man -- aye, favored man, with every conceivable help -- was incorrigible. In this aspect the rejection of the Messiah had the most solemn meaning; for it demonstrated, beyond appeal, that man, the Jew, was good for nothing if weighed in divine scales. It was not only that he was evil and unrighteous, but he could not endure perfect love and goodness in the person of Christ. Had there been a single particle of divine light or love in men's hearts, they would have reverenced the Son; but now the full proof stood out, that human nature as such is hopelessly bad; and that the presence of a divine Person, who deigned in love to be of themselves as man, gave only the final opportunity to strike the most malicious and insulting blow at God Himself. In a word, man was now shown, and pronounced, to be LOST.

> If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father {John 15:24}.

Christ's death was the grand turning-point in the ways of God; the moral history of man, in the most important sense, terminates there.

> Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? (Matt. 21:42).

It was the revealed conduct of those who took the lead in Israel -- so revealed in their own scriptures. Marvelous doing on the Lord's part! -- in manifest reversal of such as set themselves up, and were accepted, as acting in His name: yet to be marvelous in Israel's eyes, when the now-hidden, but exalted, Savior comes forth, the joy of the people, who shall then welcome, and for ever bless, their once-rejected King:

for truly His mercy endures for ever. Meanwhile His lips utter the sentence of sure rejection from their high estate:

> Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God [not of heaven, for this they had not] shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Matt. 21:43).

Nor was this all: for

> whosoever shall fall on this stone [Himself in humiliation] shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall [i.e., consequent on His exaltation], it will grind him to powder (Matt. 21:44).

Thus, He sets forth the then ensuing stumbles of unbelief; and further, the positive execution of destructive judgment, whether individual or national, Jewish or Gentile, at His appearing in glory. (Compare Dan. 2.)

It is in all respects a notable scene, and the Lord, now drawing to the conclusion of His testimony, speaks with piercing decision. So that, spiritually impotent and dull as the chief priests and Pharisees might be, and couched as His words were in parables, the drift and aim were distinctly felt. And yet, whatever their murderous will, they could do nothing till His hour was come; for the people in a measure bowed to His word, and took Him for a prophet. He brought God in presence of their conscience, and their awe feebly answered to His words of coming woe.

Matthew 22

We are not positively informed that the parable of the marriage feast was uttered at this time. It is introduced in so general a manner that one could well conceive it the same as that which Luke, with more definite marks of time, presents in the fourteenth chapter of his Gospel. However this may have been, nothing can exceed the beautiful propriety of its occurrence here, as the sequel to the latter part of Matt. 21. For, as the vineyard sets forth the Lord's righteous claim from Israel on the ground of what He had entrusted to them, so the wedding sets forth the new thing, and hence is a comparison of "the kingdom of heaven" -- not now fruit sought as a debt due to God from man, but God displaying the resources of His own glory and love in honor of His Son, and man invited to share. We have nothing properly here of the Church or assembly, but of the kingdom. Consequently, though the parable goes beyond the Jewish economy, so elaborately treated in the preceding portion, and Christ's own personal presence on earth, it does not take in corporate privilege, but individual conduct, as variously affected by God's astonishing mercy, and this in view of, and flowing from, the place of Christ as glorified on high. The characteristic point is that it is an exposition, not of Israel's ways toward the Lord, but of the King's ways who would magnify His Son; though here, as before, unbelief and rebellion never fail to meet their just recompense. It had been proved that God could not trust man: would man now trust God, come at His word, and be a partaker of His delight in His Son?

It is manifest that here we are no longer on Old Testament ground, with its solemn prophetic warnings.

> The kingdom of the heavens is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come (Matt. 22:2, 3).

Our Evangelist, true to his plan and the design of the Holy Ghost, presents this striking picture after that of the Messiah's rejection. What would be the fresh intervention of God? and how received of man, especially Israel? In Luke, I may mention by the way, the dispensational connection does not appear; but the Spirit gives rather a view of what God is to mankind generally, and even puts it as "a certain man" making a supper with unexampled generosity, not the "King" acting for the glory of "His Son." In both Gospels the parable represents, not righteous requirement as under the law, but the way in which grace goes out to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. He "sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden [Israel], but they would not come." The kingdom was not come, but announced, while the Lord was here below.

> Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings. are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage (Matt. 22:4).

Mark the difference. On the first mission of the servants He did not say "All things are ready"; but only on the second, when Christ meanwhile was dead and risen, and the kingdom was actually established on His ascension. It is the gospel of the kingdom after His work, as compared with this gospel before it. Thus the two messages are distinguished, the rejection of Christ, and His death, by the grace of God, being the turning-point. Matthew alone gives us this striking difference; Luke at once begins, with equal propriety for his task, with, "Come; for all things are now ready," dwelling, with a detail unknown to Matthew, on the excuses made by the heart for despising the gospel.

The King, then, was active and His honor at stake in having a feast worthy of His Son. Not even the cross of His Son turned Him aside from His great purpose of making His people happy near Himself. On the contrary, if grace works, as it does, the interrupted message is renewed with new and infinitely more urgent appeals to the invited; and now by other servants beyond the twelve and the seventy. So we have in the beginning of Acts (2 - 6) the special announcement to Israel as the children of the covenant -- "them that were bidden." The first sending out, then, was during the life of the Messiah to call the privileged people; afterwards, there

was the second and specific testimony of grace to the same people when the work of redemption was done.

What was the effect? "They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise (Matt. 22:5). God was not in their thoughts, but a man's own field or his trade; and, alas! as God increases the testimony of His grace, man grows bolder in his slight and opposition.

> And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them (Matt. 22:6).

This is what you find in measure in the Acts of the Apostles. The message is disregarded in the earlier chapters; in Matt. 8, and 12, the servants are outraged and slain. The issue is then foreshown judgment on the Jews and on Jerusalem.

> When the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city (Matt. 22:7).

Who does not see there the fate of the Jewish nation, and the destruction of their city? {in AD 70}. In Luke this is not found in the parable: how suitable it is to Matthew, I need not point out.

But God will have His house filled with guests, and if those peculiarly favored would not come, and even incurred wrath to the uttermost, divine grace will not be outdone by human wilfulness, but evil must be overcome of good.

> Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage (Matt. 22:8, 9).

There is the indiscriminate dealing with any, and every, soul under the gospel.

> So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests (Matt. 22:10).

The gospel goes out to men as they are, and, wherever received, produces by grace that which is according to God, instead of demanding it. Hence all are welcome, bad and good, a dying thief or a woman that was a sinner, a Lydia or a Cornelius. The question was not their character, but the feast for the King's Son; and to this they were freely called. Grace, far from asking or finding, gives fitness to stand before Him in peace.

Yes, there is produced a necessary, indispensable fitness. A wedding-garment is due to the wedding-feast. This the King, of His own magnificent bounty, provided, and it was for each guest to wear it: who that honored the King and the occasion would not? The servants did not look for such garments outside: they were not worn on the highways, but within at the wedding. Nor was it the point for the guests to appear in their best. It was the King's affair to give. Come who might, there was enough and to spare: all things were ready.

This is the great, essential truth of the gospel. So far from looking for anything in man agreeable to God, the glad tidings come on His part on the express ground that all is ruined, wretched, guilty, on the sinner's part. Let him that is athirst come; let him that will, take life's water freely.

But where the heart is not right with God, it never submits to His righteousness; man, in this case, prefers to stand on his own foundation. Either he thinks he can raise a claim on God by being, or doing, something, or he ventures within, careless both of himself and God. Such was the man who was found of the King without the wedding-garment. It was to despise the holiness, as well as the grace, of God, and proved that he was utterly a stranger to the feast. What did he think of, or care for, the feelings of the King bent upon the glorifying of His Son? For this is the true and real secret: God lavishes mercy on sinners for the sake of His Son.

Opportunity is thus given to put honor on Christ's name. Does my soul bow to it, and to Him? It is salvation. The heart may go through much exercise, but the only key to His astonishing goodness to us is God's feeling toward His Son. If I may venture so to speak, the Lord Jesus has put God the Father under obligation to Himself. He has so lived and died to glorify God at all cost, that God (I say it reverently) is bound to manifest what He is by reason of His Son. Hence that remarkable expression of St. Paul's epistles, "the righteousness of God." It is no longer man's righteousness sought by the law, but God being righteous in Christ, when man has been proved to have utterly, and in every way, failed. Because of the infinite value of the cross, God loves to put honor on Christ; and if a soul does but plead His name, it becomes a question of God's righteousness, justifying him freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

How strikingly was the truth demonstrated by the King's dealing with the Christ-despising intruder!

> And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment (Matt. 22:11).

At once this was the ground of action. No question was started of what the man had been, or done. The servants were warranted to bring in bad as well as good. "Such were some of you," says the apostle. Indeed, this man may have been the most correct, moral, and religious of the company, like the young ruler who left the Lord in sorrow. But, whether he were a hardened sinner or a self-righteous soul, one thing we know for certain -- he had not on a wedding-garment. This at once arrested the King's eye. He looked at the simple fact: had the guests on a wedding-garment? This man had not. What was the meaning? It told a tale the most damning possible; it was setting at nought the King's grace -- it was openly dishonoring His Son.

The wedding-garment is Christ. This guest therefore came before the King without Christ. He did not put on Christ. There might be ever so sincere efforts to be holy and righteous, but it was all, and only, himself, not Christ, and that is everlasting ruin and condemnation to a sinner. Whereas, if we suppose the very chief of sinners justifying God by accepting Christ as the sole means for a lost soul to stand before Him, this is what exalts God and His grace. It is as if a man were broken down enough in his thoughts of himself, by God's revelation of what He is in Christ, to look

up and say, 'I cannot trust myself, I cannot trust what I have been, nor even what I desire to be to Thee, but I can trust fully what Thou art to me in the gift of Thy Son.' Such confidence in God produces deep loathing of self, real uprightness of soul, as well as diligence of heart, and desire to do the will of God. There is nothing so humbling, and strengthening withal, as the heart's rest in God's grace toward us in Christ.

The man was not blamed for not bringing a new robe, no matter how splendid, of his own. On the contrary, what made his case so hopelessly evil was his indifference to the munificent provision of the King. Why should not his own robe do as well as the King's? He knew not, believed not, that nothing from earth suits His divine presence -- only what is purchased by the precious blood of Jesus. He had no sense of the grace which invited him, nor of the holiness that befits the presence of God. The King accordingly says to him,

> Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless (Matt. 22:12).

He may have been ever so well attired, he may have liked the feast and the guests; but he thought nothing of the King, nor of his Son, and had not a word to say when the solemn challenge came. He was in spirit, and before God, entirely outside the feast; else he would have felt the absolute need of an array in keeping with the King's joy and the Son's bridals.

Judgment cast the despiser of Him out of that scene for which he had no heart, to that where the unbelieving, if it be in the hopeless wretchedness of remorse and self-reproach, must honor the Son. It is not merely governmental vengeance, such as that which providentially slew the murderers and fired their city {in AD 70}, but full, final judgment on one who abused grace by presuming to draw near to God without putting on Christ -- who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. This man showed manifestly that he had no part nor lot in the matter; and by-and-by judgment will simply execute by power what is according to the truth now.

> Then said the king to the servants [or attendants, *not* the bondmen of vv. 3, 4, 6, 8, 10], Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth {Matt. 22:13}.

Was this most solemn sentence rare because one man only is here instanced? Nay, verily; "for many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:13, 14).

Thus terminated the double trial of the nation, first, on the ground of their responsibility as under the law, and next, as tested by the message of grace. The rest of the chapter judges in detail all the various classes in Israel who successively sought to judge and. ensnare the Lord, bringing into relief their position, and winding up all with a question which they could not answer without understanding His position, and withal His glorious person.

> Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians {Matt. 22:15, 16}.

What an alliance! The partisans of strict Judaism and the law and the political time-servers of that day, whom the former hated cordially, join in flattering Jesus to ensnare Him by the question of Jewish title against the Gentile. Would He, the Messiah, gainsay the hopes and privileges of Israel as a nation? If not, how could He escape the charge of treason against Caesar? Diabolical craft was there, but divine wisdom brings in the truth as to God and man, and the difficulty vanishes. It was the rebellion of the Jews against Jehovah which gave occasion to His subjecting them to their heathen lords: their wrong made nothing wholly right. Were they humbled because of it, and seeking the resources of God's grace? Nay, they were proud and boastful, and at that moment, in deadly opposition, mingled with malignant craft, plotting against their own -- His -- Messiah.

> Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money {Matt. 22:17-19}.

They brought a denarius, owned Caesar's image and superscription, and heard the unanswerable sentence,

> Render therefore unto Cesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's {Matt. 22:21}.

Had the Jews honored Him, they had never been in bondage to man; but now, being so through their own sin and folly, they were bound to accept their humiliation. Neither Pharisee nor Herodian felt the sin; and if one felt the shame which the other gloried in, the Lord, while forcing them to face the real position to which their iniquity had reduced them, pointed out that which, if made good in their souls, would be the speedy harbinger of a divine deliverance.

> The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, saying, Master, Moses said, &c. (Matt. 22:23-33).

Thus unbelief is as false and dishonest as pretended human righteousness; and if one could be in league with Herodians and affect loyalty to Cesar, so could the other plead Moses, as if the inspired word had plenary authority over their conscience. But the Lord, as He laid bare the hypocrisy of those who stood high as religionists, equally detected what the sceptic never suspects, that their difficulties flow not merely from overlooking the power of God, but from downright ignorance, whatever may be their self-complacency and conceit.

> Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God {Matt. 22:29}.

Faith, on the contrary, sees clearly, just as it counts on God according to the revelation of Himself He has made in the word.

As to the particular point in question, our Lord, not content with tracing their sophism to the sheerest misapprehension of the resurrection-state, proves (and from Moses too, without going further) that the resurrection of the

dead is an essential, radical part of God's scheme and truth. Luke was inspired to convey an additional statement as to the intermediate living of the separate spirit. But in our Gospel the one point is that the dead rise, because God declared Himself the God of the fathers after their death; and confessedly He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. They must therefore rise to live again. If He were their God in their state when He spoke to Moses, He must be the God of the dead, which the Sadducee had been the first to deny. It was the more important so to reveal Himself to Moses, who was in due time to bring in the conditional system of the law, with its visible rewards and punishments, and the sure ruin of all who through unbelief clung to it and present things, despising the promises which hang on "the Seed" and resurrection. Thus, infidelity is made unwittingly to bring out from Christ with divine clearness the power and purpose of God revealed in scripture, and this on the ground chosen to create difficulty. And God's purpose to bless Israel fully in resurrection-power is asserted, after He had shown the necessary dealing with their sin in subjecting them meanwhile to the Gentile.

But if the Pharisees retired with wonder, they were far from subdued; and indeed they bestir themselves afresh when their skeptical rivals were put to silence. They assemble together, when a lawyer tempts Him, but in fact only elicits a perfect summary of practical righteousness. They talked and tempted: Jesus was the expression of all the perfectness of law and prophets, and far, far more -- the image of God Himself in grace as well as righteousness here below: not as Adam, who rebelled against God -- not as Cain, who loved not his neighbor, but slew his brother (Matt. 22:34-40).

And now, finally, it was the Lord's place to ask them the question of questions, not only for a Pharisee, but for any soul:

> What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?

He was David's Son, most true; but was this the truth, the whole truth?

> How, then, doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, Jehovah said unto my Lord? &c.

How was. He both -- David's Son and David's Lord? It was the simple truth, the key to all scripture, the way, the truth, the life, the explanation of His position, the only hope for them. But they were dumb. They knew nothing, and could answer nothing.

> Neither dared any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

Matthew 23

The last chapter had silenced those who pretended to most light. Not believing in Christ they were destitute of the only key to scripture, and Psa. 110, bright as its testimony is to their own Messiah, was a thick cloud, not only to Egyptians now as of old, but to Israel. They saw not His glory, and were therefore hopelessly puzzled how to understand that David, speaking by the Spirit, should call his son his Lord.

In this chapter (23). the Lord pronounces the doom of the nation, and most of all -- not of those man would chiefly denounce, not of the openly lawless, licentious, or violent, nay, nor of the ease-loving, skeptical Sadducees, but -- of those who stood highest in general esteem for their religious knowledge and sanctity. And so it always is when we find a dealing of God with His people. Conscience, man, the very world, can, with more or less exactness, judge of immoral grossness. God sees and eschews what looks fair to human eyes, and is withal false and unholy. And the word of God is explicit that so it is to be. The heaviest woes yet in store for this world are not for heathen darkness, but, as for rebellious Judaism, so for corrupt Christendom, for the spot where most truth is known and the highest privileges conferred, but alas! their power despised and denied. It is not that God when He arises to judge will leave the pagan nations unpunished. They shall not go without punishment, but shall surely drink of the cup. Yet

> hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Even so is it now with the professing Gentile; and the fuller the light bestowed, and the richer the grace of God revealed in the gospel, they are only so much the graver reasons for unsparing judgments on Christendom, when the knell of divine vengeance tolls for those on earth who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord sees not as man seeth, whether in grace or in judgment: for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. No otherwise did Jesus speak in the scene before us.

It is remarkable, however, that in the first instance He spoke "to the crowds and to his disciples." They were yet to a great extent viewed together -- this till the death and resurrection of Christ: and even then the Holy Ghost breaks one old tie after another slowly, and duly utters His last word to the Jewish remnant (then Christian of course) by more than one witness not long before the destruction of Jerusalem. But even in principle separation there was not, nor could be, till the cross. Hence the fatal error of some who argue, from that which was done in Israel before the death of Christ, to neglect and overthrow the holy union, apart from the world, to which believers are called since that momentous day. The foundation for it was not even laid, the middle wall of partition still subsisted; and though the faith that pierced through to the deeper glory of the Lord's person never failed to reap a rich reward and the fullest welcome, yet would it have been premature before the cross, and indeed contrary to God's order as yet, to have led the Jews outside the camp, or

to have gathered them and the Gentiles into one body. The more solemn the sentence of God pronounced or executed, the greater and more wondrous is the display of His long-suffering. And if He call us to patience, how astonishing is His own! How truly in His case patience has its perfect work! But what shall we say of the spirit that abuses His patience toward that which He is going to judge, to a denial of the truth, equally sure, of His sensitive love and jealous care over such as stand in Christ in the most intimate nearness of relationship to Himself? He does speak peace to His saints; but let them not turn again to folly.

It was, then, part of our Lord's Jewish mission to say that the scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat

> all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do (Matt. 23:3, 4).

But there was the careful warning against making the scribes and Pharisees in anywise personal standards of good and evil. "Do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not" They were in themselves beacons, patterns of wrong, not of right (Matt. 23:7). Still not only are the disciples classed with the multitude; but in the very strongest denunciations of these religious guides, they are bound as yet by the Lord to acknowledge those who sat in Moses' seat. There they were in fact, and the Lord maintains, instead of dissolving, the obligation to own them and whatever they set forth, not of their own traditions, but, from the law. This was to honor God Himself, spite of the hypocrites, who only sought man's honor for themselves, and it affords no warrant for false apostles or their self-deceived successors now. For the apostles had no seats like that of Moses; and Christianity is not a system of ordinance, or formal observance, like the law, but, where real, is the fruit of the Spirit through life in Christ, which is formed and fed by the word of God.

It has been urged, confidently enough of late, and in quarters where one might have hoped for better things, that, as the saints in Old Testament times looked for Christ, and eternal life was theirs by faith, though they were under the law, so we, who now believe in Christ, are, nevertheless, and in the same sense, under the law like them, though like them we are justified by faith. Now, plausible, and even fair, as this may seem to some, there need be no hesitation in pronouncing it extremely evil. It is a deliberate putting souls back into the condition from which the work of Christ has extricated us. The Jews of old were placed under the law for the wise purposes of God, till the promised Seed came to work a complete deliverance; and the saints in their midst, though they rose above that position by faith, were all their lifetime subject to bondage and to the spirit of fear. Christ *has* set us free, by the great grace of God, through His own death and resurrection; and we have thereon received the Spirit of sonship whereby we cry, Abba, Father. And yet, spite of the plainest testimony of God to the momentous change brought about by the coming of His Son, and the accomplishment of His work, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, it is openly, seriously proposed as if it were part of the faith once delivered to the saints, that this wondrous working and display of divine grace should be set aside, with their results to the believer, and that the soul should be replaced under the old yoke, and in the old condition! Doubtless this is precisely what Satan aims at, an effort to blot out all that is distinctive of Christianity by a return to Judaism. Only one may be amazed to find so barefaced an avowal of the matter in men professing evangelical light.

The true answer, then, to such misunderstandings of Matt. 23 and misapplications of similar portions of holy writ, is that, as yet, our Lord was adhering (and so He did to the last moment) to His proper Messianic mission; and this supposed, and maintained, the nation and the remnant under the law, and not in the delivering power of His resurrection. Which of the disciples could yet say

> Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature {"[there is} anew creation"}: old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation {2 Cor. 5:16-18}.

Now, on the contrary, this is the normal language of the Christian. It is not a question of special attainment nor of extraordinary faith, but of simple present subjection to the full Christian testimony in the New Testament, And this I may add, that what the law was to the Jew, the word of God in all its extent is to the Christian, specially that part which was founded on, and followed, Christ dead, risen, glorified, and sending down the Holy Spirit. Even were we Jews, the old tie is dissolved by death, and we are married to another, even to Christ raised from the dead. Thus to have the law as well as Christ for our guide and rule is like having two husbands at one time, and is a sort of spiritual adultery. Subject even to one another in grace, we are to heed no authority save God's in the things of God.

Surely also we can, and ought to, take the moral profit of our Lord's censure of the scribes and Pharisees: for what is the heart! We have to beware of imposing on others that which we ourselves are remiss in observing. We have to watch against doing works to be seen of men. We have to pray against the allowance of the world's spirit -- the love of preeminence, both within and without (Matt. 23:4-7).

The truth is that here, as everywhere, the power of the truth, and blessing depend on a hearty acquiescence in Christ's glory in one form or another, and our participation consequently in His thoughts and feelings. Hence the word is,

> Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no one your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ (Matt. 23:8-10).

The question here is not of the various gifts which the Lord confers by the Holy Ghost on His members in His body, the church, but of religious authority in the world, and a certain status and respect by virtue of ecclesiastical office, or position. This were to govern divine things on the principle

of men, and to reward the fruit of God's grace, if it be anything real, with that which appeals to, and gratifies the base selfishness of, the heart. Thus, while asserting the authority of the law in the sphere for which it was given, there is gradually increasing severity in the exposure of the moral worthlessness of those who turned it to their own exaltation. There is no development as yet of the blessed provision His love would make, when He was ascended, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. But the great moral principle of the kingdom (which is always true, I need hardly say) is enforced here.

> He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted (Matt. 23:11, 12).

The cross and the heavenly glory would but deepen the value and significance of these words of the Savior; but even before either, and independently of the new order of things inn the church, they bore His stamp and were current for the kingdom.

In marked contrast with this pattern of true service for the disciples were the scribes and Pharisees, on whom the Lord next proceeds to pronounce eight solemn woes (Matt. 23:13-33). What else could He say of men who, not only entered not the kingdom of heaven, but hindered those disposed to enter? What else could be due to those who sought religious influence over the weak and defenseless for gain? Granted that their proselyting zeal was untiring, what was the fruit in souls before God? Were not the taught as usual the truest index of such teachers, as being more simple and honest after the flesh, unreserved as to their ways, and aim, and spirit? Then there is the laying bare the nice hair-splitting as to outward distinctions, which really overlooked the patent authority of God; and the insisting on the pettiest exactions to the neglect of the plainest everlasting moral truth. Next is detected the effort after external look, whatever might be the impurity within: and this both in their labor and in their lives and persons, which were full of guile and self-will, crowned by affected great veneration for the prophets and the righteous who had suffered of old, and no longer acted on the conscience. This last gave them the more credit.

There is no cheaper, nor, in the world, more successful means of gaining a religious reputation, than this show of honor for the righteous who are dead and gone, especially if they connect themselves with them in appearance, as being of the same association. The succession seems natural, and it sounds hard to charge those who honor the dead saints in this day, with the same rebellious spirit which persecuted and slew them in their own day. But the Lord would put them to a speedy and decisive test, and prove the real bent and spirit of the world's religion.

> Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar (Matt. 23:34, 35).

It was morally the same race and character all through. In righteous government the Lord adds,

> Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation (Matt. 23:36).

Thus should be judged the full measure, begun by their fathers and completed by themselves. Hypocrites they were on all the counts of which the Lord accused them, and as guilty as the worst of their predecessors, they would soon prove themselves in the very point of their self-complacency. Serpents indeed they were -- a viper-brood. How could such escape the judgment of hell?

Yet how touching here is the Lord's lament over the guilty city, His own city:

> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets &c. (Matt. 23:37).

His glory shines out more than ever; the rejected Messiah is in truth Jehovah. He would have gathered (and how often!) but they would not. It was no longer His house, nor His Father's, but theirs, and it is left unto them desolate. Nevertheless, if it be a most solemnly judicial word, there is hope in the end.

> For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah (Matt. 23:39).

Israel are yet to see their king, but not till they, at least a goodly remnant of then, are converted to welcome Him in Jehovah's name.

Matthew 24

We see in this prophecy of our Lord a remarkable confirmation of a great principle of God -- that He never opens out the future of judgments on the rebellious, and of deliverance for His own people, till sin has so developed itself as to manifest total ruin. Take the very first instances in the Bible. When was it said that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head? When the woman was beguiled, and the man in transgression through the wiles of the enemy; when sin had thus entered the world, and death by sin. Again, the prophecy of Enoch, given us by Jude, was uttered when the term of God's patience with the then world was almost closed, and the flood was about to bear witness of His judgment in man's corruption and violence.

Thus, whether we look at the first prediction of Christ before the expulsion from Eden, or at the testimony of the Lord's coming to judge before the deluge, prophecy thus far evidently comes in when man has wholly broken down. So, next, we find Noah, when there was confusion and failure in his own family, and in himself too, led of the Holy Ghost into a prophetic summary of the whole world's history, beginning with the doom of him who despised his father, even though it were to his own shame, and proceeding with the blessing of Shem and the portion of Japhet.

So, later on, with the prophecies of Balaam and of Moses, "yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after"; for Samuel's is that striking epoch which the New Testament singles out as the commencement of the great line of the prophets. And why? It was the day when Israel openly abandoned God as their king, consummating the sin which their heart conceived in the desert, when they sought a captain in order to return into Egypt. It was a proud crisis in Israel, whose blessedness lay in being a people separated from all around by, and to, Jehovah their God, who would surely have provided them a king of His own choice, had they waited, instead of choosing for themselves -- to His dishonor and their own sure degradation and sorrow -- in order to be like the nations.

The same principle equally and conspicuously applies to the time when the great prophetic books were written—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest. It was when all present hope had fled, and David's sons wrought no deliverance, but rather at last a deeper curse through their towering iniquity and profane insults of the true God, who was thus morally forced to pronounce the nation Lo-ammi -- "not my people." Before, and during, and after the captivity, the Spirit of prophecy laid bare the sin of king, and priests, and prophets, and people, but pointed the heart to the coming Messiah and the new covenant. And Him we have seen, in our Gospel, actually come, but growingly and utterly rejected by Israel, as also all their own promises and hopes in Him; and now in the near prospect of His own death at their hands -- in itself their worst of deaths -- He takes up this prophetic strain.

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple." For what was it now? A corpse, and no more.

> Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.
>
> And his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down (Matt. 24:1, 2).

The hearts of believers then, as too often now, were occupied with present appearances, and the great show of grandeur in God's service; the halo of associations was bright before their eyes. But Jesus passes sentence on all that even they admired on the earth. In truth, when He left the temple, all was gone which gave it value in the sight of God. It is ever thus. Outside Jesus, what is there in this world but vain show, or worse? And how does the Lord deliver His own from the power of tradition and every other source of attraction for the heart? He opens out the communications of His own mind, and casts the light of the future on the present. How often worldliness unjudged in a Christian's heart betrays itself by want of relish for God's unfolding of what He is going to do! How can I enjoy the coming of the Lord if it is to throw down much that I am seeking to build up in the world? A man, for instance, may be trying to gain, or keep, a status by his ability, hoping that his sons may outstrip himself by the superior advantages they enjoy. On some such idea is founded all human greatness; it is "the world," in fact. Christ's coming again is a truth which demolishes the whole fabric; because, if we really look for His coming as that which may be from day to day -- if we realize that we are set like servants at the door with the handle in hand, waiting for Him to knock (we know not how soon), and desiring to open to Him immediately ("blessed are those servants!") -- if such is our attitude, how can we have time, or heart, for that which occupies the busy, Christ-forgetting world? Moreover, we are not of the world, even as Christ is not; and as for means and agents to carry on its plans and ends, there never was, nor will be, a lack of men to do its work. But we have a higher business, and it is beneath us to seek the world's honors. Let our outward position here below be ever so menial or trying, what so glorious as in it to serve the Lord Christ? And He is coming!

In the cross I see God humbling Himself -- the only One of all greatness making nothing of Himself for my soul -- the only One who commands all becoming a servant of the very vilest. A person cannot receive the truth of the cross without having in measure his walk in accordance with the spirit of it. Yet saints of God have regarded the cross, not so much as that power by which the world is crucified unto them and they unto the world, but rather as the remedy by which they are set free from all anxiety, in order to make themselves a comfortable place in the world. The Christian ought to be the happiest of men; but his happiness consists not in what he has here, but in what he knows that he will have with Christ. Meanwhile, our service and obedience are to be formed

according to the spirit of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man's evil and God's grace thoroughly came out in the cross;' all met there: and it is. founded upon this great truth that it is said so often in scripture, "The end of all things is at hand"; because all was brought out in moral ways and in dispensational dealings between God and man.

Connected with this, our Lord does not as yet unfold here the portion of us Christians, but takes up the disciples where they were. They were believing, godly Jews. Their associations connected Christ and the temple together. They knew that He was the Messiah of Israel, and they expected Him to judge the Romans and gather all the scattered ones of the seed of Abraham from the four winds of heaven. They looked for all the prophecies about the land and the city to be accomplished. There was no thought in the minds of the disciples at this time of Jesus going to heaven and staying there for a long time -- of the scattering of Israel, and of the Gentiles being brought in to the knowledge of Christ. Consequently this great prophecy on the mount of Olives starts with the disciples and with their condition. Their hearts were too much occupied with the buildings of the temple. But the Lord, now rejected, announces that

> there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down (Matt. 24:2).

This excited greatly the desire of the disciples to understand how such things were to come to pass. They were aware from the prophecies that there was a time of dismal sorrow for Israel, and they did not know how to put this together with their predicted blessing. They ask Him, therefore,

> When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world {age}? (Matt. 24:3).

"Thy coming" means "the Lord's presence with them on the earth"; and "the end of the age" is a totally different word from that translated "world" elsewhere: it means here the end of the time during which our Lord should be absent from them. They wished to know the sign of His presence with them. They knew there could never be such desolation if their Messiah was reigning over them. They wished to know when the time of sorrow should cone, and what should be the sign of His own presence that should close it and bring in unending joy.

> And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many (Matt. 24:4, 5).

In the epistles of Paul it is never exactly such a thought as warning persons against fa1se Christs. For there the Holy Ghost addresses us as Christians; and a Christian could not be deceived by a man's pretensions to be Christ. It is most appropriate here, because the disciples are viewed in this chapter, as the representatives, not of us Christians now, but of future godly Jews. We, as Christians, have nothing to do with the destruction of the temple; it does not affect us in any way. These disciples were regarded as the godly remnant of the nation, who were looking for the Messiah to bring in glory. The Lord, therefore, warns them that if any should arise among them, saying, I am Christ, they were not to believe them. The time was come when the true Messiah ought to appear. And He had appeared, but Israel had rejected Him; they refused to bow to Him, hardening themselves in the lie that our Lord could not be the promised One.

But the Jews, while not believing that Jesus is the Christ, had not yet given up the hope of the Messiah, and this exposed them to the delusion spoken of here (i.e., to persons saying, I am Christ). At any rate, the rejection of the true Christ laid them open to the reception of a false Christ. Our Lord had warned them of this.

> I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive {John 5:43}.

If a messiah were to come full of self and of Satan, the nation should be given up to receive the false, as a just retribution for having rejected the True. The disciples were the representatives of godly Jews, and were warned of what should befall their nation. But take the epistles of John and what have you there?

> Beloved, believe not every spirit {1 John 4:1}.

Why? Because the great thing that the church is distinguished by is the presence of the Holy Ghost; and the deceit which we have to watch against is false spirits, not false Christs, though there are many antichrists {1 John 2:18}.

How are we to do God's will? How are we to be directed to what will honor Him? The Holy Ghost alone can guide us in a right path, and He acts by the word of God. I must find myself meeting, according to the scriptures, where what is of man is disallowed, and what is of God is freely, and fully, acknowledged. We are bound to see whether all that we are doing will bear the full searchings of the scriptures; if not, let us stop at once. Never allow a single thing which you believe to be contrary to the written word.

> Cease to do evil.
>
> To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

Supposing I only know that what I am engaged in is wrong, but that I see nothing further, I must stop. God gives me no fresh light before me if I am doing what is wrong. I may have to remain in my chamber, and not see what next; but wherever I see evil, I am bound by it. We can never go on in evil, hoping for more light. What is the walk of faith? A believer may seem to go blindfold, but he has God for his guide. He does not see before him, but he has the eye, and heart, and hand of One who does. It is God who guides. He shows me His will for that one step, and when I have taken it, He will show me the next. It is a question of honoring God. When we have done this in any particular step, the Lord opens a further path for us.

Our Lord does not warn against false spirits here, because He is not speaking to the disciples on the ground of Christianity. By a Christian, I mean a believer since the Holy Ghost was poured out from on high. He is not a bit more a saint than a man called to the knowledge of God before; but

he has special privileges founded on accomplished redemption, and also enters more fully into the truth of God as revealed in Christ. The disciples did not know this blessing yet; and the Lord takes them as examples of a believing remnant in the latter day. The danger of Christians is grieving the Holy Ghost -- nay, listening to false spirits.

> Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world {1 John 4:1}.

These were persons in whom an evil spirit wrought. There are false prophets now, and evil spirits work in them. In these days, faith, both in the Holy Ghost and in Satan's power, is very much weakened. People only look at the man; whereas scripture makes a great deal of God and of Satan. What gives Satan power over a professor of the name of Christ is the allowance of sin. Satan has not one atom of, power against a child of God who is looking to Jesus; but where self is allowed Satan can come and make a resting-place for a season. If a believer could not be a false prophet, there might be a temporary power of the enemy over his soul.

Here it is a question of false Christs, because our Lord was going to speak to the disciples about Jewish circumstances and hopes, though He afterwards turns to christian subjects. The prophecy consists of three great parts. The Jewish remnant have their history thoroughly described; then comes the portion of Christians, and afterwards that of the Gentiles. The prophecy divides itself into these three sections. Why are the Jews, we may ask, first brought forward? The disciples were not yet taken out of their Jewish position: only when Christ was crucified was the wall of partition broken down. Our Lord's intention was to take up a Jewish remnant and show that there would be a company in the latter day on the same ground as these disciples -- the Christian would come in between. This we have described in the latter part of the chapter, and in the greater part of Matt. 25. Then we have the Gentiles, "all nations," gathered before the Son of man. Such is the thread of connection between the parts' of this great discourse.

> Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet (Matt. 24:5, 6).

Observe, there are two great moral warnings given by our Lord. First, they were to beware of a true hope falsely applied. He guards them against the attractions of false Christs, who would take advantage of the fact that the Jews ought to be looking for Christ, and would pretend to be Christ. But, besides, there is the fear that would be excited by the enemy, who knows how to bring in a new deceit suited to another set of circumstances. Verse 6, therefore, guards them against alarms: "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars." We have nothing to do with these. Where do you read that the Holy Ghost warns the Christian about trouble from wars and rumors of wars? Do we find anything about it in the Epistles, where the Christian Church is properly brought out?

Am I then denying the importance of the Lord's prophecy? God forbid! But the portion we are looking at does not refer to Christians as they now are, but to the Jewish disciples as they then were, and as they will be. Our calling takes place after our Lord went to heaven and before He returns in glory, whereas the Jewish remnant will be found in the latter day on similar ground and with hopes like those the disciples had whom our Lord was here addressing. We do not arrive at a clear knowledge of anything by denying the great landmarks of God. If we want to put things rightly together in the word of God, we must notice what, and to whom, He speaks. If a Gentile take up the language of a Jew, a great mistake is made; or if a Christian adopt the language of either Jew or Gentile, there is again an equal mistake. Therefore it is that such stress is laid on "rightly dividing the word of truth." We find various ways of God according to His sovereign will about those with whom He is dealing, and we must take care to apply His word aright.

Here we have disciples having a peculiar calling in a particular land, the land of Judea; and if they heard of wars and rumors of wars they were not to be troubled.

> For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet {Matt. 24:6}.

Mark the difference in the language of scripture. Do we ever find the apostles saying, The end is not yet, for us? On the contrary, it is said of us (1 Cor. 10), "Upon whom the ends of the world are come." So again, speaking about the cross of Christ, it is written (Heb. 9:26), "Now once, in the end of the world"; whereas, when the Lord is predicting about the Jewish remnant, "the end is not yet." And this, because many things must yet be accomplished before the Jews can come into their blessing. But for Christians, all things are ours in Christ even now; the blessing is never put off, though we await the crown at His coming. Again, many parts of scripture speak of scenes of anguish before the Lord's coming; others make Christians to be expecting Christ at any time. These scriptures cannot be broken, nor can they contradict one another; and yet they must do so, if they be applied to the same people.

Practically, too, the difference is immensely important; for the Christian is not of the world, even as Christ. is not, which could not be equally said of the Jewish body yet to be called in the latter day. For us "wars and rumours of wars" ought not to be a source of trouble, any more than of interest on either side of this world's combatants. Surely they should be an occasion of holy concern and intercession in the spirit of grace, and this for all engaged. The Jewish remnant, on the contrary, will not be separated after this heavenly manner; and the earthly struggles, which will then rage in, and around, the land cannot but affect them nearly: so that they will especially need to cherish confidence in the Savior's words, and not be troubled as if the issue were a doubtful one, or themselves forgotten in that dark day. They must wait patiently;

> for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows {Matt 24:7, 8}.

It is evident that the language is only applicable in its full force to Jews -- believing ones, no doubt, but still Jews in the midst of a nation judicially chastised for their apostasy from God and rejection of their own Messiah.

Besides, the Lord prepares the Jewish disciples, or remnant, for their own special trials, partially true after His own departure till Jerusalem disappeared, and once more to be verified before Jerusalem is fully owned after the destruction of the Antichrist.

> Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations [or 'the Gentiles'] for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another (Matt. 24:9, 10).

There should be false profession among them, and hatred of the true even among themselves; and not only troubles without:

> Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound., the love of many shall wax cold; but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved {Matt. 24:11, 12}.

Thus there is a certain, defined period of endurance -- an end to come, as truly as there was a beginning of sorrows. But what trial, and darkness, and suffering, and scandal before that end comes! When our Lord speaks, as in the Gospel of John, of the Christian's lot, He never names either a beginning or an end, but rather implies that tribulation should be expected throughout his career. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." And such is the constant language and thought in the epistles, where beyond question our calling is supposed.

Then follows a final sign.

> This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come (Matt. 24:14).

The gospel of God's grace is not the same as the gospel of the kingdom. Both should be preached -- that God is saving souls of His mere favor now through Christ; and that there is a kingdom which He is going to establish by His power shortly, which is to embrace all the earth. Before the end come, there will therefore be a special testimony of this coming of the Lord, as He here intimates. So in Rev. 14 an angel is seen by John in the prophetic vision,

> having the everlasting gospel to preach to the dwellers on earth and to every nation, and saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

Now it cannot be so said that the hour of His judgment is come; for it is, on the contrary, and expressly, the day of His grace and salvation.

Clearly, therefore, the inference is that, just before the close of this age, there will be a remarkable energy of the Spirit in the midst of the Jews; and from that very people who rejected Jesus of old, messengers of the kingdom shall go forth, touched by His grace, to announce the speedy fall of divine judgment and the establishment of the kingdom of the heavens in power and glory. Who so suited, in God's mercy, to proclaim the returning Messiah, as some of the very nation who of old had nailed Him to the cross, among all the proud Gentiles whose then representative inscribed it with, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews?" The testimony shall go forth universally. How humbling for Christendom! What has become of the East? What of the West? Mahometanism! {i.e., Islam}. Popery! with Paganism, too, still prevalent over vast tracts of Asia and Africa. And yet Christian men close their eyes to the plainest and most solemn fact, and boast of the triumphs of the gospel! No; the Gentiles have been wise in their own conceits, though grace has wrought where God has pleased, spite of all; but it is reserved for other witnesses, when the falling away shall have been complete in Christendom, and the man of sin revealed, to proclaim the coming kingdom in all the habitable earth.

In Matt. 24:15 the Lord goes back in point of time and shows us -- not general tokens of the approach of the end, and that which should distinguish the end in general from the earlier throes of Israel -- but here we have circumstances of the most definite character, which may, perhaps, be applied partially to what occurred before the fall of Jerusalem under Titus, but which can only be fulfilled in the future of Israel, if we duly heed the peculiarity of the scene, the connection of the prophecy, and, above all, the consummation in which all is to terminate.

First, then, our Lord points to a Jewish prophet.

> When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), &c. (Matt. 24:15).

The parenthesis warns that the prediction might be misunderstood -- that at any rate it demanded attention. Two passages of the prophecy (Dan. 11:31 and 12:11) speak of this abomination; but why should I hesitate to affirm that the former was the foreshadowing of the doings of Antiochus Epiphanes, centuries before Christ, and that the latter is the one referred to here, and still unaccomplished? Entirely distinct from the epoch of Antiochus, Dan. 12 speaks of another idol which brings desolation in its train, and this expressly at "the time of the end." "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." In this we have another link of connection with our Lord's words, "Whoso readeth, let him understand."

> And from the time that the daily [sacrifice] shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days {Dan. 12:11}.

Thus, beside the idolatrous evil imposed by the notorious king of the north long before the Lord appeared, Daniel looks onward to a similar evil at the close of Israel's sorrows, the destruction of which immediately precedes their final deliverance. "Blessed is he that waiteth." As to this last, our Lord cites the Jewish prophet, and casts further light on the

selfsame time and circumstances, when Daniel himself shall reappear in his lot.

The conclusion is clear and certain: our Lord in v. 15 of Matt. 24 determines the allusion to be to that part of Daniel which is yet future, not to what was history when He stood on the mount of Olives. I am aware that some have confounded the matter with what we read in Dan. 8 and 9. But "the transgression of desolation" is not the same as "the abomination of desolation"; nor can we absolutely identify "the last end of the indignation" with "the time of the end." (Compare Isa. 10). The distinctions of scripture are as much to be noted as the points of resemblance and of contact. The last verse of Dan. 9 {27} might seem to have stronger claims. There we have a covenant confirmed for one week; and then in the midst of the week sacrifice and oblation are made to cease; after which, because of the protection given to abominations or idols, there is a desolator "even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (i.e. Jerusalem).

I have thus given what has the best claim to be the true sense of this important passage; and evidently, when thus stated with precision, the supposed resemblance to "the abomination of desolation" disappears. A desolator who comes because of the wing (i.e. protection) of abominations is very distinct from the abomination that makes desolate, or the idol which is yet to stand in the sanctuary. With the setting up of this abomination the date of one thousand two hundred and ninety days is connected. Even for those who understand this of so many years, it is impossible to apply the prophecy to the destruction of Jerusalem or its temple by the Romans. Had it been so, the period of blessing must long before this have arrived for Israel. Has the prophecy then failed? No; but many readers have failed in understanding it. We must correct, not the language of Scripture, but our interpretation: we must go back to God's word again and again, and see whether we have not mistaken our bearings.

The truth is, that the understanding of Dan. 12 is of all moment for reaping due profit from Matt. 24. In its first verse we have a plain landmark:

> At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people {Dan. 12:1}.

There can be no just doubt that Daniel's people means the Jews, and that a mighty intervention on their behalf is intimated; but, as usual, not without the severest trial of faith. For

> there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.

This our Lord has unquestionably in view in Matt. 24:21:

> Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

There cannot be two tribulations for the same people, each of which is greatest: both statements refer to the same trouble. Now Daniel is positive that "at that time thy people (the Jews) shall be delivered." Who can pretend that Michael stood up for Israel against Titus any more than against Nebuchadnezzar? Does not everybody know that at that time, far from being delivered, they were completely vanquished by the Romans, and those who escaped the sword were sold as slaves and scattered over the world? God was then against, not for, Israel; and, as the king in the parable, He was wroth, sent forth His armies, destroyed those murderers, and fired their city. Here, on the contrary, the unequaled hour of sorrow is just before their deliverance on God's part, not before their captivity.

Carrying this back to our chapter, the sight of the desolating idol in the holy place is the signal for flight

> Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains (Matt. 24:16).

There is no thought of a sign to Christians as such, but to Jewish disciples in the holy land; and this that they may instantly retire from the scene of danger.

> Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days (Matt. 24:17-19).

It has been tried to find in this the warning on which some fled to Pella in the interval after the Roman lieutenant surrounded the city, and before the final sack under the victorious commander. But this arises from confounding Luke 21:20-24 with Matt. 24:15-21; whereas they are demonstrably distinct, spite of a measure of analogy between them. It perfectly fell within the province given of the Spirit to the great Gentile Evangelist to notice the past Roman siege {AD 70}, as well as the present supremacy of the nations which tread down Jerusalem till their times are fulfilled.

Matthew, however, has his own proper task in giving the awful, future crisis, at least from v. 15. And it is evident that, as the abomination in the holy place differs widely from armies compassing Jerusalem, so there was ample space for the most leisurely departure from the menaced city (yes, for the most impeded and infirm of either sex to go) after Cestius Gallus withdrew. I conclude, therefore, that by Matthew our Lord gives us what bears on the time of the end, by Luke what refers to the past, and to the present too, cursorily, as well as to the future. Matthew, for instance, could not speak like Luke, of Jerusalem being trodden down. of the Gentiles, because he is here occupied only with the horrors which immediately precede Israel's blessing and deliverance. Luke has both an earlier and a later time of trouble: Matthew, from v. 15, leaves that and confines himself to this.

> But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Matt. 24:20, 21).

How considerate the Lord is! And how surely His disciples in that day may count on His care, that their petitions will be answered, so that urgent as their night must be, neither the inclement season, nor the day of Jewish rest, shall hinder! Here again is another proof that not Christians, but His

Jewish followers are contemplated. Holy as is the Sabbath, I have no hesitation in saying that the Lord's-day, with which the church has to do, is founded on a deeper sanctity. The believer has now to beware, on the one hand, of confounding the Sabbath with the Lord's-day; and, on the other, of supposing that, because the Lord's-day is not the Sabbath, it may therefore be turned to a selfish, or worldly, account. The Sabbath is the holy memorial of creation, and of the law; as the Lord's-day is of grace, and of the new creation in the resurrection of the Savior. As Christians we are neither of the old creation, nor under the law, but stand on the totally different ground of Christ dead and risen. The Sabbath was for man and the Jew, the last day of the week, and one simply of rest to be shared with the ox and the ass. This is not the Christian idea, which begins the week with the Lord, gives the best to Him in worship, and is free to labor for Him to all lengths in the midst of the world's sin and misery.

Thus we have, at every step, a fresh testimony to the real bearing of the prophecy. For us the holy place is in heaven, not in Jerusalem; for us it is no question of escaping some unexampled tribulation, but of being prepared for, and rejoicing in, it always; for us, gathered out of all nations and tongues, the mountains round Judea are no suited hiding-place; nor could the winter, or the Sabbath-day, be a just source of alarm. Every word is for us to ponder, and profit by; but the evidence unmistakably points to a converted body of Jews in the latter day, not standing in church light and privilege, but having Jewish hopes, and, while awaiting the Messiah, warned how to escape the deceits and overwhelming trouble of that day. It is a question of flesh being saved (Matt. 24:22), and not of fellowship with Christ's sufferings and conformity to His death, so as, whatever the cost, to have part in the resurrection from among the dead.

Hence, too, there is no thought here of Christ's coming to receive us to Himself and to give us mansions {abodes} where He is in the Father's house, but of His presence in glory to destroy enemies, to judge what was dead and offensive to God, and to deliver the scattered elect of Israel. For their sake those days of terror should be shortened. With this agree the warnings in vv. 23-28:

> Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders &c. (Matt. 24:23, 24).

Could such a delusion be addressed even to the simplest Christian who waits for the Son of God from heaven? Yet it is very intelligible if we think of these future Jewish disciples, who might expect something akin to it from a prediction such as Zech. 14, where we find that the Mount of Olives is the appointed spot on which Jehovah-Messiah is yet to stand. We can well conceive rumors for such saints that Christ was in the desert, or in the secret chambers: they might deceive those who expected to meet the Lord on earth, but not those who know that they are to join Him and the risen ones in the air (1 Thess. 4; 2 Thess. 2).

The manner of His presence for delivering the Jews is then made known as the guard against their deceits: For as the lightning cometh," &c. The figures (Matt. 24:27, 28), which illustrate the presence of the Son of man, convey the thought of sudden, terrible manifestation, and of rapid, inevitable judgment on what is then but a lifeless body before God, whatever may have been its pretensions. Nothing similar appears, wherever beyond controversy scripture describes the descent of the Lord to receive His risen saints. And what is the result of thus misapplying these verses? The revolting interpretation that "the carcase" means Christ, and "the eagles" the transfigured saints, or the converse, calls for censure, not comment. Nor is it needful to refute the claim set up for the Roman standards. Applied to Israel, all is simple. The carcase represents the apostate part of that nation; the eagles, or vultures, are the figure of the judgments that fall upon it. It is not only, then, that there will be the lightning-like display of Christ in judgment; but the agents of His wrath shall know where, and how, to deal with that which is abominable in God's sight. The allusion is to Job 39:30.

> Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, &c. (Matt. 24:29-31).

One can hardly be asked to notice the old effort to apply these verses to the Roman triumph over Jerusalem. On the face of it, could this be said to be "immediately after the tribulation"? or was it not rather the crowning of Jewish sorrow, riot the glorious reversal of their sufferings by a divine deliverance? Whatever prodigies Josephus reports were rather during the tribulation he records; whereas the signs spoken of here, literal or figurative, are to follow "the tribulation of those days" (i.e., the future crisis of Jerusalem). No; One incomparably greater than Titus is here; and an event is announced in connection with that poor people, which will change the face and condition of all nations.

> Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other {Matt. 24:30, 31}.

The elect throughout are the chosen seed of Israel (Matt. 24:22, 24, 31. Compare Isa. 65). Other elect there are, no doubt; but we must ever interpret by the context; and this in the present case seems to me clear and unquestionable. The Son of man in heaven, and seen there, is, I conceive, the sign to those on earth. This fills all the tribes with mourning; and Christ visibly comes to judgment. Other scriptures prove that the heavenly saints have been already been translated, and are then to accompany their Lord; but here nothing of this appears. It would have been premature. Besides, the object of this portion of the prophecy is to announce His coming for the relief and in-gathering of His elect out of Israel. Hence, it is as Son of man (that is, judicially, see John 5:27) that He is present; and, hence, too, He sends His angels with loud trumpet-sound.

> And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem (Isa. 27:13).

It is the proclamation, not alone of the acceptable year of Jehovah, but of the day of God's vengeance.

> And ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.

The four winds in connection with Israel are no difficulty, but rather the contrary. (See Zech. 2:6). As Jehovah had scattered and spread them abroad "as the four winds of the heaven," so now are His chosen ones to be gathered in.

The general outline and the special view of the Jewish portion have been given thus far in ch. 24. This is next illustrated, both from nature (Matt. 24:32, 33) and from scripture (Matt. 24:34-36), and closed by a suitable application (Matt. 24:42-44).

"From the fig-tree learn the [or, its] parable (Matt. 24:32). What is the peculiar significance and propriety of the fig-tree here? It is the well-known symbol of the Jewish nationality. Thus we saw it, in Matt. 21 bearing nothing but leaves -- that generation given up to the curse of perpetual fruitlessness, whatever grace may do for the generation to come. In Luke 21 the word is, "Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees." Why this striking change? Because the Holy Ghost all through, and notably in that chapter, introduces "the Gentiles." Luke takes in a larger scope than Matthew, and expressly treats of Jerusalem's sorrows in connection with "the times of the Gentiles." Hence the difference even in the illustrative figures. Here it is the tree, not withered away, but with signs of vitality.

> When its branch has now become tender and the leaves are shooting, ye know that summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is nigh by the doors {Matt. 24:32}

(i.e., the end of this age, and the beginning of the next under Messiah and the new covenant). And how solemnly the Savior warns that "this generation," this Christ-rejecting race in Israel, [40] shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled

The notion that all was fulfilled in the past siege of Jerusalem, founded on a narrow and unscriptural sense of that remarkable phrase, is from not hearing what He says unto the disciples. In a genealogy (as Matt. 1), or where the context requires it (as Luke 1), a lifetime might be meant; but where is it so used in the prophetic scriptures, Psalms, &c.? The meaning herein is rather moral than chronological, as for instance in Psa. 12:7, "Thou shalt keep them, O Jehovah, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." The words "for ever" prove a prolonged force; and accordingly the passage intimates that Jehovah shall preserve the godly from their evil, vain, flattering, lawless oppressors (vv. 2-5) -- from "this generation" for ever. It is the distinct and conclusive refutation of those who would limit the phrase to a short epoch, or to a man's lifetime.

So, in Deut. 32:5, 20, we find generation similarly used, not to convey a period, but to express the moral characteristics of Israel. Again, in the Psalms we have not only "this generation," but "the generation to come," and neither confined to a mere term of thirty or a hundred years. (Compare also Prov. 30). But what may make the case the plainer is the usage in the synoptic Gospels. Thus, in Matt. 11:16, "Whereunto shall I liken this generation?" means such as then lived, characterized by the moral capriciousness which set them in opposition to God's testimony, whatever it might be, in righteousness or in grace. But evidently, though people then alive are primarily in view, the moral identity of the same features might extend indefinitely, and so from age to age it would still be "this generation." Compare Matt. 12:39, 41, 42, 45, which last verse shows the unity of the "generation" in its final judgment (not yet, I believe, exhausted) with that which emerged from the Babylonish captivity. Again, note Matt. 23:36, "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." This generation shall not pass till all the predictions of judgment, &c., which Christ uttered shall be fulfilled (Matt. 24:34).

As it is plain from what has been already shown -- indeed, most of all from the plain scripture itself -- that much remains to be accomplished, "this generation" still subsists, and must till all is over. And how true it is! There the Jews are, the wonder of every thoughtful mind, not merely a broken, scattered, and withal perpetuated race, not only distinct, spite of mighty effort from without to blot them out, and from within to amalgamate with others, but with the same unbelief, rejection, and scorn of Jesus, their own Messiah, as on the day He pronounced their doom. All these things -- He warned of their earlier and their latest sorrows -- must come to pass, before that wicked generation shall disappear. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." That which incredulity counts most stable, the scene of its idolatry, or of its self-exaltation, shall vanish; but the words of Christ, let them be about Israel or others, shall abide for ever.

But if all be thus sure and unfailing, the Father alone knows the day and the hour (Matt. 24:36). Ample and distinct signs the Savior had announced already, and the wise shall understand;

> but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand.
>
> But as the days of Noah, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matt. 24:37-39).

Here is another testimony that our Lord in this position speaks of the Jewish disciples of the latter day (represented by those who then surrounded Him), and not of the church. For His illustration is taken from the preservation of Noah

40. {Yes, the Christ rejecting race -- from the time of Moses and on through the tribulation.}

and his house through the waters of the deluge; whereas the Holy Ghost, through Paul, illustrates our hope according to the pattern of Enoch, caught up to heaven, entirely apart from the scenes and circumstances of judgment here below.

Moreover, when the Son of man thus comes in judgment of living men here below, it will not be, as when the Romans or others took Jerusalem, indiscriminate slaughter or captivity; but whether in the open country, or in the duties of home, whether men or women, there will be righteous discernment of individuals.

> Then shall two be in the field, the one is taken and the other is left; two women grinding at the mill, the one is taken and the other is left (Matt. 24:40, 41).

The meaning clearly is, that one is taken away judicially, and the other left to enjoy the blessings of His reign, who shall judge God's people with righteousness and His poor with judgment. It is the converse of our change, when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air; for those who are left in our case are left to be punished with everlasting destruction from His presence. But the Lord will also have an earthly people. He waits till the heavenly saints are gathered to Him above, and then begins to sow, if I may thus speak, for earthly blessing, in which case His coming as Son of man will be for the removal of the wicked, leaving the righteous undisturbed in peace.

> There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.

"Watch therefore, for ye know not in what hour (or day [41]) your Lord is coming." The dealings with Israel, ending with the rescue of the just in their midst, involved, we saw, the judgment of the self-secure, unconscious world. Accordingly, in these transitional verses (Matt. 24:42-44) we have an allusion to a wider sphere than the Jews or their land, in which the godly remnant would be found -- protected, but still there. God would know how to deliver the godly out of temptation. There they are, however, surrounded by snares and foes, but preserved: a totally different position from ours, who will then be above in the sovereign grace and wisdom of our Savior.

> But know this, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, amend would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in an hour when ye think not the Son of man is coming {Matt. 24:43}.

I suppose that if we are to apply "the goodman," or proprietor, of the house strictly, the enemy is meant -- the prince of this world, who will be surprised by the sudden day of the Lord as a thief. But the object is evidently a practical warning to the godly on earth to be ready. They had been comforted in view of trouble and violence; they had been set on their guard against the religious deceits of the old serpent; they had been solemnly assured of the stability of the Lord's words in the very point where Gentile conceit has misled even true believers; they are now exhorted to vigilance and readiness for their coming Lord, that they might not only escape the fowlers, but stand before the Son of man.

From Matt. 24:45 - 25:30, we enter on the parables which pertain to Christendom only, and not to the Jewish remnant. Hence here we have so distinct a portraiture of profession, true and false. Whenever we touch what is properly Christian, we find God dealing with the heart and conscience. He is calling out, and forming, those who are to be the companions of His Son in heavenly glory. Therefore nothing is passed by; all is judged of God in its real light. Hence, too, there is no limit here of either place or people. Christianity is above time, and of, and from, heaven, though it may be divulged in fact on earth during the gap in the dispensations of God made by the rejection of Israel for a season. It is a revelation of grace flowing from Him who now speaks, not from earth, but from heaven.

It is not, I need hardly insist, that evil is slighted. No mistake can be more profound, or fatal, than that grace implies levity about sin. On the contrary, grace is the very strongest condemnation of all evil, as it is indeed not the mere claim of what man ought to be toward God, but the revelation of what God is toward man in the judgment of his sin in the cross of Christ. Therefore it is the fullest display of divine hatred and judgment of evil, but this in Christ, so as to save the most guilty who believe, at the cost of His own Son, the Savior. When dealing with His earthly people under the law, many things were allowed for the hardness of their heart, which never had His sanction. But it is precisely where the complete display of grace shines, as it does now, that their evil is not borne with, but judged.

Such is Christianity in principle, and in fact. And hence it is that, for the true Christian, all the time for his earthly sojourn is a season of self-judgment; or if he fail in this, the assembly is bound to judge his ways; and if they fail, the Lord judges him and them, holily but in grace, that they should not be condemned with the world. False profession He may expose now if He see fit, but the end of it we see here in all these three parables. Grace never winks at evil; and if evil takes advantage of grace for its own purposes, the issue is frightful, and will be manifestly so at the coming of the Lord.

And this leads me to remark that the Lord's coming has a twofold character. First of all, there is His coming in full grace, entirely apart from all question of our service, and consequently of special rewards in the kingdom in which we are to be manifested along with Christ. But we must bear in mind that this manifestation to the world in the future

41. Ἡμέρᾳ, day (instead of the common reading ὥρᾳ, "hour"), has excellent authority. Besides the external evidence, consider the chain of vv. 42-44, day, watch, hour. As to v. 44, the authorities for "day" in v. 42 agree with the rest in reading "hour."

kingdom is far from being the highest part of His glory, or even of ours, as it does not elicit the deepest exercise of His grace. In receiving us to Himself, on the other hand, all is purely from Himself. It is His own love who would thus have us with, and as, Himself. Thus we find St. John puts the coming of Christ in his Gospel (John 14), nor am I aware that it is ever treated otherwise there.

In the Revelation we find both ways. In the first chapter the testimony is, "Behold, he cometh with clouds," &c. Plainly there is no trace of the saints caught up there, but

> every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him {Rev. 1:7}.

The Bride nowhere appears in the scene: it is rather what is public and affects the world universally, and especially the blood-guilty Jew; and all are mourning. But the last chapter could not close without letting us know that there is, spite of all evil, and woe, and judgment, such a one as the Bride awaiting her heavenly Bridegroom. No sooner does He announce Himself the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star, than the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Here we have the intimate intercourse of heart between the Lord and the church. It is impossible for anyone not born of God to say "Come," though there may be these who are so born and yet are ignorant of their full privilege of union with Christ. For them, I doubt not, gracious provision is made in the word, "Let him that heareth say, Come." But in no case can the world, or an unforgiven soul, take up such a call; to such it would indeed be the madness of presumption, for to them His coming must be sure and endless destruction.

Again, it is not merely saving flesh, or deliverance out of misery and danger by the overthrow of their enemies: the Holy Ghost never puts the aspect of Christ's coming for us in any such light. We shall have rest, and those who trouble us shall have tribulation in the day of His appearing; but we go to meet the Savior, and to be with Him for ever; and meanwhile, it is our sweet, earthly privilege to suffer for His sake. We are left for a while in a world where everything is against us because it is against Him, and we belong to Him. But we know that He waits to come for us, and we wait for Him from heaven; and while the waiting lasts, we expect nothing but suffering from the world, but are happy in it, assured that glory in heaven and the cross on earth go together. The cup of trial, the reproach and scorn of men, may be less at one time than another. This is for our Father to give as He sees fit. But if we look for aught else as our natural portion here as Christians, we are faithless to our calling. Rejection is ours because we are His: "therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

As the Bridegroom, then, the Lord has nothing but love in His heart to the Bride. Nor is there a question of any save His own. He has told them He is coming; and the greater the power of the Spirit in the soul, the more ardently does the Bride say "Come." How incongruous here that other eyes should see? or that wailing throngs should intrude into, or witness, such a fleeting Scripture does not so speak.

The Jew, the world, which refused the true Christ, will receive the Antichrist. This is what men wait for and will fall into; and in the midst of their delusion and apparent triumph the Lord will come in judgment. But when He thus comes, it will not be alone. Others, His saints, appear along with Him in glory. This is what we see in Rev. 17, and with detail in Rev. 19. Not angels only, but His saints follow Him out of heaven, clothed in white linen, and on white horses, according to the striking figures of the Apocalypse. The saints had been in heaven before the day of the world's judgment. They must have been removed from earth to heaven before this, in order to follow Him out of heaven and be with Him when that day dawns. This could only have been through His coming to receive them to Himself. Hence, again, it appears that His coming has a double character, according to the object of each of its steps, or stages. He comes to gather above His saints, dead or living, and present them in the Father's house, that where He is, there they may be also. In due time afterwards He brings them with Him, judging the beast and the false prophet, the Jews, and the Gentiles, as well as every false profession of His name. This is still His coming, or state of presence: only now it is (what the former act, when He takes us to be with Him, is never called) His appearing, the shining forth of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8), His revelation, and His day.

With this second act of the Lord's coming, or His day, is connected the appraisal of our service, and the assigning of reward for work that has been done. For all must be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, and each must receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad. Some find a difficulty in bowing to both truths; but if subject to the word, we shall overlook neither the common blessedness of the saints in the full grace of the Savior at His coming, nor the recognition of individual faithfulness, or the lack of it, in the rewards of the kingdom. When we read of the many mansions, we are not to dream of one being more glorious than another. The truth conveyed is that we are to be as near and dear as sons can be in the Father's presence, through the perfect love and work of the Son. In this point of view I see no difference whatever. All are brought absolutely nigh, all loved with the love wherewith Christ was loved, and having His portion as far as can be for the creature. But am I therefore to deny that "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor?" or that in some cases the work will abide, as in others it will be burnt? or that, as the parable teaches, one servant may receive ten cities, and another five?

It will be found accordingly, that there is a close connection in scripture between Christ's day, or appearing, and present exhortations to fidelity. Thus, Timothy is exhorted to keep the commandment without spot, unrebukable until the appearing of our Lord Jesus. So the apostle, in 2 Tim. 4:8, speaks of the

> crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

The results of faithfulness, or of unfaithfulness, are only

manifest then. It is the day of display before the world; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. Hence it is as awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus that the apostle speaks of the Corinthian saints as coming short in no gift, and at once brings in the thought of His day {1 Cor. 1:7}. So Christ's day is the blessed end, and solemn test of all, in writing to the Philippians. Of the Epistles to the Thessalonians I need say the less, as they present in the clearest way both these truths.

Returning now to the first of the three parables which refer to the christian profession, I would make the general remark from what we have been examining, that while the words "appearing," "day," &c., are special and never used, I think, except where responsibility is concerned, the word "coming" is general, and though applicable, if the context so require it, to the case of responsibility, is in itself of wider character and is used therefore to express our Lord's return in nothing but grace. In other words, the appearing, day, or revelation of Christ is still His coming or presence; but His coming does not necessarily mean His appearing, revelation, or day. He may come without appearing, and I believe that there is proof from scripture that so it is when He receives us to Himself on high; but His appearing is that further stage of His coming again, when every eye shall see Him.

> Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? {Matt. 24:45}.

It is not a question of evangelizing here, but of care for the household. The principle of trading outside with the Master's gifts will come by-and-by (Matt. 25:14 *et seq.*); but here the great thing is that, as the Lord loves His saints ("whose house are we") so He makes much of faithful, or faithless, service within that sphere. For I need not say that faithfulness to the Lord involves no denial of ministry. Ministry when real is of God; but the mode in which it is exercised is often wrong and unscriptural. Ministry is not Jewish, but characteristic of Christianity. But it is a thing very apt to lose its true character. Instead of being Christ's servants in His household, many sink into the agents of a particular body. In such a case it always flows from the church or denomination. Real ministry is from Christ, and from Him alone. Therefore the apostle says he was the servant, or bondman of Jesus Christ, neither deriving his mission from the church, nor being responsible to it for his work. The gospel and the church were the spheres of his service (Col. 1), but its Giver and his Lord was Christ Himself exclusively. It appears to me that this is necessary, in order that ministry should be recognized as divine in its source; and nothing but a divinely-given ministry is owned in scripture, nor should be by God's people now.

This, then, is the first thing our Lord insists on, that the faithful and wise servant, whom the Lord makes ruler over His household, be found doing His work, caring for what is so near to Christ. It is a most painful proof of the low estate of the church in these days that such service is regarded as a waste of precious ointment. So completely have even God's children fallen from the thought of true ministry, that they think it idleness, or proselytism, to attend to those that are within. "Why not preach to those without," say they, "and seek to bring such to the knowledge of Christ?" But this is not the first thing our Lord presses. "The faithful and wise servant" had to do with those within: his object was to give them their meat in due season; and the Lord pronounces that servant blessed. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he corneth shall find so doing." Others might raise questions as to his title; but He simply says, If I find you "so doing," blessed are you. The great point is to be doing His will. It is not title or position, but doing the work which the Lord wishes to be done.

But now comes the other side of the picture.

> But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken (Matt. 24:48, 49).

There you have the great danger of the professed servants of Christ in this world. First, wronging the fellow-servants by assuming an arbitrary place. Authority is right where it is exercised under obedience to Christ. No change of circumstances, or condition, alters the truth that the Lord remains Head of the Church, and raises up His servants at all times to carry out His wishes with authority. But here it is man's will, where the servant takes the place of the Master, and begins to smite his fellow-servants. Secondly, along with that, there is evil communication with the world. It is not said that he himself is drunken; but there is association with the world. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Where the thought of the Lord is gone, ministry loses its true character. There will be oppression towards those within, and evil commerce with those without.

But judgment slumbereth not.

> The Lord of that servant shall come in a clay when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 24:50, 51).

It supposes that the servant still pursues the same course, and is found there when the Lord comes -- his heart thoroughly with the world. He began by saying in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming. This is far more than wrong thoughts about the coming of the Lord, which some saints might hold without this scripture applying to them. If there were, on the other hand, persons professing to look for the Lord's coming, and acting as if they did not believe it, they would be much more like the servant saying in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming. What the Lord judges is not a mere mistake, or doctrinal blunder; but it is the state of a heart content that Christ should stay away. If we are desiring something great and of esteem among men, how can we say, "Come?" His coming would spoil all our schemes. We may talk about the Lord's coming, and be learned about prophecy; but the Lord looks at the heart, and not at the appearance. He sees where, let the profession be ever so loud or high, souls cleave to the world and do not want Him.

Matthew 25

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins." [42] We have here the general aspect of those who bear the name of Christ. The kingdom of the heavens here implies a certain economy at a given point of time.

> Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps [or torches] and went forth to meet the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1).

"Their lamps" set forth the light of profession. They were witnesses for the Lord, and their calling was to meet the Savior. That was to be the attitude of the Christian from the first, going forth to meet the Bridegroom. Christianity does not mean that its professors remain where they are and so look for Christ, but that they leave everything behind in order to go out and meet the Bridegroom. Some of the early believers were Jews, and some later ones were Gentiles; but they abandoned for Christ their previous connections, their position in the world, and all that they hitherto valued. They had a new, absorbing and satisfying object; they knew that the only blessed One in the sight of God was the Savior; they were waiting for Him who is in heaven, and they went out to meet Him who promised to come again. This is the true expectation of the Christian. There ought to be no fixing of dates, but the certain hope that the Lord is coming, we know not how soon. The stronger such a hope is in our hearts, the more completely separated shall we be from the plans and projects of this world.

> And five of them were wise, and five were foolish (Matt. 25:2).

The kingdom of the heavens becomes a thing of profession. As in the case of the servants there was an evil as well as a faithful servant, so here we have five wise and five foolish virgins. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them. They were persons who had the lamp of profession, but no oil. Some have thought that they were Christians who failed in looking for the Lord to come. But I believe this to be false, because the foolish proved their folly in this -- that they took no oil in their lamps.[43] What does this imply? Oil is the type of the Holy Ghost. We read in 1 John 2 of the unction of the Holy Ghost. Will any one maintain that there are real Christians who have not this "unction?" The wise virgins set forth the believers, the foolish ones mere professors; these took the name of the Lord, but there was nothing that could fit them for the presence of Christ. Our power of enjoying Christ is entirely by the Holy Ghost. The nature of man may admire Christ, but only at a distance, and without an awakened, or a purged, conscience. There is no living link of relationship between the heart of man and Christ; and therefore man crucified Him. These foolish virgins, having no oil in their lamps, showed that they possessed nothing that could enable then to welcome Christ. The Holy Ghost alone can fit men to stand in the confession of His name to do His work. The oil was that which fed the lamp, and these foolish virgins had none.

> But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all grew heavy and slept (Matt. 25:4, 5).

They all practically dropped the hope of Christ's coming: there was no difference in that. There were true Christians and false, but all were in this respect asleep. Thus, while the original calling of Christians was to wait for Christ's return, united by the Holy Ghost, yet was there to be a universal slumber as to expecting Christ. But the Lord adds,

> And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom [cometh]; go forth to meet him (Matt. 25:6).

Plainly, that cry was the movement of the Holy Ghost Himself. It was the power and grace of God which sent it out

---

42. ◆ Q. -- Matt. 25:1-13, Since believers are the bride, whom do the five wise virgins represent? They went in to the marriage feast as guests only. When the bridegroom came, was he not accompanied

by his bride? was he not taking her to his home at the end of the feast given at her father's house? S. de G.

A. -- The Lord in this parable presents not the church as such in its unity, but Christians as an aggregate going out to meet Him in figure; and hence He depicts them as the nuptial cortège. "The bride" would not have answered His purpose at all, but the maidens, foolish and prudent, so as to be emblematic of professors through Christendom's state and at His advent. The possession of the Holy Spirit is the crucial test. All had gone asleep; but at midnight grace sent forth an awakening cry, which wrought, even on the foolish, to arise and trim their lamps. But when the Bridegroom came, only those ready could enter in; for they alone had the unction from the Holy One which could fit any to have their portion with Him. The object here was not to fix attention on the bride, but on the individual responsibility of the Christian to await Christ's coming duly. Mere profession gives no title to go in with Him to the feast. There must be oil in their vessels; and the foolish, active as they were ("earnest" as men say), had none. The bride is nowhere in this scene. (*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:62). ◆

43. ◆ Matt. 25:1-13 . . . Mr. WEEKE'S interpretation appears to me not merely to rest on insufficient and misapplied evidence, but to contradict the general teaching of God's Word. Whether the lamps had gone, or were only going out, makes no real difference as to the grand teaching of the parable; and, as far as this goes, either the one or the other is quite compatible with the absence of oil. Mr. WEEKE'S statement that the foolish "have some oil" is most objectionable: not a word implies it; nay, what is said both by the wise virgins and the Lord would imply the reverse, even if we had not the plain and positive declaration that the foolish "took their lamps and took no oil with them." Why might not wicks be lit, and relit, without oil? I agree with Mr. W. that "are going out" is a more correct rendering than the ordinary version; but it in no way shows that the virgins had oil, or that they were more than professors without the Holy Ghost, though responsible for and designated according to the position they assumed. As to the unconverted being called "virgins," there is no more difficulty there than in the "servant" of the preceding parable. In either case they took that place, and were judged accordingly. There are Christians who love Christ's appearing in the midst of much ignorance as to its details. There are professors who talk much of the Second Advent, and hold it to be premillennial. But I assuredly believe that the former, if they are alive and remain till the coming of the Lord, will be caught up to meet Him, and that the latter, if they abide unregenerate, must have their portion outside, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (*Christian Annotator* 1856, p. 174). ◆

by the means that He saw fitting. We are not told how, but it plainly reveals a general movement among Christian professors -- a revival of the truth of the coming of the Lord.

> Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps (Matt. 25:7).

The cry affected even those who had not the Holy Ghost dwelling in them.

But now comes out the solemn difference.

> And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out {Matt. 25:8},

or rather, "are going out."

They had lit their wicks, but there was no oil. The light of natural strength burns soon and rapidly, but there is nothing that implies the Spirit of God -- they had never had oil.

> But the wise answered, saying, [Not so]; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves (Matt. 25:9).

I need not say that the terms on which God sells, and man buys, the Holy Ghost are "without money and without price"; but the great point is, that for this every soul must have to do with God. The believer listens and bows to God in this world; the unbeliever will quail before God in the next world. Grace compels souls to come in and to have to do with Him now, in this world; but if I refuse to face God about my sins here below, I am lost for ever. Now is the day of salvation; and it is only a delusion of the devil to persuade the heart to defer it to a more convenient season. If I go to God about my sins, and because I believe that Jesus is the Savior, I shall, find, not merely Jesus the Son of God, but the Holy Ghost given, by whom I shall be able to enjoy the Savior. The wise had this oil, and they could await the coming of the Lord in peace. But the foolish ones are unacquainted with His grace. And to whom do they go? Not to those who sell without money and without price.

> While they went to buy, the bridegroom came: and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut (Matt. 25:10).

Afterwards, as we see in the painful picture of the foolish virgins, they come, saying,

> Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour {Matt. 25:13}.

The words "wherein the Son of man cometh" have no sufficient claim to follow in the verse. This is no particular view of mine, but the judgment of every competent person who has examined the original testimonies to the word of God. When the Lord is coming in the way of judgment, He is spoken of as Son of man. Here He is introduced as the Bridegroom, and if the words. "Son of man" were really read here, it would be hard indeed to account for them. How plain it is that you cannot add anything to scripture without spoiling it! Our Lord here appears in an aspect of grace towards His saints, and this is one reason why you have no description of the judgment about to fall upon the foolish virgins. The displayed execution of divine vengeance would be incongruous with His title of Bridegroom. No doubt, even here the door is shut; and our Lord tells the foolish virgins when they appeal to Him to open, "I know you not"; but He thereon immediately turns the fact to the spiritual profit of His disciples:

> Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour (Matt. 25:11-13).

Then comes another parable. [44]

> For the kingdom of heaven [or, literally, 'For he,' or, 'it'] is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one: to every man according to his several ability: and straightway took his journey (Matt. 25:14, 15).

There our Lord is represented as leaving this world and going to a far country. It is a very remarkable way in which our Lord is presented here. In Matthew His home is supposed to be on the earth, because He is the Messiah who came to His own, even if His own received Him not. As the rejected Messiah He leaves His home, and goes, the suffering, but glorified, Son of man, to the far country, which is clearly heaven: and while He is gone there, He has His servants to whom He has committed certain of His goods, and with these they are to labor.

> Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents (Matt. 25:16).

Here you have another kind of ministry. It is not serving the household and giving them meat in due season. It is trading, or going out to others. This also is a characteristic of Christianity. In Judaism there was no such thing as the Lord sending His servants here and there to gain souls; but when the Lord Jesus left this world and went up to heaven, He thus sent them out. He left them His goods to trade withal. It is the activity of grace that goes out to seek sinners, and to spread the testimony of the truth of God among saints. This also is the thing to which our Lord calls us, according to our several ability. The character of the gift put at our disposal is suited, in the Giver's wisdom, to the object and vessel. There is sovereignty, but all is wisely ordered. How could it be otherwise, seeing that it is the Lord who calls?

It is here, too, that Christendom has so completely failed. Were a man now to begin to preach and teach without some human sanction, many would regard it as a piece of assumption, if not presumption. Whereas, in truth, if I look for authority to preach from the churches, established or voluntary, I shall be sinning against Christ. Any appointment by men for such a purpose is unauthorized, and is opposed to the mind of Christ; and those whom they would consider acting irregularly, are, in reality, in the lowly path of

44. {The words, "the kingdom of the heavens," is omitted. This parable is an adjunct to that of the virgins, for there are those who serve without being in the good of the expectancy inculcated by the parable of the virgins, but know that the Lord will return some day and they will give account.}

obedience, and will find their vindication in the great day. It is entirely a question between Christ and His own servants. He gives one to be a prophet, another an evangelist, another a pastor and teacher (Eph. 4:11). But there are two things in the servant -- both of them of importance. He gave them gifts, but it was according to their several ability. The Lord does not call anyone to be His servant who has not an ability for the trust belonging to himself. The servant must have certain natural, and acquired, qualifications, beside the power of the Spirit of God. He gave them talents -- to one five, to another two, and to another one. Here you have the energy of the Holy Ghost -- the power that the Lord gives from on high, over and above the choice of each man "according to his several ability."

It is plain from this that there are certain qualities in the servant, independent of the gift that the Lord puts into him. His natural powers are the vessel that contains the gift, and wherein the gift is to be exercised. If the Lord calls a man to be a preacher, there is supposed a natural aptitude for it. Again, the gift may be increased. First, there is the ability of the man before, and when, he is converted; next, the Lord gives him a gift that he never possessed before; thirdly, if he does net stir up his gift, there may be a weakening, if not loss. He may become unfaithful, and may lose power. But if a man waits upon the Lord, there may, on the contrary, be increased power given to him. Many think that the one qualification of the servant of God is that of the Spirit. This is, of course, essential, and most blessed; but it is not all. The truth of God is, that Christ gives gifts; but He gives them according to the ability of the individual. The union of the two facts -- the ability of the servant and the sovereignly-bestowed gift given him to trade with -- is of all-importance to keep distinctly in view.

But to proceed --

> After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant (Matt. 25:19-21).

In Matt. 24 it was the "faithful and wise" servant; here, "thou good and faithful servant." Both are called faithful. But where it was a question of the household, wisdom was needed. In exercising a gift outside the house, it was a question of being good. What is meant by this? What is the source of all grace in the servant of the Lord? The appreciation of God's goodness. This comes out by contrast in the case of the slothful servant. An unconverted man might have a gift from the Lord. [45]

The slothful servant was clearly one that never had life from God: and what proved it was, that he did not believe in the goodness of the Lord: he had no confidence in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. I ought to have a divine sense of my sins. I cannot have too deep an abhorrence of sin; but this ought never to make me limit, or doubt, the grace of God. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." And what is true at first remains true a11 through the christian path. I may become a sluggard -- may be disappointed, allowing circumstances to hinder me; but whatever may be my own fault, or the wrong of others, this is no reason for giving up confidence in Christ. There is no trial but what He can turn to greater blessing than even if it did not exist. When things are happy, we can trust Him; but if they are miserable, are we to say, There is no hope? Never! The Lord says to us, "Overcome evil with good." And does not the Lord act upon this Himself? Does He not hold to it, that there is grace enough in Him to meet any case, be it ever so bad? It is the secret of power, that the soul holds to His grace.

It was in the flat contrary of this that the evil servant betrayed what he was. He says to the Savior,

> Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: 10, there thou halt that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed (Matt. 25:24-26).

Christ takes him upon his own ground: for with the froward He can show Himself froward. If the servant judges Him to be hard, He can say, On your own ground you ought to have done just the contrary: why did you not make the best use of what I gave you?

> Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury (Matt. 25:27).

According to his self-defense, he had utterly failed: and so it is always.

The man who talks about the justice of God cannot, for an instant, stand before it, while he who casts himself humbly upon the grace of God will be found to walk soberly, righteously, godly, in this present evil world. The denier of the goodness of God is invariably a bad man himself. The Lord grant that we may make no excuses for ourselves, but feel and confess that He is full of grace and truth! He cannot allow what is contrary to His nature; but there is always grace in Him to meet the soul that goes to Him about its sin, and spreads it before God in the desire of being delivered from it. And so, in the matter of our service also, whether we have two talents or five, if we use them for Him, the Lord will return it to our souls again, and give us in the day that is coming to hear those blessed words,

> Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord (Matt. 25:14-30).

45. {One of the persons in the parable was not the Lord's, though professedly so, as being in the kingdom of the heavens (in mystery). Therefore, he is responsible to the Lord. Thinking of the talents as *a responsibility* given may eliminate the difficulty some sense by regarding the talents as gifts of the Spirit. Responsibility well discharged gives increase in responsibility to act for the Lord.}

We now approach a subject, viewed, I apprehend, with much prejudice -- perhaps with more than most subjects in the word of God. It has been perverted, and, I grieve to add, commonly perverted, even by those who love the Savior, have faith in the value of His blood, and own both the general blessedness of those that belong to Him and the sure doom of those that despise Him. But although on these fundamental truths all Christians must be in the main agreed, when we come to inquire what the Lord intended us to gather from His taking His seat upon the throne of His glory; when we would ascertain who the parties are that the Lord has before Him in this scene, and what the special destiny of the blessed is, we come into the region, not of uncertainty, but of the most various opinions.

The root of the difficulty may be traced generally to one thought -- the anxiety, even of Christians, to find that which bears upon their own lot. Not being thoroughly at rest touching their acceptance, there is ordinarily a disposition to warp Scripture, partly to escape what they dread, and partly in order to gather comfort for their troubled souls. The greater part of God's children are, more or less, in spirit, under the law: and wherever such are honest in this condition, they must be miserable. There are comparatively few who know the fulness of deliverance in Christ; few who know what it is to be dead to the law and married to another, even to Him who is risen from the dead. They may hear and repeat the words of Scripture, thinking they mean something good; but the riches of the blessing of being dead to the law and united to a risen Savior, very few appreciate. This is the reason why so many are not in a state to understand the word of God. Not enjoying in peace their own position in Christ, they are hankering after what may console, or secure, them. This leads them to seize upon every promise, with small regard to the objects God had in view; and to dwell too exclusively on what may be called the covenant mercy of God, without heeding seriously His admonitions and His warnings. Their desire is, that out of the words of comfort in Scripture they may find some solid ground of assurance for their own souls.

When, therefore, as here, the Lord speaks of certain Gentiles as "sheep," [46] they think it means us, because we are so called elsewhere, as in John 10. They find these are blessed of the Father, and thence conclude that it can be no other than our hope. Again, certain are here spoken of as "brethren" of the King. Who can these be but ourselves -- Christians? For all we, unquestionably, are brethren, and He is not ashamed to call us brethren. In this superficial way Scripture is misunderstood, and the very comfort that souls are grasping after as surely eludes them. Wherever we turn aside the edge of the word of God, and appropriate indiscriminately what is said of persons in a wholly different position, there is loss. The sovereign grace of God has so arranged everything that the best portion for us is what God has given. We cannot mend the counsels of God, nor add to the riches of His grace. If we know the love that God has to us in Christ, we know the best thing that we can find in earth or heaven. The moment we lay hold of this, and see how greatly we are blessed, we cease from the anxiety that each good word of God should converge on ourselves; we see His infinitely greater Object, even Christ, and we can delight in others being blessed even in what we have not. This is most important practically -- that we should be so satisfied with God's love to us, and with the portion He has given us in Christ, as to rejoice in all that He is pleased to give to others. Are we not sure that our Father withholds nothing from us but what would interfere with our blessing? So reading this parable, or prophetic description, we are under no constraint. We can examine it with other scriptures, see whom the Lord has in view, and inquire what their portion is to be.

> When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations (Matt. 25:31, 32).

Here are proofs enough of what the time and circumstances are of which our Lord speaks. He is taking His seat upon His own throne as the Son of man. He is gathering before Him all the nations. When will this be? Here, at least, it will not be contended that something past is in question. The Lord Jesus is not even yet seated upon His own throne. When on earth He had no throne; when He went to heaven, He sat down on His Father's throne, as says Rev. 3:21,

> To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

According to this promise, when it shall be fulfilled, He must have left His Father's throne and sat down on His own throne. It is a future thing. All scripture that touches on our Lord's actual place, proves that He is now seated on the Father's throne. But scripture also is plain that He is to sit on His own throne; and this is what we have here.

All things in heaven and in earth shall be put under the government of the Lord Jesus. He will be the Head of all glory, heavenly and earthly {Eph. 1:10}. Of which does this portion speak? Are there any circumstances with which our Lord surrounds His throne, that make the answer plain? "Before him shall be gathered all nations." Are nations in heaven? Clearly not. Who can imagine so gross a thing? When the boundary is crossed that separates the things seen from the unseen, no such earthly sight lowers, or distracts, the worship above. When men are risen from the dead, they will no longer be known as English or French; these national distinctions for them terminate. Their future lot is decided according to their reception, or rejection, of Jesus in the present life. This future throne of the Son of man is accordingly connected with a time-state on the earth. The more every word is weighed, the more this will be evident to the unbiased.

46. ◆ That they are the same objects of mercy in that day {as the Gentiles in Rev. 7:17} is confirmed by the remnant in Matt.24:15-26, answering to Rev. 14:1-5, and His elect in Matt. 24:31, answering to Rev. 7:1-8. "All the nations" seem from the context to be outside Israel and Christendom (already judged in the previous parts of the Lord's prophecy on the mount). 2 Thess. does not exclude a remnant that love the truth, even when all that reject it perish irremediably (*The Bible Treasury* 20:32). ◆

If we compare it, in the next place, with a resurrection scene, their distinctiveness will be apparent. In Rev. 20:11,

> I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

here can be no question about this throne. It can have nothing to do with the earth, because the text itself tells us that the earth and heaven fled away. We learn at once the positive contrast between Matthew and Revelation. In the latter only do we hear a word about heaven and earth fleeing away; in the former only have we very plain indications that the Lord is taking His throne in the government of the earth, and of men living on it -- not judging the dead when the kingdom is about to be given up. Those gathered before Him here are "all the nations" -- a term never used about the dead or the risen, but only applied to men while still going on here below, and indeed applied to only a part of living men -- the Gentile portion, as distinct from the Jews. For we have already had the Jews in Matt. 24, and now we see the Gentiles; as between the two were the Christians.

Thus, nothing can be more orderly than the whole connection of this prophecy on the mount. The Jews came first, as indeed the disciples themselves still were such. Then the parables of the house-servant, the virgins, and the talents, which describe the christian position, soon to be developed, when Jerusalem should reject the Holy Ghost. Lastly, another section closes all: neither Jews, nor Christians, but "all the nations," or Gentiles, to whom the testimony of the kingdom is to be sent out, and among whom the Holy Ghost will work (Satan working too, lest they should be brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light).

In Rev. 20:11 we find another throne, unconnected with the earth, which, indeed, ere this will have fled away. In Matthew we had nations, but in this point of the Revelation they, too, have disappeared. Satan had previously gone out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth; and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. Hence, though there were nations just before the great white throne, they had been completely destroyed by a divine judgment. In their disappearance from the earth the final throne is seen, and before the face of Him who sat upon it earth and heaven fled away. Thus time was done with, all present circumstances were closed, the wicked men of the earth having been killed by God's judgment: thereon follows the great white throne. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand . . ." Thus you see the character of this throne at once. Not a living man is there in natural life. Everyone before it had been previously dead. I am not speaking now of those that had been changed, or raised, into the likeness of Christ long previously. Everyone called before this throne had been dead some time ago. The nations were destroyed by the judgment of God, and were, like others before them, but dead men: these are now raised from the grave, summoned for judgment before the great white throne.

In Matt. 25 not a single dead man is spoken of, in Rev. 20 not a single living man. In Matthew the persons called before the throne are "all the Gentiles" or nations, in Revelation none but "the dead, small and great." No matter what they might have been before, they all stand alike, small and great, before the throne.

> And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works {Rev. 20:12}.

When we come to look closely into Matt. 25 the principle of judgment is not according to works generally, but a particular test is pressed upon them -- faithful, or unfaithful, treatment of the king's brethren.

> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it: and death and hell {hades} delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works {Rev. 20:13}.

There is not a word about this in Matt. 25; and indeed the expression "nations" involves, without a question, the inference that there was not a dead, or risen, man among those so spoken of. It is the judgment of those commonly called "the quick," and they are dealt with according to the very special principle of their behavior to the messengers of the gospel of the kingdom.

This may prove that it is a grand error to suppose that all the judgments in the word of God mean one and the same thing. We must leave room for differences here as elsewhere. In what indeed do we find absolute sameness of God's ways? Who says that there will be sameness in heaven? There is certainly nothing like it on earth. God shows Himself capable, according to His love to and insight into, all men, to enter into, and meet, every difficulty, and to bring out His own perfections in dealing with all that comes before Him.

Gathering up the contrast of Rev. 20, let us turn to the closing scene in Matt. 25. The title "Son of man" at once prepares you for a judgment connected with the earth, and with persons living there. No doubt the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven, but He comes to judge the world, and people on it. It may be said even of churches or assemblies, as in Rev. 1; but whatever the object of the judgment, it is the Lord judging persons still alive upon the earth, and not the dead.

> And before him shall be gathered all the nations and he shall separate them one front another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats {Matt. 25:32}.

It is a careful, and divine, discrimination -- not a mere act of vengeance which deals with masses, in which all might be overwhelmed in common ruin. He separates them one from another. At the great white throne the dead stand all together: there is no question, or need, of separating them there. But here there is a mingled company. Such a mixture is never found in heaven or hell, but only on the earth. Thus every clause gives proof that our Lord speaks of a judgment of the living on the earth. He separates them "as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." It follows that the persons meant by "the sheep" and "the goats" are respectively the righteous and the ungodly among the nations then living on the earth, when our Lord comes to judge in His quality of Son of man.

It is not now what we have seen in Matt. 24, where He shines suddenly like lightning. Here it is the calm, peaceful, but most solemn judgment, with everlasting results, according to the discrimination which the Lord makes between individuals. When the judgment of the dead takes place before the great white throne, the heavens and earth are fled away; so that before then the Lord must have come, or He never can come to the earth as it is now, and as we all confess He shall come. The eternal separation will have taken place before the new heavens and earth.

Our Lord is here found separating the godly from among the ungodly of these living nations; and He disposes of them according to the manner set forth by His own lips.

> Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34).

However blessed they are, He does not describe them as children of their Father. I do not deny that they are children of God; but He says, "blessed of my Father." No doubt the words said to them are very precious; but do they reach up to the height of the blessing the grace of God has given us in Christ now? There is nothing here about being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world -- blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Here they are called to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. When God laid the foundations of the earth, He was looking onward to this blessed time. Satan's getting power over man was only a fearful interruption, but not one whose consequences the Lord could not overmaster and purge out: He means to do it. He means to have this world the scene of incomparably greater blessedness than now it is of misery through Satan's misrule. He means to give the kingdom of this world to His Son. The Lord Jesus will have a higher glory, yea, will have the whole. universe put under Him. And His blood has purchased us for His bride. He had a right in His own glory to everything; but He laid down His life that there might be a righteous title to give it to whom the Father would.

Again, let it be noted that there is not a word about His bride here -- nothing that supposes such a position in these blessed ones of the Gentiles. He speaks as "the King," and He is never spoken of as such in His relation to the Church. In Rev. 15 the expression "King of saints" should be "King of nations," quoted from the words of Jeremiah. It is a title we can rejoice in, but it is not His relationship to us. We are called by grace to be the members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Here, then, in His capacity of King, the Lord severs the righteous Gentiles of His day from their unrighteous fellows

> Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34).

When Eph. 1:4 speaks of our being chosen before the foundation of the world, it means a choice independent of the scene of creation, in connection with which these blessed Gentiles have their portion. Our place may be rather said to be with Him who created all. God has chosen us in Christ "before the foundation of the world." The world may disappear; but our blessing is identified with Himself. We are made one with Him who spoke the world into being.

The thief on the cross asked of our Lord, "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." But our Lord says, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." To be with Christ -- with Christ at once -- with Christ in paradise, are each better things than the kingdom that we, too, shall inherit. Christ Himself is far beyond all the glory displayed in, and to, the world. This is what our Lord gives to faith; and confidence in His love ever receives more than it asks from Him.

The blessing, on the other hand, given to these godly ones from among the Gentiles, is the inheritance of the kingdom prepared for them by the Father, from the foundation of the world. The Lord gives them the key to it all -- that which showed they, were possessors of eternal life:

> I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me (Matt. 25:35, 36).

Observe what they answer:

> Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? (Matt. 25:37).

How could a Christian, understanding the membership of the body of Christ, say such a thing to our Lord? Above all, could he say it in heaven, where we shall know even as we are known? Impossible. The fact is, however, that the scene does not speak about saints in heaven at all. The time of wondering ignorance will be past, one need hardly say, when we are in the resurrection state.

But there will be godly Gentiles on the earth then.

> When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? (Matt. 25:38, 39).

They are very far from full intelligence, and evidently in their natural bodies still. And the Lord is instructing them even after He appears in glory. When He, having come, is as King seated upon His throne, we, raised front the dead, shall surely still cast our crowns before Him; but there will be no need of light on our part in that day. It is undeniable that the righteous here do require to be instructed. Hence there is a positive contrast between the heavenly Church and these future "sheep" of the Lord from among the nations.

However blessed this scene may be, still it is the Lord as Son of man judging all nations, and blessing the righteous from among them, who were ignorant, up to that moment, that in showing acts of love and kindness towards Christ's messengers, it was so much done towards Christ Himself. Their last lesson was the first that a heavenly saint learned -- indeed, even then but a small part of it, as I conceive. When Paul was struck down on the road to Damascus, what was the truth that startled his soul? "I am Jesus whom thou

persecutest." Only just awakened, yet that was made known to him, which these Gentiles only partially hear when they stand before the throne of the Son of man. Paul was taught of the Lord that to persecute the saints living on the earth was to persecute Christ in heaven: they and Christ are one. It is evident that these Gentile sheep set forth men still in the condition that requires, and receives, instruction from Christ.

But this is not all.

> The King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me (Matt. 25:40).

Who are "these my brethren"? We have had the sheep and goats—the righteous Gentiles and the unrighteous: but who are the King's brethren? Men whom the Lord will send out before He comes in the glory of the kingdom; men sent to announce that He is coming in His kingdom. The sheep showed them love -- care -- sympathy in their sorrows. So that these brethren of the King must have been exposed to tribulation before the King appears. The conclusion is obvious that, in that day, the ground on which He will deal with the nations will be this -- "How did you behave to my messengers?"

The King's messengers, immediately before He appears in glory, will go forth preaching the gospel of the kingdom everywhere; and when the King takes His throne, those that received the gospel of the kingdom among the nations are recognized as "sheep": and the despisers perish as "goats." Those that honor the message treat the messengers well -- caring for them, and identifying themselves with them -- "companions of them that were so used." The Lord remembers this, and counts what was done to His messengers as done to Himself. There is no opening of books here: all turns on this simple issue. They were arrested by the message when summoned to receive the true King who was coming. Their souls were wrought upon by the Spirit, and they treated the messengers with love and honor. The Lord stakes all upon this -- if you have honored My messengers, it proves your faith in Me. It will be as truly the work of the Holy Spirit, as our entrance into the far fuller testimony of His love is now. Their astonishment before His throne, at having done anything to Him in the person of His brethren, proves that they were not in the christian position, though truly believers.

But who were these brethren? From general principles of scripture, and from the special teaching of this prophetical discourse, I have little doubt that the King's brethren in this case will be godly Israelites, employed by the Lord, after the church has been caught up to heaven, to be the heralds of the coming King and kingdom. We know that the church is to be taken away before the time of the last great tribulation.

> Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour [47] of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth {Rev. 3:10}.

But here there are saints found on the earth -- not kept from the hour of temptation, but living on the earth during it, and preaching this gospel of the kingdom. And according to the way in which they were received, the nations will be cursed, or blessed. There was no gospel of the kingdom preached before, or after, the flood, and it is the gospel of the grace of God that is, in general, being preached now. The gospel of the kingdom is often confounded with this.

Here we find the King upon His earthly throne. The church's portion is heavenly. I have no doubt, therefore, that the King's brethren are a class distinct from the church, but whom, along with the church, Christ owns as His brethren. There are some blessings the Jewish saints will have that neither you, nor I, will possess; there are others we shall have that they will not enjoy: All depends upon this -- What does God say? Whatever He reveals ought to have absolute authority over us.

But we have also another, and a very solemn, background to the scene to glance at:

> Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41).

Observe, He does not say, 'Cursed of my Father,' answering to "Blessed of my Father." God hates putting away. So when the awful moment comes for the curse to be pronounced on these wicked Gentiles, it is, "Depart from me, ye cursed." I believe it is the deepest sorrow to God, and throws all the onus of destruction on those whose own sin it was, who rejected His love, and holiness, and glory in rejecting His Son. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." In the other case the kingdom was said to be "prepared for you": not so when speaking about the curse.

> {And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matt. 25:46)}. [48]

Hell was not prepared for poor, guilty man. He deserves it; but it was prepared for the devil and his angels. Where the souls rejected the testimony, He does pronounce them cursed. It is His place. He is the King, the Judge. But whether it be the great white throne, or this earthly throne, it is "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

47. {Note that exclusion from the "hour" (kept from, i.e., "out of the hour" (JND)) means exclusion from the time of it.}

48. ◆ Q. -- Does the word of God really mean "eternal " or "everlasting" in Matt. 25:46? Or only age-lasting? T.H.T.

A. -- The word is used in Rom. 16:26 of God, in Heb. 9:14 of the Spirit, and in 1 John 1:2 of that life which Christ was and is. Are *they* merely age-lasting? In 2 Cor. 4:18 the same is *contrasted* with "temporal," instead of being similar in force, as these false teachers aver. Nay, the verse itself refutes their desire; for even they own that the life of the saints is "everlasting," and the same word in the same sentence is applied to the punishment of the wicked. Hebrew, Greek, English, or any other tongue, makes no difference. The N. T. differs from the Old in the utmost clearness as to this, now that Christ is come; as the O. T. had dwelt chiefly on the present government of God, while pointing here and there to the eternal things which are now unveiled under the gospel. *(The Bible Treasury* 20:112). ◆

There was no hope of deliverance for these fallen angels -- no redemption for them. They wilfully, and without a tempter, departed from God. Man was tempted by an enemy; and God feels for guilty man, drawn away by a mightier, if not more guilty, rebel than himself. How solemn to think that it was prepared for others, and that men share it with these rebellious spirits! It was not in the heart of God to make a hell for miserable man: it was prepared for the devil and his angels. But there were those who preferred the devil to God; and to such He says, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The same test is applied to them as to the godly before. For good or ill, the question will be the treatment of the King and of His messengers, or rather of Him in them.

To us, although the same principle is involved, yet, in one way, what is yet deeper comes in. All turns upon -- What think ye of Christ? Do you believe on the Son of God? "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5). The sinner is obliged to face the person of the Son of God, and it becomes an urgent, all-absorbing, eternal question that must be decided by the soul -- Do I prefer Christ to the world? Do I prefer Christ or self? The Lord grant that we may be wise, and know how to find in Christ, not only the wisdom but, the power of God. For the same blessed One who gave us life gives us power for every practical difficulty.

> This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Matthew 26

The Lord had rendered His testimony, as the Faithful Witness, in deeds as well as in words. He had finished all the sayings which proclaimed Him to be the Prophet like unto Moses, but incomparably greater withal, who was henceforth to be heard on peril of eternal ruin. The hour approached, the solemn hour of His sufferings; and Jesus passes into it in spirit, with a calm dignity found only in Him (Matt. 26:2).

The resolve of the religious guides was to put the Lord to death. The chief priests, the scribes, the elders, were all of one mind: they assembled at the high-priest's palace, they consulted, they plotted; but after all, as usual, if they consummated their infamy, they did unwittingly the will of God, and accomplished the words of Christ to His disciples, not their own subtly concocted plan of wickedness. They said to each other,

> Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people (Matt. 26:5);

but He said to His disciples,

> Ye know that after two clays is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified (Matt. 26:2).

Did they wish to kill Him? They must do it then. Man has his wickedness, and God has His way. But little did either the friends, or the foes, of Jesus know how the determinate counsel of God was to be brought to pass. A traitor from within the innermost circle, fit instrument for Satan's scheming malice, must lift up his heel against the Savior, the leader of that adulterous, and now apostate, generation into the pit of perdition. But the enemy loves to morally degrade his victims; and the beautiful offering of love (fruit of the Holy Ghost in her, who poured the very precious ointment from the alabaster box on the head of Jesus) gave occasion to the basest motives in Judas, and the final success of the tempter over a soul -- spite of the constant seeing and hearing of Christ -- long inured to secret guilt (Matt. 26:6-16).

I am compelled through circumstances to glance but cursorily at these final, but most fertile, as well as affecting scenes. But indeed they are simple in statement, and for the heart rather than for discussion, or interpretation: every believer understands. Yet let us not fail to observe, first for our warning, how easy it is for eleven good men to be led astray by the fair pretenses of one bad man {Judas}, who was influenced by evil feelings unknown to them. Alas! too, the flesh in all, even in the regenerate, remains ever the same hateful, and hating, thing; and there is no good for the believer save where Christ is the object and the means. Next, for our joy, how sweet to find that love to Christ is surely vindicated of Him, and has the Spirit's guidance in the weakest one, spite of the murmurs of those who seem ever so high and strong! Thirdly, if a saint manifested her estimate of Jesus so lavishly in the judgment of utilitarian unbelief, what was His value in the eyes of the bribing priests and of the betrayer?

> And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15).

A slave's price was enough for the despised Lord of all! (Compare Ex. 21:32; Zech. 11:12, 13).

Still the Lord pursues, in the face of all, His path of love and holy calm; and when the disciples enquire His pleasure as to the place for eating the pascha feast, He speaks as the conscious Messiah, let Him be ever so rejected:

> Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will, keep the passover at thy house with my disciples (Matt. 26:17, 18).

As the twelve were eating, He tells out the grief of His heart:

> Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me (Matt. 26:21);

which fails not to elicit the reality of their affections and their deep grief. If Judas imitated their enquiry of innocence, fearful that his own silence would detect him, and, it may be, counting on ignorance because of the Lord's generality of expression ("one of you"), he only thereby hears his doom brought personally home (Matt. 26:21-25). Prophecy was

accomplished, but woe to that man who betrayed the Son of man!

Nothing, however, arrests the flow of His own love.

> And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:26-28).

The bread, but especially the cup, set forth the Messiah, not alive on earth, but rejected and slain. The broad truth is given here, as by Mark, in "this is my body," without dwelling on the grace which gave it; it is the truth in itself, without accessories seen elsewhere. Stress is laid on "my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many," because the refusal of the Messiah by Israel, and His death, opened the way for others outside -- for Gentiles; and it was important for our Evangelist to note this. Luke has it "shed for you" (i.e., for the believers in Jesus); Matthew adds, "for the remission of sins," in contrast with the blood of the old covenant, which held forth its penal sanction. This they were also here called, all of them emphatically, to drink. The blood in Ex. 24 sealed on the people their promise of obedience to the law under menace of death: here all drink the witness, in the Savior's blood, of their sins blotted out and gone.

"But," adds He,

> I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

He is henceforth separated from joy with them till the Father's kingdom come: then He will resume His association with delight in His people here below. [49] The godly have to drink His blood with thankful praise now: by-and-by He will drink the wine of joy new with us in the Father's kingdom. Till then He is the heavenly Nazarite; and so consequently should we be in spirit.

After partaking of the supper, they sung a hymn (how blessed at such a time!) and repaired to Olivet (Matt. 26:30). With the ineffable grace and serenity which reign throughout, the Lord lets them know the trial which should befall, and shake, them all that very night, and this according to the written word, even as that which He had shown of Himself. (Compare Matt. 26:24 and 31). The flesh had proved its worth in the goodly price it set on Jesus; it now proves the value of its self-confidence and courage on His behalf ("All ye shall be offended because of me," &c.); and he proved it most glaringly for others, and most bitterly for himself, who most trusted his own love for the Savior (Matt. 26:32-35). Thus the end of the trials would be to confirm their faith, and to deepen their distrust of self, making Christ their all in everything; and He, risen, would go before them into Galilee, resuming in resurrection-power, the relationship which He had with them there in the days of His flesh.

The next scene (Matt. 26:36-46), though equally perfect in its display of Jesus, and equally humbling in its exhibition of the choicest of the apostles, shows us the picture, not of complete and holy calm in the full knowledge of all that awaited Himself and His disciples, but of anguish to the uttermost, and of death realized in all its horrors as before God. What au insight Gethsemane gives us of Him, Jehovah-Messiah though He was, as the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Who ever saw affliction as He? It was not only that Jesus knew the cross in atonement as none other did, or could, that He alone bowed His head under the full, unsparing judgment of God when made sin for us; but He underwent, beyond all others, the anticipative pressure of death on His soul as the power of Satan, and this perfectly -- but only the more painfully for all that -- because He took it from His Father's, and not from the enemy's, hand. Yet it is the very reverse of insensibility -- strong crying and tears to His Father now, as afterwards to God as such, when it was a question of actual sin-hearing on the tree.

> And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me (Matt. 26:37, 38).

When the cross came, there was no such call to disciples to watch with Him. He was alone, absolutely, essentially, for us, that is, for our sins, with none of men, or angels, in any way or measure (morally speaking) near Him, when God forsook, and hid His face from, Him on whose head met all our iniquities. It was here, on the other hand, pleading as a Son with His Father, when

> he went a little farther, and fell on his face [prostrate in His earnestness] and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt (Matt. 26:39).

He watched, and prayed, and entered not into temptation, though tempted in all points as we are. But He finds the disciples asleep: they could not watch with Him one hour. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And so it was again and again with them, till He bade them sleep, but warned them that the hour was at hand, as was also the

---

49. ◆ Q. Matt. 26:29. How is this to be understood?

A. I think that it refers to the joy of, or consequent on, the new covenant which the Lord will bring in, not in spirit only as now, but in fact in all the fulness of its terms when He comes in the kingdom of His Father Not till then would He be associated with the disciples, as the representatives of God's remnant of Israel, in the full joy and blessedness which crown the fulfilment of that covenant. Then will his heart's joy have its just scope and satisfaction, when the Lord shall hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel, (i.e., the seed of God.) Yea, there is more than this intimated here, for Hosea does not reach up to the higher, deeper scene of the Father's kingdom, save so far as it may be vaguely left room for in "the heavens." It was not to be yet -- not "till that day." His personal joy with them is postponed till then. There was rich and profound love in that word, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." There was a hindrance now, for which his blood would provide. There should be none by and by, when all should be divine joy, the Father the blessed source, and Himself the center and the substance of it. He would not drink till then, but then, in all its freshness, He would drink with them of that which gladdens the heart of God and man (*The Bible Treasury* 2:63). ◆

traitor.

But the same flesh which drags down to sleep, when the Lord calls to watch and pray, is zealous enough with carnal weapons, when Judas came with his deceitful kiss and a multitude following (Matt. 26:47 *et seq*.), though it preserved not from, but rather led into, either forsaking the Master, or denying Him. Jesus, thoroughly suffering before His Father, is all dignity and peace before man, and goes forward to meet His will at their wicked hands, laying bare in the simplest, meekest words the base evil of Judas, the rash weakness of His inconsiderate defender, and the scriptural key to His approaching death, spite of His title to command legions of angels, and in face of an inconsistent multitude. He was, after all, a prisoner for the will of God, and not of man.

Before Caiaphas (Matt. 26:57-75) He is counted guilty of death, but this is not because the falsehood of the witnesses succeeded, but because of His own confession of the truth. He was the Son of God; but, come in fulness of grace and truth as He was, henceforth should they see Him, the Son of man, sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven -- His present position, and His manifestation when He comes in power and glory. Yet in the midst of His rejection and contumely at the hands of high and low among His own outward people, Jesus causes His mighty word to be remembered by poor Peter, bold now in denying Him -- cursing amid swearing Peter. "And he went out, and wept bitterly." O what a servant, and what a Master!

Matthew 27

All through this Gospel the Holy Ghost bears in mind very particularly our Lord's relations with Israel. Hence in the preceding chapters, where we had the destruction of Jerusalem foretold, care was taken to bring out also the preservation of a godly remnant of Israel, as a fact which would be of special comfort to His own people. And, just as we have seen in that prophetic testimony, so in the narrative of the crucifixion what comes out peculiarly in Matthew's Gospel is the part which Israel takes in the wondrous scene -- their accomplishment of what was written in the law, and Psalms, and prophets touching their rejection of their own Messiah. Our Evangelist wrote with a very express view to the Jews, and hence it was of the greatest importance to convince them, by his testimony, that God had accomplished the promises in the sending of the Messiah, whom Israel's unbelief had refused, and crucified by Gentile hands on the tree. What would be the special value of quoting the law and prophets to Gentiles? The Old Testament scriptures formed a book of which the heathen had the scantiest knowledge. We do find references to these scriptures in Luke; just enough to give a link; and that is all. But Matthew, while writing for all souls, has Israel in full view. Hence the Lord is so distinctly and carefully presented as Messiah in this Gospel; but, at the very first, enough is intimated to show His rejection. In the subsequent details we see not only broad predictions accomplished, but the way in which enmity is brought out. The guilt of the religious leaders is prominent. In this world religious evil works the part that is specially offensive to God. The devil cannot give effect to his ends here below unless he brings in the name of God to sanction what is done by man.

Hence here the active people are the priests. "When the morning was come" -- they rise early to accomplish their design. And, mark, it is said, "all the chief priests," &c. This shows the utter ruin and blindness of the nation. It was a most startling fact, and a capital one fora Jew to understand (for a Jew knew that the priesthood was instituted and ordered of God), that those who ought to have been the sure guides of the people were their misleaders in the greatest of all sins. Were not the sons of Aaron divinely chosen? Was not the succession duly maintained? Were not the Jews a people called out from the rest of the world to own the true God and His law? Most true; but what were they, and their heads, now about? Led or leaders, they played the chief part in crucifying the Christ. These were the men who had the best light of any nation; but all the use man made of the light was to become more hardened and embittered in rejecting the Son of God.

> And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor (Matt. 27:2).

Whatever we find the Gentiles doing here, God takes care to point out that the Jews were not only the secret conspirators, but openly guilty also, "Then Judas, which had betrayed him," &c. (Matt. 27:3). "And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that" (Matt. 27:4). Awful picture of what Satan brings about in a wretched human heart! Only the farther from Jesus morally, because he was the nearer externally. Most of all guilty are those who have the greatest outward privileges, while the truth of God does not govern the soul. We see, too, the mockery of Satan -- the way in which he cheats his victims even in this world. Judas did not expect that Jesus would die. He had known the Lord in imminent peril before; he had seen Him when the people took up stones to cast at Him, hiding Himself, going through the midst of them, and passing on His way. He knew how Jesus could walk on the sea -- how He could conquer all the obstacles of nature; and why not the raging storm of human passion and violence? But Judas was deceived, whatever his calculations may have been; he yielded to covetousness; he bargained for the blood of Jesus -- and Jesus came to die. To his horror he found it too true. And Satan, who had led him on by his love of money, leaves him without a single hope -- in black despair. He goes to the priests; but miserable comforters were they all to the miserable, despairing soul. Confession of sin, without giving God confidence for His grace, is worthless.

Cleave to God, my soul, and give Him credit for what He is in Christ. But there is no faith where Jesus is not loved:

and Judas had neither. Jesus was a forgotten object before his soul, and this proved that there was no life in him. All the outward nearness he had enjoyed before was only a greater weight to sink him into perdition. What a thing is the end of sin even in this world, sin against Jesus! Judas brings the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders with the confession,

> I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.

They could not deny the truth of this; but with utter heartlessness they say,

> What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself (Matt. 27:4, 5).

Many a one sells Jesus virtually, if not literally. Let every soul look to it, that his sin be not in some way akin to that of Judas. If God is calling sinners to a knowledge of His Son, it is an awful thing to reject Him; it is selling Jesus for some object in this world, which we either seek to attain, or love too well to part with. In Judas this came out in. its worst form; but perdition is not confined to him who is the son of perdition.

"And the chief priests took the silver pieces," &c. Conscience would have told them that theirs was the guilt of bribing Judas to betray Jesus. But another thing becomes evident here. Religion without Christ only gives persons the means of cheating their souls into the belief that they are doing God service. They said, "It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood." Here was religion; but where was conscience in giving the money for Jesus?

> And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day (Matt. 27:7, 8).

They are obliged thus to perpetuate their own wickedness. And this is exactly a picture of what the people, once holy, had now become -- the chief priests the pattern of what the nation was. A field of blood that land remains to this day, a field "to bury strangers in." Israel being cast out of their own land, it is left to others, if only to be buried there.

> Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value {Matt. 27:9}. [50]

But it is not now the chief priests and elders, nor the wretched condition of Judas, nor the perpetuation of Israel's wickedness, foretold by the prophet, that occupies us. It is our Lord Himself, standing before the governor. He acknowledges the power of the world, when Pilate asks Him, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" To the chief priests and elders He answers nothing. Pilate, struck by the silence and moral dignity of his prisoner, desires His release, sees through the malice of the people, and proposes to them a choice, such as was the governor's custom. "Whom will ye that I release unto you?" But he had to find out the hatred with which men regarded Jesus: there is no person, or thing, the malice of man does not prefer to Him.

God takes care, too, that there should be a home testimony to the conscience of the governor. His wife sent a message, saying,

> Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him (Matt. 27:19).

This, which is recorded only in Matthew, disturbed Pilate the more. All of it God ordered that man's iniquity in rejecting Jesus should be evident, and without excuse. Then observe the solemn lesson:

> The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus (Matt. 27:20).

The greater the moral advantages, where there is not simple faith in God, the greater the hatred of Jesus. The reception, or rejection, of Jesus now is the same thing in principle,

---

50. ◆ Q. Matt. 27:9 -- Why does Matthew here quote the prophecy as Jeremiah, when it is really Zechariah?

A. The difficulty is due to the Jewish manner of citation, felt by many friends of inspiration and often pressed by adversaries. But it is remarkable that R. Isaac Chizzuk Emuna, in his determined assault on Matthew's credit, finds no objection to the use of Jeremiah's name to the Jewish manner of citation, felt by many friends of inspiration and often pressed by adversaries. Yet it is almost incredible that he could lave overlooked so obvious a peculiarity if he had regarded it as a fault, as he does object to Matthew's application of this prophecy to the Messiah, but not to his method of citing which to us westerns is apt to look strange. Hence the just inference appears to be that this learned Jew knew that such a form of citation was even more characteristically Jewish (and therefore appropriate in Matthew) than the more simple and precise mention of the particular prophet in question.

The true point then is the principle on which the inspired writer thus cited. The imputation that he did not know the very palpable fact that the passage used was in Zechariah is even on human grounds absurd; for the evangelist abounds in the most profound and accurate use of the Old Testament throughout, and hence cannot fairly lie open to the charge of such a blunder as would be unworthy of an intelligent Sunday scholar.

Now it appears from a great Rabbinical authority (T. Bava Bathra, fol. 14, 2) that *Jeremiah* stood as a beginning and title to the later prophets, Joshua to the earlier, as contradistinguished from the law and the Chetubim. Hence a citation from the later prophets (or what we should call the prophets) might well be made under the name of Jeremiah, no matter which was quoted in particular; especially as it appears from Sepher Hagilgulim (according to Surenhusius) that it was a common saying among the Jews that the spirit of Jeremiah was in Zechariah. It is a familiar fact attested by our Lord in the New Testament that the Old Testament was divided into the law, the psalms, and the prophets, which latter we have seen subdivided in the manner already described.

So the best copies of Mark 1: 2 read (not in the prophets, but) "in the prophet Isaiah," though two passages are cited, the latter of which only is Isaiah's, the former from Malachi. This may show how differently from us the Jews quoted. But ignorance or error is out of the question: they really attach to translators and copyists who tried to amend the true reading in some Greek copies and ancient versions of both these scriptures. It is the best wisdom and the simplest faith to accept scripture in its most accurate form in spite of difficulties, which the Spirit of God will enable us to solve if for His glory. But were the difficulties more and greater, could we not trust Him? (*The Bible Treasury* 9:80).◆

though, no doubt, the circumstances of the world are changed.

Persons may know just enough of Jesus for their souls' salvation and experience little of the world's rejection; but if one really clings to a crucified, but now glorious, Christ, he must know what it is to have the scorn and hatred of the world. If the world rejected Him, he must be prepared for the same thing. We cannot have both heaven and earth. The cross and the glory go together. The Lord presented hopes of blessing on earth to Israel if they had received Him; but they refused, and this brought in the cross of Jesus. God knew it was inevitable, and this because of man's wickedness. Then God brings in heavenly glory, and we must prepare for as much as man chooses to do in the present state of society.

It is a lie of Satan's that man is altered for the better during the last eighteen hundred years; the feeling of the human heart is always the same, though there may be times when it comes to a crisis. The very people, who "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth," the same day sought to cast Jesus down headlong. And what was it that brought about their enmity? The assertion of God's true grace. Man cannot endure it -- the thought that. His salvation is the same perfect, eternal salvation for the worst of sinners as for any. "Is it possible," he says, "that I, who have tried to serve God for so many years, should be treated like a drunkard, a swindler, or a harlot?" He turns round on God, and becomes His open enemy. But, after all, there is no question of justice to man in the salvation of a sinner. It must be grace, if God saves any, and so He says plainly.. Nor is it merely a partial remedy, for there is no case so desperate that His grace cannot reach. This self-righteous, religious man hates, and God too, because it makes nothing of him.

> Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified (Matt. 27:22).

Here we see the unrighteousness of these religious men. If Pilate seemed, at least, too sensible to act thus, we shall see what his righteousness amounts to. He asks,

> Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, &c. (Matt. 27:23, 24).

There we see what the world's righteousness is.

We have seen what the chief priests were; now we learn the unrighteousness of the Roman. There cannot be true righteousness unless God governs. We have all failed -- I must therefore be saved by another; for God proves all measured, weighed, and found wanting. One Person alone in this scene is found full of wisdom, patience, goodness -- perfect in every way. When it was the time to speak, His word is spoken; when it was the time to be silent, He holds His peace. He was God upon earth, and all His ways perfect. But this is not the great point here. The Gospel of John specially develops the Deity of our Lord, as that of Luke His humanity. In Matthew we see Him as Messiah; therefore Pilate asks Him here, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" When Pilate had "washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" (as if that could relieve him of the fearful guilt he was perpetrating); all the people answered and said,

> His blood be on us, and on our children {Matt. 27:25}.

And there the dark, fatal stain abides to this day.

Others are guilty too, but the favored Jew above all. "When he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified." See what the righteousness of the judge is! This was he who had just before called Jesus a just man!

And now come the soldiers. They are, and must all be proved, guilty. Not a class, or condition, of man but evinces its hatred of God in the person of His Son -- failing most, too, in that which was their pride. For what base cowardice is that which tramples down One who suffers unresistingly!

> And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head . . . and they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head, &c. (Matt. 27:28-31).

But this was not all.

> As they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear his cross (Matt. 27:32).

What excesses of human tyranny follow the rejection of Jesus!

> They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall (Matt. 27:34).

We must not confound this circumstance with that mentioned in John, where the Lord says, "I thirst." In Matthew's narrative, it was the stupefying draught administered to prisoners before they suffered; and this the Lord would not drink. Whereas, in John, the Lord while on the cross, remembers, as it were, a scripture as yet unfulfilled. There He is regarded, not as One who did not suffer, but withal as the absolute Master over all circumstances. Alive therefore to the honor of scripture, and to a word which had not received its accomplishment, He says,

> I thirst.
>
> And they filled a sponge with vinegar . . . and put it to his mouth.

He did drink the vinegar then. But here, on the contrary,

> When he had tasted thereof, he would not drink (Matt. 27:34).

He wished no alleviation from man.

> And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots, &c. (Matt. 27:35).

The superscription differs in the various Gospels. We must remember that Pilate wrote it in three different languages. One Gospel (Mark) does not profess to give anything but the substance of what was written, the accusation or charge against Him; in the others, the Holy Ghost gives the words. And what appropriateness is here! "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:37). The great thing for the Jew was the identifying of their Messiah and King with Jesus. In Luke the

word "Jesus" ought to be omitted, as in the best authorities. It is really, "The King of the Jews, this!" and means "this fellow," a term of contempt, the point there being "He is despised and rejected of men." Here, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not"; because, though the Gentile shares the guilt, it is the Jew who leads Pilate to condemn Him to death. In John we have, characteristically, the fullest form of all -- "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." The reason is, that it unites two things in our Lord, not anywhere else so brought into juxtaposition -- the most complete humiliation and the highest glory. He by whom all things were made, God Himself, became a man of "Nazareth." The beauty of this moist appear to any spiritual mind. Throughout John's Gospel the Lord is both higher and lower than anywhere else.

> The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth (Matt. 27:44).

They found time to revile Jesus too, venting their bodily anguish in mockery of the Son of God. Oh! beloved friends, was there ever such a scene? We have looked at man's part, but what was God doing there?

> About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why didst thou forsake me? (Matt. 27:46).

We have full evidence that this was not the exhaustion of nature.

> When he had cried again with a loud voice, he dismissed his spirit (Matt. 27:50).

Our Lord died a willing victim. Man might will, and be the instrument of, His death. A man He became that as such He might die; but He marks it in every circumstance so as to prove that He was there who could as easily have swept away a world, as of old He laid down, by a word, the foundations of heaven and earth.

> He dismissed his spirit; and, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised; and coming forth out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many (Matt. 27:50-53).

Nature was made to yield its testimony above and below; and the darkness over the land was no mere eclipse. The Jewish system, too, yielded its solemn witness in the rent veil. Unrent, it had been the symbol that man could not draw near to God. Under the law it can never be. God dwelt then in the thick darkness. But in the death of Jesus there is the expression of full grace. God and man may now meet face to face. The blood is sprinkled upon, and before, the mercy-seat, and man is invited to draw near bodily. Why should it not be? It is due to that precious blood. God in Him had come down from heaven to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. For every soul that believes, it is done. The Jewish system might linger on, like a corpse waiting so many days for burial; but the rending of the veil was the soul severed from the body. Nor this only, there was witness on every hand -- the earth and the heaven, the law and the unseen world. Jesus has the keys of Hades and of death. The very graves were unlocked when Jesus died, if the bodies of the saints did not rise till after His resurrection. He was, Himself is, the firstfruits, and the power of life was brought in through His resurrection. What testimony could be more complete? The centurion set to watch (heathen as, no doubt, he was)

> feared greatly, saying, Truly, this [man] was Son of God {Matt. 27:54}.

"And many women were there beholding afar off," &c. But where were the disciples? Oh, what withering condemnation of all boasted strength They had forsaken Jesus and fled; but here were these women, contrary to their natural timidity, out of weakness made strong, beholding, even though afar off. In Joseph of Arimathaea, we see a man who had a great deal to lose, being a rich man and a counselor. Before he was a secret disciple of Jesus; but now God brings him to a point when it might least be expected. With the death of Jesus before his eyes, he goes to Pilate, begs His body, and, having laid it in his new tomb, rolls a great stone to the door. If apostles and disciples flee, God can, and does, raise up testimony for His name's sake.

We have traced the history of self, of the flesh, as well as of the rejection and death of Jesus, in this chapter. If we had all the riches, the learning, the power of this world, these could not make us happy. But Jesus can. Yet let us remember that we are in an enemy's country, which has proved its treachery to our Master. If we do not feel that we are passing through the camp of those who crucified Jesus, we are in danger of falling into some ambuscade of the enemy. The Lord grant us that calmness of faith which is not occupied with itself, but with Him who His own self bare our sins in His own body en the tree!

Matthew 28

The special purpose of this Gospel appears in the account of the Lord's death and resurrection as plainly as elsewhere. Hardly any portion, indeed, more strikingly illustrates it than the chapter before us. Thus, on the face of it, we see nothing of the ascension. If we had only Matt. 28, should we have known as a fact that the Lord went up to heaven at all? It is impossible, without a special purpose, that the apostle could have omitted an event so glorious and interesting. Not that this omission is a defect in Matthew's narrative; on the contrary, it is a part, and proof, of its perfection, when the scope is understood. Were the ascension scene introduced here, it would be mere patchwork, and out of keeping with the history that closes in our chapter.

Yet even now there is one of the points that learned men stumble over. Neglecting the evidence of design, they reason *á priori*, and consequently cannot understand why such an event should be left out by our Evangelist. Evidently they do not believe, in any full sense, that God wrote these Gospels; else they would conclude that the fault lay in their ignorance and misreasoning. A simple-hearted believer rests satisfied that the omission in Matthew is as perfect as the insertion in Luke; everything is as it should be in the word of God, as He wrote it. And the notion that anything is now wanting which Matthew ever wrote as a conclusion is contrary to all evidence, external and internal.

Before closing, let me endeavor to show how its presence here would be incongruous, and detract from the beauty of the picture. God was supplying; on the other hand, its presence where it does occur elsewhere is, it need hardly be added, equally beautiful and necessary. Events are selected in connection with the immediate subject. Taking the chapter as it comes, we see that the Holy Ghost here confines Himself to a Messiah risen from the dead, who meets His disciples in Galilee, outside the rebellious city. In other parts of this Gospel the ascension is implied or assumed, as in chapters 13:41; 16:27, 28; 22:44; 24, 25, and, above all, 26:64. It was, therefore, not omitted ignorantly, nor has any accident robbed us of it in the original. I only say this as sufficiently, and entirely, refuting the foolish irreverent reasoning of men, chiefly moderns.

> In the end of the sabbath, as it began to grow dusk (not dawn), &c. (Matt. 28:1). [51]

This was not the morning of the resurrection-day, but the evening previous to it. We, with our western notions of time, might think only of the early twilight; but it means simply that the last day of the week was drawing to its close. And evening, we must remember, to a Jewish mind, commenced the new day. An exactly similar phrase occurs in Luke 23:54, where the Jewish sense cannot be doubted. The Holy Ghost does not continue the description of this visit of the women to the sepulcher. There is no real ground for connecting the circumstances of the first three verses of this chapter. [52] The first merely presents the devotedness of these holy women. When the disciples had gone to their own homes, these females, spite of natural fears at such place and time, could not stay away. They had prepared spices for embalming the body, but rested the sabbath-day (as we read in Luke) according to the commandment. "It was just getting dusk" is the real thought here. It was the twilight after the sabbath. Their hearts lingered round the grave, bound up with Jesus.

"And, behold, there was a great earthquake," &c. This occurred afterwards; how long is not said. We have simply a narrative of events, without defining the intervals of time, but one after another, in these early verses. We must not confound the visit of the women here (in v. 1) with their visit on the morning of the first day mentioned by Mark and in our v. 5, &c. The Lord on this last occasion was not in the sepulcher. But the angel, descending and rolling away the stone, had nothing directly to do with the Lord's rising. No such interposition was in any way necessary to Him. God raised Him, and He Himself rose. Such is the scriptural doctrine of the resurrection. This angelic action was, one supposes, to call the attention of men to what God had done, and the-more fully to set aside the deceits, or the reasonings, of enemies. So the angel's word is "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

One remarkable consequence of the resurrection is always pressed. The angel says "Fear not ye." That mighty act of God is intended for ever to dispel the alarm of those who believe in Jesus, by giving them the certainty of His intervention on their behalf. Up to the advent and resurrection of Jesus there was a measure of darkness and uncertainty, however great the kindness and mercy shown by God. The resurrection left all the world apparently undisturbed; but what was the great resulting truth and blessing for the people of God? To faith it is the triumph of God over the last efforts of sin and the power of Satan. No doubt death is still in the world, pursuing its ravages.

What, then, is the resurrection to you? says the caviler. Everything, if Christ is my life. I am entitled to have the comfort of it; my soul is welcome to drink into the joy of it, though my body does not yet share the deliverance. God has

51. ◆Q. -- Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1; John 20:1: please explain.

A.. -- The first text speaks, not of the resurrection day, but of the sabbath which preceded, though late on that day, the dusk of evening when the next day was to begin according to Jewish reckoning. With v. 2 commences a distinct paragraph referring to that first day. When the sabbath was *past,* as we hear in the second (v. 1), the women named bought the spices to embalm; but on coming to the sepulcher very early next morning, they learned that the Lord was risen; and so speaks the third text. The fourth tells us of the two separate visits of Mary of Magdala, when she saw the stone taken away, and subsequently when He first appeared to her, as also Mark 16:9 declares (*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:175). ◆

52. This is quite in keeping with what we have found in Matthew elsewhere. The reader can compare *καὶ ἰδού* ("and behold") in Matt. 8:2 with the same in Matt. 28:2. The true connection is in the object of the narrator, not in mere time. There is no ground to suppose the women witnessed the earthquake: the soldiers, I believe, alone did.

shown me in the cross of Christ the perfect witness of suffering for sin. Man believes not that He is the Son, and cannot understand how God could allow His best Beloved to suffer. Others, too, had cried to God, and spite of all their faults, they had been heard; yet in the extremity of Christ's sufferings, and spite of His grace and glory, and the Father's love to Him, He cried and was not heard! For truly He was not, till all the billows of divine wrath closed over His head -- the spotless Victim wreathed with our sins. But now the crisis is come, and all is changed. It might have seemed to the world that all was over with the claims of Jesus. He had died on the cross, and, by His own confession, forsaken of God. Was all as safe as man, or the devil, could desire? On the third day God interferes: Jesus rose from the dead, and all the power of earth and hell was shaken to its center.

Resurrection, too, settled everything in peace for the believer. Every cause for fear and selfish sorrow was buried in the grave of Christ. Every blessing overflows in Him risen. How much is made of this in the Epistles! Nothing is more fundamental, or more insisted on. Vague thoughts of God's faithfulness, love, &c., would not be enough for the solid comfort of God's people. Many who see little more have only glimpses of joy. In order to have full, settled peace they must be founded on the basis to which God points -- the death and resurrection of Jesus. If His death meets all my evil, His resurrection is the spring and pattern of the new life and acceptance -- above sin, and death, and judgment -- which grace has given me in Him.

But the resurrection of Jesus, as Paul preached to the Athenians, is the proof which God has given to all men, that God will judge, not only the dead, but the quick—the habitable earth -- in righteousness by a Man whom He hath ordained, even Jesus. For God sent Him as His best blessing and Blesser, and man crucified Him; and God raised Him up to justify the believer, and to judge the world.

The course of the world was not interrupted by the Lord's resurrection. Men slept as usual, and rose as if nothing had happened. Yet was it the greatest work of power, righteousness, and glory that God had ever wrought, yea (founded on the deepest and perfect suffering for sin, such as never was endured by another), it was the greatest work He ever will do and I say this looking on to the day when everything shall be made new according to His glory. These are but consequences of Christ's resurrection, but applications of the power put forth therein. And if the world was indifferent to it, what should it be to us?' Say not it is a little thing because it is as yet a matter of faith. Into the midst of this scene of weakness and death the mighty power of God has entered; and been here put forth in the resurrection of Christ. God does, and could do, no more to blot out sin: it has been put away by the sacrifice of Christ. But one thing abiding ought to make the soul afraid of God -- even sin. Now Jesus was treated as if He were covered with it, and it were all His own. If it was to be removed, He must bear it thoroughly: He did so, and now it is gone; and we rest upon what God tells us of Him and of it. This is what tests the soul's confidence in God. Am I willing to trust God when I cannot trust myself? Sin brought in distrust of God; but the gift; death, and resurrection of Christ, more than restore what was lost, and establish the soul in such a knowledge of God as no angel ever did, or can, possess. What my soul wants is, not that God should be too merciful to destroy me because of my sins, but a full deliverance with a full judgment of sin (Rom. 8: 1, 3). We cannot have fellowship with God except on the ground of sin being dealt with righteously. Jesus crucified has abolished sin before God for those who believe. To believe God about the death of His Son because of sin -- our sin -- is to take God's part against ourselves. Before Him to acknowledge ourselves lost sinners is repentance toward God, and is inseparable from faith.

Perfect love is in Himself, and comes out of the depth of His own holy being. God became a man that He might go through the whole moral question of sin: that done in Christ is the triumph of grace. No wonder then that the angel could say, "Fear not ye." The resurrection shows every hindrance gone. The angel acknowledges Him as Lord, but what a blessing to be able to say our Lord! What a joy thus to own that risen One who was crucified, as entitled in everything to command! No doubt what made His work of value was that He was God Himself -- One who, while He was a man, was infinitely above man's Daysman – One who could lay His hand upon both. The angel intimates this, that in the presence of a risen Savior there was nothing for the most timid believer to fear.

On the other hand, Acts 17:31 says

> He [God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

If I do not trust to a risen Savior for the deliverance of my soul, I participate in the guilt of His death. If I have not fled for refuge to Him, I belong to the same firm, as it were, that crucified Him. But by faith in His blood I am washed from this guilt. How just that the provision of grace, which signs the believer's deliverance, should, if despised, become the dead weight that sinks the world! If I believe Him, I know it was man that crucified Jesus; and not merely profane man -- the guilt pervades all. And there is one only door of deliverance for any, and this is Jesus crucified.

"Fear not ye." There is no need of alarm, for He is risen. God was waiting for this. "For I know that ye seek Jesus," &c. It was the heart set upon Jesus that was valued. It had ever been in the mind of God to blot out sin; but now it was-all gone. He who was full of holy love in giving Jesus to die, now raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. If my faith and hope are in God, my delight is in Christ; if in myself, Christ becomes to me a cipher, and I justly perish for ever. If I have not Christ for my rest and delight, for my Savior and Lord here, I must by-and-by quail before Him as my Judge.

And now, returning to the women, they, were to go and tell His disciples that Jesus was risen from the dead, and went before them into Galilee. In Luke there is no notice of Galilee, but He joins the two disciples going to Emmaus; and when

they returned to Jerusalem the same evening, they "found the eleven gathered together . . . saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Jesus Himself appears in their midst. All circumstances there have Jerusalem as their center. In Matthew the great point pressed is the meeting-place assigned in Galilee. And why? Is it not remarkable on the face of it that one should give the meeting of Jesus with His disciples in Jerusalem, another in Galilee? Has not God some truth to teach us hereby?

We are apt to measure, the importance of a truth by its results to ourselves; but the true standard is its bearing on the glory of God. The way in which God gives us His truth after all, too, is the best for us. Throughout the Gospel of Matthew Jesus is found in Galilee. Jerusalem refuses Him, was troubled at His birth, and cast Him out unto death, even the death of the cross. "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," exactly describes their feeling. They looked for something in the Messiah suited to their earthly idea; they vented their disappointment in the rejection of the Son of God. In accordance with this, then, Matthew records that the scene of His living labors and Jewish scorn was where He manifested Himself as risen, after the house of Israel rejected Him -- Galilee. He manifests Himself anew in despised Galilee of the Gentiles, when all power is given to Him in heaven and earth; and there He gives the godly remnant from His ancient people their great commission.

"And as they departed quickly front the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word, behold, Jesus met them," &c. {Matt. 28:8}. In John, where Mary stretches out her hand to the Lord, He says, "Touch me not" How comes it that here (Matt. 28:9), [53] when the women came and held Him by the feet, our Lord does not forbid it? A totally different truth is thus set forth by these acts. The great hope of Israel was to have Christ in their midst. But to us the absence of Christ on high, while we go through our time of trial, is just as characteristic as His presence will be to them. John speaks fully of our Lord's going away: another scene of glory, entirely distinct from this world, is brought out there. Hence the teaching implied is, as it were, You may have been looking as Jews for a scene where I shall be personally present; but instead of this I tell you of My present place on high, and the many mansions {abodes} that I go to prepare for you in My Father's house. He reveals to them a heavenly hope totally distinct from His reigning over His people in this world. But in Matthew we see Jesus rejected by Jerusalem, yet found in Galilee, even after His resurrection. Whatever His power and glory now, and the comfort and blessing to His own, He is still, as regards the Jews and Jerusalem, the

53. ◆ Q. John 20:17; Matt. 28:9. Is it true that there was a private ascension on the day the Lord rose, fulfilling Lev. 16:17, besides the public one forty days after? So say some, to avoid the difficulty; and this they try to sustain by the reception of the Holy Ghost on the first occasion, as distinguished from His descent on the day of Pentecost.

A.. There is not the slightest ground to suppose an ascension previous to that which is described in Acts 1. A little intelligence as to John 20:17 removes the difficulty, without having recourse to a supposed private ascension. *Ἀναβαίνω* is the abstract present, a common enough usage, not only in Greek, but in our own and other languages, often of the greatest value to remember in exposition. It is really ignorance to infer from the present that the action must be either actually going on, or so imminent as to follow immediately. The present may be used in the New Testament to convey certainty or permanence, but still more frequently perhaps an action eminently and emphatically characteristic as here. Take *πορεύομαι ἑτοιμάσαι τόπον ὑμῖν* in John 14:2; take *ἔρχομαι* and *εἰμί* in the next verse, or *ὑπάγω* in v. 4. Here, too, mysticising commentators tell us that this *ἔρχομαι* is begun in Christ's resurrection, carried on in the spiritual life, further advanced when each by death is fetched to be away with Him, fully completed at His coming in glory, when they shall for ever be with Him in the perfected resurrection state. All this style of drawing ever so many applications out of a word, which here means but one, the last of these alleged comings, enfeebles scripture, and injures the saint. So in v. 17 there is no need to change *μένει* (abideth) into *μενεῖ* (shall abide), with some of the old versions, or to understand it, with Euthymius Zigabenus, as the Spirit's then abiding *in Jesus,* who was among them. It really expresses permanence from the time He comes to abide, not an abiding going on then. In 1 John 1:7 we have examples of much moment doctrinally, and for the blessing and even peace of souls, where, from the structure of the sentence, as well as the truth declared elsewhere, we know that *καθαρίζει* means the cleansing efficacy of Christ's blood, without question either of repetition or of a continuous process. So again, in Acts 2:47 *τοὺσσωζ.*, and in Heb. 2:11, *οἱάγιαζ.*, is not the historical present or fact, but the character or class. This is made certain in the last case by comparing Heb. 10:10 with 14, where we have the perfect and present used of the same persons -- the one the fact and date, the other the abstract character.

The Lord then in John 20:17 meant, not that He was at that moment, or that day, ascending, but that this was the character of what was before Him; not staying to reign over Israel and the world, but going up to heaven, the model Man there, according to whom the children of His Father and God, now owned as His brethren, were to be formed in and according to the truth. (Compare John 17:19.) It was to be a new order of sanctification, which the believer, even if a Jew, once separated to Jehovah from the Gentiles, needed no less than the Gentile; a heavenly separateness, not fleshly or monastic, nor mystic, but sanctification in truth. So we all, says the apostle, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit. And this seems to be the significant reason why Mary Magdalene was not permitted to touch the Lord. It was not in bodily presence He was to be known by the Christian, but ascended to heaven; and she who had known Him according to flesh must now know Him so no longer. She thus stands in contrast with the women in Matthew, who were permitted soon after to hold Him by the feet and pay Him homage, the type of those out of that nation who shall have Him to their joy reigning ever them here below, and hence as seasonable a pledge in the first Gospel, as the Jew taken out of the earthly hope to know Him above suits this part of the fourth. Indeed a similar truth is taught in Thomas, who, absent on the resurrection-day and unbelieving, was caused in the most sensible way eight days after to learn and own the Lord risen from the dead. So will the Jew yet *see* and confess Jesus to be the Lord and God in a day still future. But blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. So the Christian knows Christ.

With this falls in Lev. 16:17, which sets forth our Lord's presence on high ever since He ascended, and not some imaginary appearing there on the day of resurrection. When He comes out, it will be for the reconciliation of all things, as well as the forgiveness of Israel. We enter in spirit where He is meanwhile, identified with Christ, the great High Priest, instead of waiting, like God's ancient people, till He come forth. While He is there, the Spirit is come out to dwell in us Christians and baptize us into one body, giving us liberty to enter in boldly through the rent veil. The people meanwhile wait, but will have the blessing when the Lord comes out.

Thus the right view of these scriptures very simply illustrates and confirms the truth of the gospel and the prophetic word; so that we need not take up anything strained or fanciful to vindicate their harmony. On the day the Lord rose He breathed the spirit of life into the disciples, and the Holy Spirit acted in this as in new birth. The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost was power from on high. *(The Bible Treasury* 11:320).◆

rejected and despised Messiah. Hence it is that on this occasion He confirms the message of the angel, saying to the women, "Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee; and there shall they see me" (Matt. 28:10).

The governor wielded the power of the Roman kingdom: but who were they that secretly instigated him? (vu. 11-19). The false religionists of their day -- the priests, utterly blinded of the devil. Always without simplicity of heart, they assembled together with the elders and took counsel; and those who bribed a treacherous disciple with "thirty pieces of silver" to put Christ to death, gave "large money" now to the soldiers to deny the truth of His resurrection. Such is man, such is the world; and, solemn to ay, such is its highest and proudest phase. Such it was then: is the moral complection altered now? If we read the Bible aright, we shall find in it not only the record of the past, but the divine lesson-book of the present and the future. May we read it from God as His truth, as well as for our own souls! Certain it is that the Jews, and especially the religious chiefs, took the lead in evil and in opposition to God, before Christ's death (Matt. 26, 27), while He lay in the grave (Matt. 27:62-66), and after He rose again, as in Matt. 28:11-15. But unbelief is after all as weak against God, as faith is mighty with, and by, Him. Their own guard became the clearest, most unwitting, and least suspected witness of the resurrection. What a testimony was the alarm of the soldiers, added to the doubts of His own disciples! It became more than unbelief now; it was a deliberate, wilful lie; and there rest the Jews "until this day." Their fears raised up, without meaning it, a sure testimony to Jesus; their enmity leads then on now to reject what they knew was the truth, even if they perished everlastingly.

But

> the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped [him]; but some doubted (Matt. 28:16, 17).

And yet these doubters were disciples. How good is God! how above the thoughts of nature! Man would have held back the fact. Why write that some of His disciples doubted? I would it not stumble others? But it is profitable to know the depths of our unbelieving hearts -- to see that, even in the presence of a risen Jesus, "some doubted." No matter what His love to His children, God never hides from them, nor makes light of, their sins. Indeed, He loves them too well; and He is always God.

> And Jesus coming up spake unto them, saying, All authority is given unto me in heaven and on the earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them unto the names of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you. And, lo, I am with you all the ways, until the consummation of the age {Matt. 28:18-20}.

Now it appears to me that, with such a word as this, the ascension scene would be incongruous. What more unsuitable, after He had said, "Lo, I am with you all the days," than the details of His going back to heaven? But there the curtain drops. Otherwise it would not have left the unbroken blessedness of this promise to ring on the heart. Thus, the keeping out of view His departure seems to me to be in exact keeping with the parting promise, and with the entire Gospel.

Why not here "repentance and remission of sins"? why not "preach the gospel to every creature"? What is the peculiar fitness of this conclusion of Matthew? The Lord, rejected as the Jewish Messiah, opens out fresh dealings of God with men. Before, they were not to go even to Samaritans; but here an entirely new sphere is opened. It is no longer God having His peculiar dwelling-place in one nation; it is now this larger thought --

> Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19). [54]

Baptism is here in contrast with circumcision, and the fuller revelation of the Godhead is contrasted with the name Jehovah, by which God was known to Israel.

> Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you.

That falls in with the Sermon on the Mount, where the Lord says, in contrast with them of old time, "But I say unto you." He was the Prophet like unto Moses whom God had promised to raise up, and to whom they were bound to hearken. What special guidance is this for Jewish disciples! They were to teach all things that Jesus commanded. He was the beloved Son of God who now was to be heard preeminently. It was not a question of putting the Gentiles under the law, which has been the ruin of Christendom, the denial of Christianity, and the deep dishonor of Christ Himself.

And here all closes. The disciples were about to enter on a troubled scene; but

> Lo, I [Jesus] am with you all the days, until the consummation of the age.

This was, and is, enough for faith. The Lord grant that we may confide our souls, both for this age and for ever, to God and to that word of His grace which shall stand when heaven and earth pass away.

---

54. ◆Q. In what respect does the form of baptism, in Matt. 28:19, differ from the fact given in Acts 2:38?

A. Our Lord, in the Gospel of Matthew, gives the formula according to which a. disciple is to be baptized unto His death; and this in contrast with the Jewish confession of one God, even Jehovah. In Acts 2: it is said by Peter to be "upon the name of Jesus Christ." So, in Acts 8:16, the Samaritan professors are said to have been baptized "unto the name of the Lord Jesus," as Cornelius and his household were "in his name." These are ways of describing baptism suitably to the Acts of the Apostles, where the Lordship of Jesus is one of the main objects. But there is no ground to doubt that christian baptism was always formally "unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." To omit or change that which the Lord enjoined so solemnly in resurrection, is a bolder act than becomes a Christian. *This,* certainly, ought never to be left out, however right it may be to testify to His Lordship also (*The Bible Treasury* 5:80). ◆

{A lengthy answer regarding Matt. 28:19 by J. N. Darby is found in *The Bible Treasury* 3:380; also found in *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:332-334.}

A Few Notes by J. N. Darby on the Commission of Matthew 28

❖ The Lord addresses them {the disciples} on the ground of the place which now belonged to Him, which He will fully take in power hereafter, which belonged to the risen Lord, being His in right of the new place into which He had entered as man.

> All power is given to me in heaven and in earth {Matt. 28:18}.

All is not accomplished, all things not yet put under His feet, but it is His place as the risen Man who has glorified God and accomplished the work given Him to do. Hence He sends them forth beyond the limits of the King of Israel in Zion, that had been set forth fully in Matt. 10, then and on to the future. Here connected with the remnant of the Jews, associating them as brethren with Himself, having accomplished redemption, they were to disciple the nations, baptizing them (not to Jehovah, not to Messiah or the Son of David, but) to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that in which the one God of Israel was fully and completely revealed; teaching them to observe that which they had learned from Him on the earth; and He would be with them to the end of the age {"until the completion of the age"}. [55] It is thus before the millennium, not the mystery of the church, nor the future gathering of all things. The former was revealed and confided to Paul, the latter to come in when the age was finished. Not the mission from Bethany (which the Acts follow throughout), not starting from Jerusalem nor beginning it as that did; but accepting the poor of the flock as brethren to Christ; they were to bring in, disciple all the nations on the footing of their relationship with Him as thus risen. It is well to notice what has been alluded to: -- the ministry in the Acts is not the accomplishment of this but of the mission in Luke, the book itself being, as is known, the continuation of his Gospel; nor was the ministry of Paul, who took up by a separate divine mission the evangelization of the nations {cp. Gal. 2}, the carrying out of this. His was more fully even yet a mission from an ascended and glorified Savior {Acts 9}, to which was added the ministry of the church. It connects itself even much more in its first elements with Luke. The ministry here established stands alone. The disciples {in Matt. 28:18-20} are not sent to Jews, as in Luke coming from an ascended Savior they were to begin Jerusalem. Jerusalem is rejected, and the remnant attached to Christ (His brethren, and owned in this character) sent to Gentiles. This, as far as scripture teaches us, has never been fulfilled . . . a new mission to the Gentiles is sent forth in the person of Paul and that connected with the establishment of the church on earth. The accomplishment of this mission in Matt. 28 has been interrupted, but there is the promise to be with those who went forth in it to the end of the age {"Until the completion of the age"}. Nor do I doubt it will be so. This testimony will go forth to the nations before the Lord comes. "The brethren" {cp. Matt 25:40} will carry it to warn the Gentiles. The commission was given then, but we find no accomplishment of it. It connects the testimony with the Jewish remnant owned by a risen Lord of all, with the earth and His earthly directions, and for the present it has in fact given place to a heavenly commission, and the church of God. [56] ❖

❖ This mission {Matt. 28:18-20}, up to the present time, has never been accomplished. The mission to the Gentiles was formally transferred to Paul by those who were pillars among the apostles (Gal. 2), with divine authority from Jesus glorified, and by the direct mission of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:4; 26:16-18).

---

55. {As to the expression *"this age,"* we are accustomed to apply it to the church; but it is not here a question of the church, but of the introduction of the kingdom of heaven, Messiah being rejected by the Jews. What was the age in which the Lord was found with His disciples? Was it the church, or the dispensation of the church? By no means.

It was a certain age of this world, which was to end by reception of the Messiah, and the re-establishment of the law as a rule by the government of this Messiah. The people of Israel having rejected Him, this age becomes purely and simply *this present evil world (age),* from which Christ delivers us, in the course of which God has set up His kingdom, in the way we have just spoken of *(Collected Writings* 24:12).

Christianity is not the age, nor an age at all (*Collected Writings* 10:267).

The {Mosaic} age remains unclosed (*Notes and Comments* 2:126).

In the same way the end of this world (in Matt. 13 and other places) is not of this globe when it is consumed, but of this age or dispensation; a perfectly well-known phrase among the Jews who spoke of the *olam-hazeh,* this world or age, and the *olam-havo,* the age to come, the latter being the time of Messiah's reign (*Collected Writings* 10:360).

Really this is not a dispensation. The Jews had a "this world" and "a world to come," "this age" and an "age to come." Messiah was to bring in the "age to come" {i.e., the millennial age}. The age of the law went on and Messiah did come, but they would not have Him, and the whole thing stopped {i.e., stopped with the Mosaic system, but the age itself continued on}; then comes the church between that and His second coming; and this is why I said this is not strictly a dispensation, but when Messiah comes again, it will close this time, and then will be the last day of this age (*Collected Writings* 25:243, 244).

Note by the editor:

See also *Collected Writings* 13:15; 30:287; 8:14, 339; *Notes and Comment* 5:25.

Not only Covenantism, but the Scofieldian system has also gotten in the way of apprehending the fact that we are presently in the Mosaic age. The testing of man closed with the cross (though the Mosaic age rolls on),

> for they have both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:24).

It is an (unintentional) insult to Them both to say that there is further testing of man after man's rejecting what is obviously the highest of all. May God graciously give His own light on these things.}

56. *Collected Writings* 24:217, 218. See also 24:69, 72, 68-80; 25:312; 30:314-315; 18:59. {Regarding the different commissions in the Gospels see *Collected Writings* 25:311-313; *Notes and Comments* 5:170-172, 175; 4:302-303; *Synopsis* 2:368n; 3:5; *Letters* 2:48. My impression is that JND contradicts the extracts from him that is quoted above, in his paper, "The Closing Commissions in the Gospels," *Collected Writings* 32:376-378. Ed.}

It is possible the other apostles may have gone later; but the history which is given us in the word does not speak of it, unless it be in a very general and even vague verse at the end of Mark. [57] The apostles remained at Jerusalem at the time of the persecution which took place after the death of Stephen; then the gospel was carried to the nations by those scattered abroad, and later on committed to Paul. John is found in Patmos, left last of all to watch over the church in its decline. The last verses of Mark say that they went everywhere, and that the Lord wrought with them to confirm the preached word by the signs which it was granted them to perform. However it may be here in Matthew, the commission is given them. They were also to teach the baptized nations to observe all that Jesus had commanded the disciples, and He Himself would be with them to the end of the age. It is not the christian mission properly so called; this is found rather in John 20, Luke 24, and Mark 16.*

* Down to v. 6 of Mark 16 the same history as that of Matthew is found; in the last verses, that which we read at the end of Luke, and that which is found in John 20. The discourses of chs. 13 and 26 of Acts are connected, as those of Peter, with the mission mentioned in Luke. In the Gospel of Matthew it is not said they were to go and make disciples of the Jews, because the remnant is looked at as already separated from the nation, and associated with Christ. It is a kind of extension of ch. 10 of the same Gospel, where they are forbidden -- at least as to their mission at the moment then present -- to go to the Gentiles, indeed even to the Samaritans, but are told to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Here a wider mission is given them: they are to go and make disciples of the nations. This supposes that the work in the midst of the Jews is other than that of Matt. 10, and, in some respects, Matt. 24 only explains why the mission which is in question here applies exclusively to the Gentiles. The mission from heaven for the salvation of souls is naturally addressed to the Jews as to the Gentiles. This last is what we find accomplished in Acts: only the part which includes the Gentiles was transferred to Paul, as we have seen.[58] ❖

* * * * *

{The *Collected Writings* 24:68-80 contains much help on Matt. 28.}

57. {Heb. 2:3, 4 refers to the end of Mark. The epoch of these signs and wonders was closing. But the actual history given in the Word as to what was carried out, shows that it was the commissions in Mark, Luke, and John that were carried on, not that in Matt. 28).}

58. *Collected Writings* 30:315.

Appendix 1 for Matthew: The Lord's Prayer

I propose to examine the Lord's prayer as briefly as is consistent with a plain, perspicuous exposition: first, looking at it, as it is given in its most comprehensive form in the gospel of St. Matthew; next, comparing the form which St. Luke presents; and, in the third place, seeking, as far as the Lord enables me, to gather His design touching its use, whether at the time it was given, or afterwards.

I. -- The first thing I desire to point out, is the accordance of the Lord's prayer with the place it holds in the first gospel and with the object the Lord Jesus had then in view. It occurs in the Sermon on the Mount where He is addressing Jewish disciples, and leading them out of their previous thoughts and feelings and ways into the new principles of the kingdom of heaven, which he was about to introduce. That is important to remember for understanding either the meaning or the object of the prayer. It does not contemplate, as it was not addressed to, the whole human race indiscriminately; it does not express the state, wants and feelings of every person who has certain desires after God or a fear of coming wrath. Thus, when the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, realizing his sin and unworthiness, he does not venture to say, "Father," or "Our Father which art in heaven." He has no thought of taking up the profound and lofty petitions with which the Lord's prayer opens, nor has he leisure of heart to think of the full sup' plies and the, tender mercy counted on in God, which the latter portion breathes. "God be merciful to me a sinner" was the just, becoming cry from his contrite heart. Here was a man under the guidance of the Spirit of God, contrasted by our Lord Himself, not with disciples of course, but with the Pharisee who trusted in himself that he was righteous and despised others, whose prayer, if prayer it is to be called, betrayed his self-gratulation, and whose thanks were not for what God, but for what he, the Pharisee, was. The publican, on the other hand, might be dark, but at least, as far as his conscience was enlightened, he really felt and owned his condition as a sinner before God. He, who is mighty, despiseth not any, and the publican went down to his house justified rather than the other. At the same time, it is not to despise a man, if we call his attention to the actual condition of his soul, and remind him that the Lord's prayer supposes discipleship and the relationship of children with a Father. Sincerity can never change wrong into right, and ignorance, though less guilty than the conscious utterance of language which goes beyond our state and experience, is a sorry excuse before the full blaze of God's revealed light in His Word.

If asked how we are to know for whom the Lord's prayer was meant, I would answer that there are two ways of ascertaining, which, if rightly applied, lead to a right conclusion. First, we have to observe whom the Lord had in view in the prayer or the context in which it occurs; and next, we must consider the nature of the petitions, separately and as a whole, which, if duly appreciated, will be found in harmony with the true wants of those for whom the prayer was designed.

Now, it is obvious that, when the sermon on the Mount was pronounced, there was an immense crowd listening, but it was not directly addressed to them. They heard the Lord and were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes. Wherever confidence in man usurps the place of the truth, uncertainty before God is the never failing result, and hence the craving after tradition, official and successional authority, and such like props of conscious weakness. This was the case with these scribes in a very large degree. Their employment even of Scripture had no power in it, neither flowing from nor producing simple, happy-hearted confidence in God. They were a class who handed down a measure of Scriptural knowledge, crusted over with a coating of tradition which often obscured and perverted even what was true in itself. Such is the inevitable effect of traditions it always brings in foreign ingredients, which so mix themselves up with truth as to put a blind between the soul and God. The Spirit of God, on the contrary, uses the Word to detect and expel all hindrances, and thus to place the soul without disguise in the presence of God, there to learn *His* thoughts. And if what God thinks of me as a poor convicted sinner crushes me, what He reveals of His own perfect love towards me calls me from the dust, sets me firmly on my feet, and bids me fear not. It is so even now where the Holy Spirit works in any power by the vessels whom He deigns to use; how much more when Jehovah-Jesus was there! "For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him."

In that discourse, then, the Lord had His own disciples immediately before Him. For their wants as having been Jews and not yet taken from under the law, He was providing.

> And seeing the multitudes He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, *His disciples* came unto Him; and He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit {Matt. 5:3}, &c.

The disciples were a class who (excepting Judas or any other special case of the kind, if such there were), had truly received Jesus as the Messiah by the Spirit of God. They had not chosen Him, but He had chosen them that they should go and bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain. They were gathered around Him as His witnesses, and separated from the rest of the nation even now in a measure (i.e. in faith and affection to His person), soon to be so far more

fully by His death and resurrection and in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. These were the persons to whom the Lord addressed Himself in the sermon, and of whom He thought in His prayer.

Hence, while the discourse consists of an admirable exposition of the principles of the kingdom, and announces great and precious truths of God which must ever abide, the actual circumstances of the disciples were not overlooked by their gracious Master. On the contrary, the proper application and only full meaning of many parts in detail are found in their necessities and adapted to their condition. And most blessedly He did provide for them, as One who, though a divine person, was made of a woman, made under the law, and thus by experience, and not omniscience only, knew what they lacked most and where their real dangers lay.

> For though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered {Heb. 5:8}.

For Him obedience was indeed a new thing, assuredly not because He had a rebellious nature as we have, (for He was God, as well as with God, and even as born of the Virgin He was "that holy thing" {Luke 1:35}), but because from everlasting He was the Word who had spoken into being all things, all creatures, heavenly and earthly, visible and invisible. Therefore, had He to learn obedience, and learn it He did in a pathway of such suffering as none but He could know. What, then, was His first, last, and constant thought as He walked and served in perfect grace here below? It was His Father's name: as He says elsewhere, "the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father." Viewed as man it was the power of His communion, as it was the aim of His work. And it is as the One who was thus familiar with the Father, whose heart was ever overflowing with the sense of His glory, that He puts forward His own heart's feeling as the first and prominent thought for His disciples in their intercourse with God. Some of the petitions He was about to put in their mouths were only suitable for them (e.g. that about the forgiveness of their debts or sins), but He would have them begin with their Father, not with themselves.

Accordingly, viewed in its structure, the prayer naturally divides into two sections. The first portion is made up of the desires proper to righteousness in the largest and highest sense -- the atmosphere, I think I may say, in which our Lord Himself lived and moved here below. The second part is composed rather of supplications suited to those who were needy in every way, but withal the objects of grace. [59] The three first petitions form one division, and the last four the other.

The very opening title or address to God appears to me in beautiful keeping with the gospel and the then position of the disciples: "Our Father which art in heaven." It is a phrase which constantly occurs in Matthew's gospel, and there only. It is true that the authorized Bible {KJV} has it in the corresponding passage of St. Luke {Luke 11:2}; but it is known to every person of competent acquaintance with these matters that there are weighty reasons for reducing the clause there to the single word "Father." My own conviction is that the larger form which appears in the common text of Luke was borrowed from Matthew, and this probably either through the mistake of some ancient copyist who trusted to his memory, and thus introduced confusion, or through the graver fault of designedly making as exact a harmony as possible in the language of the two evangelists. It is unnatural to suppose that if an open enemy tampered with the sacred text, his corruption would gain currency in Christendom. On the other hand, no friend of revelation could possibly justify to himself the deliberate introduction of a discrepancy with another gospel. The tendency, therefore, and more particularly in the gospels, has always been, on the part of misguided, professing friends, to interpolate words or clauses from one into another, so as to give not only concurrent testimony, but as much as might be of verbal resemblance. I need hardly say that it is grievous and presumptuous thus to meddle with a word or letter of that which the Holy Ghost has inspired; that such a step, even if well meant, invariably spoils, so far, the beauty and perfection of Scripture, though of course the substantial truth remains; and that they are the truest friends of the Bible who seek to go back to the earliest and purest sources, relying on the abundant evidence which the goodness of God affords in order to arrive at a just decision.

Assuming that this difference is well founded, what does it teach us? or why, we may reverently ask, is it thus written? In Matthew, I think, the disciples are regarded according to their connection with God's ancient people Israel, accustomed therefore to look on or hope for the earth as the sphere of their exaltation as a nation. Here the Lord is gradually breaking their merely Jewish links by the revelation of a Father in heaven with whom they would have to do. It is not now "the Lord of all the earth" causing the Jordan to be not a barrier but a highway for His conquering people to pass over and take possession of the land. Neither is it "the God of heaven" conferring imperial power, in His sovereign will, on a heathen when His people had utterly, shamefully, sinned away, for a season at least, their heritage. But, again, it is no such fulness of blessing as was conveyed in our risen Lord's message to the disciples through Mary Magdalene:

> Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God {John 20:17}.

The address, in Matthew, wears to my mind an intermediate or transitional character. It supposed certain elements in the ancient oracles which Israel had, but there was an accession of light in accordance with the state of disciples, who were associated with a Messiah whom the people did not receive, and who were thus in process of weaning from their former prejudices and of training for yet higher privileges. "The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath

59. The old and common assertion, that the Lord borrowed most of His prayer from existing forms, is now confessed by competent authorities to have very slender proof. Lightfoot and others, to have a show of making out the case, have been forced as much to exalt these Rabbinical relics as to depreciate the Lord's incomparable prayer. I cannot but feel that such an hypothesis is as irreverent as it is unfounded.

He given unto the children of men." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him." These sentiments from the Psalms, or sentiments akin springing from the Lord's divine wisdom, seem to me the basis of the address, though there is (naturally, when we think who the speaker was) that degree of progress in it which exactly met and reflected the due place of the disciples at that time. The Father is regarded as in heaven, and those who look up to Him were on earth, [60] far from Him as it were, and in circumstances of weakness, want, and danger, though with hearts in a measure yearning for His glory. The Lord, in the address, would fix their first thought on the Father above, would familiarize their spirits with looking up to Him as infinitely blessed and benignant as well as most high. There was not, nor could be at that time, the sense of nearness which was afterwards their privilege: nevertheless, the Lord Jesus assumes them to be real believers from among the Jews, and while maintaining the authority of the law and enlarging its scope, leads on their souls to higher things. But there is not an allusion to redemption in the prayer, nor indeed throughout the whole of the sermon on the Mount. Those who are taught to pray are in no way regarded as worshipers once purged, having no more conscience of sins: indeed, far from having and enjoying such a place, they would scarcely, I think, have understood then what such language meant. There is no thanksgiving to the Father

> who *hath* made us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who *hath* delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son {Col. 1:13}.

All this and more could not be so said because the work of redemption was still a promise merely and not accomplished. This gives its tinge to the whole prayer; for there is no haste in the ways of God, nor would He so far slight the suffering of His Son, nor the mission of His Spirit, as to anticipate in the experience of the saints the precious results which were to follow from these two glorious facts, when once they had come to pass. God forbid that I should insinuate any thing imperfect as to the Lord's prayer or His Sermon. For any one to speak disparagingly of either would be, in my judgment, blasphemy.

The Lord takes up the disciples where they were. If He had uttered the as yet undeveloped truth which was revealed when redemption was wrought and the Holy Ghost thereon given, His language would have been unintelligible to the disciples. If any thing had exceeded what was suitable to their then state, if the standing, experience, or worship proper to accomplished redemption had been supposed, it would not have been the perfect prayer it was for them.

Take the instance of a person in prison. A petition is framed on his behalf to the sovereign. If the document were rightly drawn up, two things at least would characterize it: a full owning of the majesty offended against, and a humble, thorough acknowledgment of the prisoner's guilt. That would be the only language becoming one under such painful circumstances. He might have sure grounds to believe that the petition would find favor in his sovereign's eyes and that its prayer would be granted. This would not be by ignoring the actual circumstances of the case, but rather by a frank confession: to adopt the tone of a freeman would be false ground. Now, the condition of those under The law was, in the main, analogous to this, till redemption, when accomplished, changed all. Confidence in God that He would save, they had, and it was right; for it rested upon a believing estimate of God's character, and upon His positive promises, spite of what they knew themselves to be. He had announced over and over again, by word and oath, in type and prophecy, that He would, through the Messiah, accomplish the deliverance of all who trusted in Him. Still, they were not yet set free, however certainly they would be, because that depended upon, His faithful goodness and truth; and "God is not a man that He should lie." But as yet it was a thing desired, not possessed -- a privilege longed and prayed for, but not bestowed and enjoyed as a constant settled portion, till the death and resurrection of Christ made it to be God's righteousness so to deal with the believer.

This consideration, by the way, explains much in the Psalms, and in particular the alternations of conflict found there. Sometimes the speakers are hoping, sometimes fearing; one moment confessing themselves the sheep of God's pasture, and the next moment afraid of being consumed in His hot displeasure. All this was the experience of the saints, before the cross of Christ made it possible for the Holy Ghost to bear witness to the soul of a complete and eternal lifting away of sins. It was well and of God that they should feel their state, without presuming to run before the dealings of God; and thus it was with the disciples also. Many prophets and kings had desired to see what they saw and to hear what they heard; but redemption, with all its fruitful issues, was still a blessing in prospect only. And the Lord's prayer was the perfect expression of their desires and wants, before that mighty change came in as a fact. It is essential, I believe, to an adequate understanding of the prayer, that we should realize the position of those to whom primarily it was given; and it will always be misapplied, if we do not appreciate the new ground on which accomplished redemption sets the faithful.

It is well to observe also that the prayer is the expression of individual wants. I do not mean that the disciples may not have used it together as well as singly, but it nowhere supposes the Christians formed into one body. A prayer for the Church, therefore, as such, it is not; for it never passes beyond an aggregate of individuals, irrespective of the uniting bond of the Spirit who baptizes into one body. But this may appear more distinctly as we look briefly at its several parts.

"Hallowed be Thy name" is the great foundation of all, the first and strongest feeling of a renewed mind. Flowing from the sense of the holiness due to the Father's name and

60. How different is the measure of blessedness conveyed by the phrase in St. Matthew, from what we find in Eph. 1:3; 2:6! In these last Scriptures the Christian, even while in this world, is regarded as at home with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, seated together with Christ in heavenly places. It is an immense step forward.

obligatory on every soul that has to do with Him, as well as on His house for ever, there is also the desire of the glory in which all shall answer to the Father's heart and character -- "Thy kingdom come." It is not exactly Christ's kingdom, but the Father's. The gospel of St. Matthew, if examined with care, shows that the Father's kingdom is distinguished in Scripture from that of the Son of man. Thus, in Matt. 13:41-43, we are told that the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of *His kingdom* all scandals, and them which do iniquity . . . then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. At the end of this age the Lord will take the world as His kingdom, and must have evil purged from it, sooner or later, by His judicial power. But the Father's kingdom is another and heavenly sphere where only the righteous shine.

But it does not satisfy the heart that the Father's will should be done in heaven only. Accordingly, the third petition runs: "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." When the Father's kingdom comes, this will be the moral answer to it, if I may so say, though in a lower sphere. The Father's will, instead of being despised or resisted, is yet to be the guide and ensurer of all blessing in that which was still but a rebellious province. The disciples were to pray that it might be done on earth, where there was nothing like it yet, save in His ways who thus led their desires Godward. This closes the first division of the Lord's prayer.

Next, comes what was suited to the disciples as the objects of divine compassion, in circumstances of sorrow and trial here below. First, their bodily need is confessed, then that of the soul. "Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive [61] our debtors"; the last being put on the ground or pattern of the merciful spirit which had been so strongly inculcated on the disciples at the close of the chapter before. It was no longer to be "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," no longer evil for evil, but good only, good always. The model for their imitation was their heavenly Father, and not merely God as God; because as such He has vindicated Himself from time to time, and He shall yet deal most righteously with all that demands judgment in man. As Father in heaven, He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust, not to speak of His intimate and everlasting relations with His children, who enjoy the outflow of all His love. So here the Lord teaches His disciples, not as a question of remission as sinners, but of divine government as children, to say, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." That is to say, we have this principle of forgiving mercy to others not only enjoined on the disciples as the will of the Lord, but solemnly interwoven with their own habitual need of it when they lifted up their hearts to their. Father. The application and value of this to such as had been Jews must be manifest, because as a nation they were responsible to walk according to the law, the character of which was not mercy in case of wrong, but the infliction of just punishment on the guilty. Thus it was that Israel of old was employed to purge the land of Canaan of its defiled and defiling inhabitants. And therefore it was that they themselves, when they and their kings thoroughly apostatized from God, fell under its terrible lash.

> You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.

But now another principle was about to govern -- not earthly retributive righteousness, but heavenly grace, which has power to transform as well as forgive the guilty. The Jews who believed were to be taken gradually out of their previous standing and set in a new place as children, having to do with their Father in heaven, and responsible to reflect His character on earth.

Again, we do well to remember who they were that the Lord instructs thus to plead with their Father. They were *disciples*, who were thereby shown the continual necessity of dependance upon Him and of confession. Nevertheless, it is the Father besought to forgive the debts of His children, not a poor sinner in an agony about his iniquity and without the knowledge of Christ. Scripture provides for such an one elsewhere, but it is not the question here; and. if the Lord's prayer were applied to, or appropriated by, an. unregenerate soul, as the prescribed means of blessing for his case, a real injury would be done. Does God make the forgiveness of an unconverted man depend, in any sort or degree, upon his forgiveness of others? By no means. That were to ask a very high practical requirement from a person in the lowest possible condition; it were to impose a new law more fatal to the sinner's hopes than that of Sinai: in a word, it would ruin and deny the gospel, which in that case would be of works and no more grace. Thus, the very petition which ignorance would cite to prove that men indiscriminately were provided for here, is enough to show the utter inapplicability of the Lord's prayer to their condition. It supposes a living link with God by faith, and proves that the nature of the petitions is an additional ground for affirming that the prayer was not meant for men in their natural, unrenewed state. Those whom the Lord was instructing how to pray were persons ignorant, it is true, of redemption and of the new rights its accomplishment would usher into, but possessed of real faith in the Lord Jesus -- persons who would assuredly have gone to heaven, had they died then. They were, so far, on the same footing with the Old Testament saints; they were all alike forborne with, by virtue of a work not yet accomplished but sure; they were safe in God's mind, because He was looking on to that work. The disciples had the privilege of the Savior present with them; but the rich, blessed, perfect salvation which He was to bring in by His death and resurrection was still vague and dimly understood, if at all. In and for this condition of things the Lord's prayer was given.

Then, they were to ask their Father not to lead them into temptation, which cannot therefore mean sin here. With temptation, in the sense of lustful evil, as St. James says, God tempteth not any man, as He, of course, cannot be Himself.

61. There is very good authority, Greek and Latin, for "forgave." The aorist here, if well founded, certainly makes the sense more specific. Its spirit agrees well with Matt. 5:23, 24, of which it is the converse.

But Scripture uses the word in the same chapter and in other places, from Genesis to Revelation, for a man's trial and sifting in a greater or a less degree. Take Peter's case in the gospels. It was no sin that he should be put to the proof, whether he would in the face of shame confess his Master. The Lord had already warned him of his weakness, but the too confident apostle heeded not the word, slept when he should have been praying against the temptation, and consequently, when it came, he fell -- fell miserably, repeatedly. It was quite right, therefore, for the disciples, conscious of their own powerlessness, to ask that they might not be led into circumstances so sorely trying. Knowing their liability to fail under its pressure, they ought humbly and earnestly to deprecate such a sifting. No such prayer is or could be in the Bible as, Lead us not into sin; for this would be to impute moral evil to God. The temptation here was the putting a person thoroughly to the proof, and the consequence of it would be that, if there were unjudged evil in the heart, it would come out to his humiliation. The undetected mischief working within would be brought to the surface and the light. The Lord Jesus Himself passed through every kind of temptation, first in the wilderness, and again, at the close, in the garden of Gethsemane, when the power of darkness came upon Him to the uttermost. But *He* had nothing in Him that could be touched by Satan; as He said,

> The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me.

In us there is something that is brought out by the temptation, and then, if we do not lean very simply on the Lord, we break down in sin against Him. Therefore it is added in the next and last clause, "but deliver us from evil [or the evil one]"; because the effect of temptation ordinarily is that evil is manifested, and he who is its source and prime mover acquires advantage over the soul.

I do not enter into the doxology which concludes the prayer in the received text of St. Matthew; for while every body agrees in leaving it out of St. Luke, it is well known that its authority, even in the other gospel, is, to say the-least, doubtful. Probably, it was an accretion derived from ecclesiastical usage in the fourth century, or perhaps earlier. Chrysostom comments on the doxology without a note of distrust, but previously to him not a trace of it appears in any exposition or citation, either in the East or West. It would appear that the prayer began to be, or at least was, spoken of in the third century as "oratio legitima et ordinaria." But this seems scarcely to have been the case in the days of Justin Martyr, [62] who speaks of the ruler offering up prayer and thanksgiving *δση δύναμις αὐτῷ*; (that is, I presume, extempore). But I trust I have shown that which we started with -- the special suitability of the prayer to the class with which our Lord was thus dealing. I do not go further now, for the question of His will as regards later times will come before us before I have done. But it is well to bear in mind, that, everlastingly true as is every word which our Lord spoke, we have to take care that all be rightly divided and applied. I yield to none in reverent admiration of the most sublime and the most pregnant form of prayer ever written. The question, nevertheless, remains, not of its intrinsic value, but of its due and intended use, after redemption: and the descent of the Holy Ghost.

II -- We must now turn for a few moments to St. Luke's report of the prayer, which differs in several respects from St. Matthew's, though both I hold to be of equal, i.e., divine authority, and the points of distinction therefore to be not the slips of the evangelists, but the result of a different object in the mind of Him who inspired them. Difference there is, unquestionably, even in our common and excellent English Bible, but that difference is considerably greater if we adopt the text which flows from the combined testimony of the most ancient and best witnesses (manuscripts, versions and Fathers). It is notorious that there has always been a tendency on the part of copyists to try and assimilate the language of the various portions of Scripture as much as possible; and clearly from their nature we might expect, as we find in fact, that no part has suffered so much in this way as the synoptic gospels. These copyists seem sometimes to have assumed that, if they found the same truth or fact variously presented in Matthew and Luke, there must needs be an error; and then they sought, by marginal glosses and even by textual changes, to make the corresponding passages almost a verbal repetition of one another. This of course has entailed trouble on those of our day who desire in all cases to know the very words of the Holy Ghost; for if they, resting on the weightiest authorities, recur to a better text than the vulgar one, they are open to the charge of innovation -- at least from the ignorant or the prejudiced. Most groundless charge for they are in truth those who alone vindicate the oldest vouchers for the Word of God against comparatively modern change and corruption.

To return, however. The place or connection in which the prayer is given in the two gospels may be noticed with profit. In Matthew the Lord speaks as Jehovah-Messiah, not neutralizing the statutes of His servant Moses, but with the conscious authority of the Master. And hence; I think, it is that whether or not the questions of the disciples drew out any part of that instruction, nothing is permitted in the first gospel to break the onward, continuous flow of its sententious wisdom and lofty discourse. Hence, such notes appear as

> ye have heard that it was said to [not by] them of old time . . . but I say unto you,

not annulling the law or the prophets, but giving fresh heavenly light on some things, and opening the way for other things far higher. Hence, too, the prayer is introduced in St. Matthew in pointed contrast with Jewish, Pharisaic love of publicity and lack of pitifulness. It is one of the three examples of the righteousness (not alms) in Matt. 6:1 which was not to be done before men to be seen of them. In Luke, on the other hand, the Lord meets the condition, of man here below -- if there was any difference, of the Gentile more emphatically, than the Jew. Therefore it is that here only we have the scene of the woman of the city that was a sinner

62. Pro Christiania, Apol. II. p. 98 D, Ed. Paris, 1615.

(whom there is no good reason for identifying with Mary Magdalene or with the sister of Lazarus), the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, the preaching at Nazareth, the Samaritan leper, Zaccheus the chief publican, &c. Facts and parables like these plainly indicated the affections of God, about to burst the barriers they had been pent up in under the Jewish dispensation, and soon to overflow wherever there was need created by sin and wretchedness. At the end of ch. 10 the Lord shows us the all-importance of the Word of God -- of His own words indeed. This had tested the two sisters, Martha and Mary, both of whom we know He loved (John 11). While Martha was cumbered about much serving, and her love, most true in its way, went forth in actively providing for the Lord's outward need, Mary, unconsciously perhaps, proved her stronger faith and deeper love by sitting at His feet and drinking in His words. The thought of Martha's heart was, What a feast I must give the Messiah when I receive Him at my house Mary, on the contrary, felt that the best feast for Him, as for herself, was to receive and treasure up all she could from Him -- to see, and hear, and be with *Himself*. If we are learning thus from the Lord Jesus, we honor and please Him incomparably more than by any thing we think to confer upon Him. In the long run, too, it is the listening at His feet which best fits for the most acceptable worship and service. (Compare John 12:1-8.)

But besides the Word of God, we want another element and exercise of spiritual life. By that Word we were begotten again, and then nourished (1 Pet. 1, 2); by it we are cleansed, and instructed, kept from the paths of the destroyer, and set apart to Christ in heaven. But withal we need something more, and that is prayer. Without prayer the Word, not being received in dependance on God, may be used as new material for mere mental activity, and thus the soul may find a positive and grave snare. Really to thrive in the things of God is from hearing the Word not with the ears or mind only, but with a conscience quickened and freed by the Holy Ghost's presentation of Christ. Now, prayer is the great means by which we are practically kept in God's presence, and the Word is made welcome, profitable and sanctifying. It is the proper expression of our weakness to God and of our confidence in His love and care day by day and evermore. Instead of presuming, as men, to enter into the deep things of God or to take and pursue the path of the cross of Christ, we confess in prayer our constant need of dependance upon God. And hence it is that throughout Luke the Lord Himself, "born of a woman," is so often brought before us as One that habitually walked thus with God. (Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28, 29; 22:41-45; 23:34. See also His exhortations there to perseverance in prayer -- chs. 11:5-13, and 18:1-8 -- besides the following parable.) It was indeed His own praying which gave occasion to the request of the disciples in ch. 11.

In comparing the prayer in Luke with that in Matthew, it will be observed that, though the manner of its introduction be somewhat different, the application to the disciples is, if possible, more precise in the later gospel.

> And it came to pass, that as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, *one of His disciples* said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father.

It has been already noticed that the formula, "Our Father which art in heaven," was in all probability an interpolation from St. Matthew. A scribe, from habit of using the longer address, may have written it down by mistake in Luke's gospel, or he may have designedly assimilated the two reports of the prayer.

"Father, Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come." These two petitions are alike in both gospels. It did not matter under what circumstances the Lord spoke, or with what special aim or outlook. That the Father should be exalted in His holiness, and that the bright scene and season may come when His love and power shall establish it without dispute or effort, must always be the prime desires of a true heart, and the necessary condition of unalloyed and changeless blessing.

But it is remarkable that the next clause in the ordinary text was foisted in, probably in the same way as the address has suffered. "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth" is a petition peculiar, I believe, to St. Matthew. And I wish to state once for all that in these questions of the true text, I never give a mere conjecture, but a judgment founded on a full survey of the extant evidence, and one which is generally received by those who are best informed and most able to pronounce on matters of the kind, If the omission be allowed here, it becomes us to ask why it is that the Spirit drops that clause in Luke which He had given in Matthew? What are we taught by the omission? It is well known that, throughout Luke, God has Gentiles in view, and not Jews merely. Therefore such words of Christ and such circumstances as bear upon the uncircumcision, both in their natural outcast condition and in the character of their privileges when brought in, are recorded there with care and precision. With this agrees the very genealogy of the Savior; for He is not, as by Matthew, traced down from Abraham and David, the heads of Jewish promise and glory, but traced up beyond all such limits to the first man, the head of the whole human family -- "Adam, which was the son of God." What, then, would the poor heathen have known about the righteous expectation of Israel as regards the earth? To the latter it was an ever present desire of faith, whatever their temporary degradation through their own sin.

> For Jehovah loveth judgment and forsaketh not His saints; they are preserved for ever but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell therein for ever.

Then and thus would God's will be done on earth as in heaven. This expectation is kept up in the Sermon generally as well as the Lord's prayer in Matthew, while other and brighter hopes accompany it; but from Luke it disappears in the wisdom which ever marks the Holy Ghost. Peculiarly familiar to the Jew, it was foreign to the Gentile's proper hope even when converted: *his* outlook was to be exclusively heavenly.

Then, we have a perceptible difference in the language

of the next petition. Luke says: "Give us *day by day* our daily bread"; Matthew had, "Give us *this day*," &c. The believing Jews looked simply at the one day, it might be, before them. It was a definite request for the present exigency. How soon the trumpet of Jubilee would sound, and the true liberty and final return and everlasting possession would come, they knew not; meanwhile they say, "Give us this day our daily bread." But the Gentile believer, for whose instruction the Lord was specially providing in Luke, is characterized by a more constant spirit of dependance: -- "day by day" is the word. [63] He was never to expect rest, or establishment on the earth, as the other might. His inheritance lay elsewhere; his portion here was to be always that of a stranger. -- I think that this is strengthened by the mode of its introduction here. The prayer is much later and nearer the close than in Matthew. All hope of Messiah's reception by the Jews was manifestly at an end. Thus, in Luke 9 He had His rejection and death ever before Him, and repeatedly names it to the disciples, both before and after His transfiguration (cf. 1 Pet. 1:11). In Luke 10 the mission of the seventy follows, as a sort of final message, in which He pronounces woe on the cities which had seen His mighty works but had despised Himself. Grace is then shown as replacing law, and doing what law could not do. The prayer in Luke 11 partakes of the progressive character of the circumstances which surround it.

But that is not all. In the next petition, "Forgive us our sins," the expression is worthy of note. The only right principle for interpreting God's Word is, that God never changes without reason. It is our own ignorance if we do not see the bearing of different words used in Scripture. Thus, if in Matthew it is said "debts" and in Luke "sins," there is a slight shade of difference that ought not to pass unnoticed. What is the distinction? I believe it to be this: that "sin" expresses, in all plainness of speech, the depth of the soul's moral need. The simplest Gentile would understand the word "sin." The Jew would feel what a debt was in his responsibility to God: it supposes a known relationship in which he had been placed and had failed. To the Gentiles who had not been in such a position, the idea of "debt" was not so obvious or applicable, unless the word "sin" prepared the way for it and made it more intelligible. The word "sins" has a more evidently moral meaning, being equally true whether people were without law or under it. "Debt" is figurative rather, though perfectly understood by a Jew. The parable of the merciless servant in Matt. 18 sets forth the Lord as dealing with Jew and Gentile in a way substantially similar. The servant that owed his lord ten thousand talents is the Jew guilty of the rejection of Christ. How deeply was he involved! Forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, &c. But, moved with compassion, he forgave him the debt. Then the same servant went out and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him one hundred pence. The Gentile was certainly indebted to him, but now found no mercy (1 Thess. 2:14) for a debt small indeed compared with that which had been forgiven the Jews; and therefore wrath is come upon the Jews to the uttermost. (Compare also Matt. 5:25, 26, and Luke 12:58, both of which refer to Israel's position in our Lord's time.) There is another expression which confirms this, the Gentile dispensation being one of full grace; "*for* we ourselves also [poor as we are] forgive *every one* that is indebted to us." It is a stronger, broader word than the expression in Matthew.

The conclusion in Luke appears to be, "Lead us not into temptation," what follows ("but deliver us from evil") being probably copied into it from the first gospel. No motive can be assigned for leaving out this clause, like the former one, if it had been originally inserted; whereas it is natural that men, observing that they undoubtedly are found in Matthew, should hastily conclude that they ought to be in Luke also. Nor is any thing lost thereby, but the contrary. For the omissions in an inspired book, as well as what is declared there, are meant to arrest attention and to instruct.

The last clause is most appropriate in Matthew, where it has special reference, I think, to the power of Satan, which, beside what is ordinary, is directed against Israel as God's great earthly witness, and the severity of which is yet to fall upon them in the last days (cf. Zech. 3). Luke, as usual, brings out general, moral principles, and hence retains the petition lest we enter temptation.

III. -- Having stated these points of distinction, I come now to a question of great practical importance: What was the Lord's intention in regard to the use of this prayer? The answer is involved in my first statement. I showed that, while intended for disciples, it exactly suited the condition they were in before Christ had finished His work. It therefore follows that when redemption became a fact and a known basis of relationship with God, the prayer that suits those who stand in the enjoyment of its full results would be formed according to their new circumstances. In other words, referring to my former illustration, the man's prayer when out of prison would not be the same as his prayer in prison, unless `he were under a delusion. If he had afterwards to do with the sovereign, he would owe not a petition for deliverance, but a memorial of gratitude and a lifelong service of devoted loyalty.

But besides that, we shall find that the accomplishment of redemption was the foundation of another and a most exalted privilege -- the gift of the Holy Ghost, in a way of which the Old Testament saints had no experience. It must be remembered that there are certain operations of the Holy Ghost, common to all saints in every age, such as regeneration, conviction of sin, holy obedience produced in the heart and ways. These ways of the Spirit are not peculiar to any time: they were always true of every saint of God from the first; true of Noah, Abraham, David, &c. They were all regenerate men, believing men. But while this is matter of common knowledge, there is another thing equally true, but not so generally acknowledged. When the Lord Jesus Christ was about to finish His work on earth and ascend on high, He

63. The word for "give," though the same verb, has a slightly different form and force in the two gospels. In Matthew it implies a bare transient act; in Luke, the continuous habit, which naturally accompanies the phrase "day by day."

promised His disciples that the Holy Ghost should be given in a way never before known. [64] The disciples were certainly believers then, and possessors of eternal life. Yet we find that when the Lord was about to depart, He says: "It is expedient for you that I go away." What could make it expedient that they should lose their best Friend and Savior? Why was it not rather preferable for them in every way that He should stay with them? The word is plain:

> It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but, if I depart, I will send Him unto you.

Does not that imply that there was to be some further and immense blessing imparted to them that they had not enjoyed before? Clearly so. But more than that. There are persons that confine the gift of the Holy Ghost to tongues, miracles, ministerial gifts, &c. But "the Comforter" is not to be confounded with the various powers that the Comforter produces. It is the Holy Ghost in person whom the Father would send in Christ's name. This was the grand truth that the Lord was teaching His disciples. All saints had had the Holy Ghost operating upon them from the beginning, but besides and beyond that, after the departure of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost Himself was to come down, in a personal, more direct, and immediate way, to be in the disciples and with them unto the end. The Son of God had come down in a special way and become incarnate. The Holy Ghost would come after Christ had accomplished redemption and gone up to the Father. [65] Therefore it is said in Acts 2: "Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." The powers that were conferred on the day of Pentecost drew attention to this blessed, divine person, whose presence these powers indicated: they were valuable chiefly as the outward evidence and effect of that unprecedented gift, the promise of the Father.

This, then, is the great truth that lies at the bottom of the question as to the Lord's prayer. It was intended for those who were true believers, but for whom redemption was yet a prospective thing, and to whom the Holy Ghost had not been given in this fuller and unexampled way. In this very context in Luke the Lord says, a little afterwards:

> If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? {Luke 11:13}.

That was their condition. They were already children, and yet were to ask the Father to give them the Holy Spirit. It could not mean the Holy Spirit to make them believers: such they were already -- "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." But there was still the Holy Ghost to be given personally, to bring them into all the full consequences of the redemption of Christ, when that should be effected, and to form them into union with Him as the glorified man at the right hand of God, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. These privileges, which were neither known nor possible to be enjoyed by the saints before the cross, are, nevertheless, the essentials of Christianity, properly so called. Therefore, I do not hesitate to say, that while the Lord's prayer was the perfect expression of the disciples' requests to God in their then circumstances and actual condition, for that reason it was not intended to be the expression even of the same men when their whole standing and condition was changed: when the work was done and all trespasses were forgiven; when all that believed, whether Jew or Gentile, were by one Spirit baptized into one body, and were all made to drink into one Spirit.

The change, indeed, was so momentous and complete, that our Lord Himself prepares the disciples for it solemnly, in John 16, when, after having fully brought out the mission and presence of the Comforter in and with them, He says:

> in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full . . . {John 16:25}.
>
> At that day ye shall ask in my name, &c. {John 16:26}.

What did our Lord mean when He said, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing?" That was what they had been doing while He was upon earth; they always went to Him as their blessed and gracious Savior, and were quite right in doing so. Yet He adds: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, &c. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." What! asked nothing in His name? Had they not been using the Lord's prayer for some years? Certainly they had; and yet they had asked nothing in Christ's name. [66] Now, He says to them, you are going to be put upon a new ground. No longer to be merely coming to me and asking me, but asking the Father and asking in Christ's name. What is meant by asking in Christ's name? Is it merely saying "for Christ's sake" at the end of a prayer? No. The meaning is no less than this: that, by virtue of redemption

64. It was from not distinguishing these two things that, if I remember rightly, Professor Olshausen and the late Archdeacon Hare fell into no slight error as to the Old Testament saints; for they actually taught that regeneration is the peculiar blessing of this dispensation! Dean Alford is also confused on the subject. The new birth, though of the Spirit, is entirely distinct from His baptism {as well as sealing}.

65. "*The gift of the Spirit at and since the day of Pentecost, was and is something* TOTALLY DISTINCT *from anything before that time; a new and loftier dispensation*." -- Alford's Greek Test. I., p. 783; cf. p. 706. (Second Edition.) The emphasis is the author's.

66. The present Dean of Canterbury has had the intelligence to perceive and the candor to own, in his comment on this passage, that "*it was impossible, up to the time of the glorification of Jesus*, (*ἕως ἄρτι* proleptical, as before,) *to pray to the Father in His name.* It is a fulness of joy peculiar to the dispensation of the Spirit, to be able so to do, Eph. 2:18." The reader will hence infer how he is to estimate Wheatly's assertion that the Lord's prayer "is so framed, that it is impossible to offer it up, unless it be in the name of Christ." (Rat. Illust. of the Book of Common Prayer, p. 6.) It is singular, however, that Mr. Alford was guilty of the contradictory remark on the preceding verse (John 16:23), that "that day," in its full meaning, cannot import this present dispensation of the Spirit, but the great completion of the Christian's hope when he shall be with his Lord. His own note on 24, already quoted, sufficiently refutes him, not to speak of verse 26 and his note thereon. -- (Greek Test. pp. 788, 9.)

when accomplished, and by the Holy Ghost uniting them to the Lord Jesus in heaven, they would be put in the same position as Himself. Therefore it is said in 1 John 4: "As He is, so are we in this world." And so St. Paul, in 1 Cor. 6, "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." This may illustrate the meaning of asking in the name of Christ, or rather of the ground on which it rests. It is to ask the Father in the consciousness of all their sins being put away, and of their being actually brought nigh to God, and in the full enjoyment of His favor, without a question or cloud between God and their souls: going to God and making supplication to Him as standing in the possession of the full blessing to which Christ above, and the Holy Ghost below, should entitle them in that day: this is asking the Father in Christ's name. The Lord had given the prayer already, and the disciples had been using it. Yet He intimates to them here that there was a new position into which they had to be put, and that the old ground would no longer do. Their circumstances being changed by the gift of the Holy Ghost, prayer must now take its form from the new standing, the full grace into which they were brought. What is the effect of believers now putting themselves back into the position of disciples before redemption was accomplished? They never can know what it is to have real settled peace; they cannot take the place of worshipers once purged, having no more conscience of sins. In a word, they forfeit, as far as enjoyment goes, the vast and entire sum of blessing which Christ's death and resurrection have procured.

Still more manifest is the mistake, for a company of believers, or of believers and unbelievers mixed together, to take up the Lord's prayer, as the expression of their common need and worship. There is no such thought in the passage as a body thus using it. Indeed, just before, the Lord had told them, when each prayed, to enter his closet, and then follows this prayer as the suited language of an individual's wants. But whether it be a company or an individual now expressing wants to God in the Lord's prayer, I have only to repeat, You are putting yourselves back into the state of the disciples under law and before the Lord had done His work of reconciliation, and thus you are doing, unconsciously, great disrespect to the will of God the Father, to the work of Christ, and to the present witness of the Holy Ghost. (Cp. Heb. 10.) If a soul, converted indeed, but still under bondage of spirit and ignorant of the Lord's ways and of the full extent of His redemption, were to kneel down and pour out his heart in the words of the Lord's prayer, I could, for my own part, quite sympathize with the feeling; for I believe that such a condition of heart and conscience as nearly as possible approaches that of the disciples whom the Lord actually had before Him. Still, under the gospel of God's grace, the state I have described is altogether anomalous. It is themselves who go back -- not God who puts them -- as it were, before redemption. Though they believe in Christ, they are not quite sure that they are justified from all things, or whether they stand in the full favor of God or not. They certainly do adopt and use a prayer given to disciples who *could not* know what every Christian since the cross ought to have his heart filled with, and what his prayers should assume and more or less express to God. So that, without questioning the final security of such believers in Christ, I dare not withhold my conviction that they do not see their most precious privileges, and thus, without intending it, are guilty of real dishonor to the Lord's sufferings and glory.

The fact is, then, that saints on earth are contemplated and provided for in the prayer before Christ died and rose, and before the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, the witness of perfect acceptance in the Beloved. True honoring of Christ is to apply His words as He intended. If our souls have entered into this, that we are brought nigh to God; that our sins are all forgiven; that we have got the Holy Ghost sealing us, and uniting us to Christ in heaven; we are on altogether new ground, and our prayers should savor of it. This would be to ask the Father in the name of the Son.

It will be said, How was it that the Lord gave the prayer in His Word, if it was not intended for the permanent use of all His people? I answer that the Lord said much which did not and could not apply to all. Look, for example, at Matt. 10. While there are many principles there which abide for our instruction, who will deny that the mission of the twelve was Jewish? Supposing a person were to quote vv. 5 and 6, and to say, "These are the Lord's own words: we are not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor to enter any city of the Samaritans, but rather to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," the absurdity would be manifest. We ourselves, poor Gentiles and yet saved, are proof enough that such an application of our Savior's words would be false. It would set a few words here against the great mass of the New Testament, which supposes special mercy to those very Gentiles. As the Lord was then sending out the disciples on a special errand, so He had previously provided for their then state in the prayer. The death of Christ, in my judgment, necessarily interrupted the prohibition of testimony to the Gentiles, deepened and extended the ground of prayer, and laid the foundation for the introduction of another order of things. Therefore, after His resurrection, the Lord, at the close of the same gospel, charges them to go and make disciples of all the Gentiles; as in the Gospel of John He, anticipating His ascension, tells them that at that day they were to ask the Father in His name. Hitherto they had not done so.

Much, therefore, as I desire to sympathize with those who continue to use the Lord's prayer now, or at least to feel for their difficulties, I must say that we ought to understand His word and will, besides having upright intentions. And what intelligence can there be if it is not seen that the redemption of Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost have wrought a total revolution as to conscience, communion, worship, and walk; have brought us out of bondage into liberty, and consequently put our prayers on a different footing from what would have been right and comely before our deliverance?

Hence, in the Acts of the Apostles, not a trace appears of such an use of the Lord's prayer as has become the traditional practice of Christendom. And when you read the various prayers which the Holy Ghost inspired in the different

epistles, such as those in Romans, Ephesians, &c., everywhere the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ form the great substance and basis. The petitions were founded thenceforth upon these great and glorious facts, on which rest alike our faith and hope; they were not made and were inapplicable before.

Evidently this is a question of no small importance for the child of God who desires to know his full standing in Christ since the Holy Ghost has been given. We all believe that the Lord's prayer was divinely suited to the actual state of the disciples. But for that reason it could not fully express their subsequent relations nor the outgoing of affection proper to them. Those who appreciate the extent of the change can profit by every clause of the prayer, even if they do not repeat it literally. But to ignore the results of redemption is not to the honor of Christ, while it is a slight upon the presence of the Spirit, and voluntary poverty in the midst of the riches of grace which are now lavished upon us. The humble and obedient heart will seek to know and do the Lord's will in this, as in all else.

The last verse but one of Matt. 6 may be helpful to some, as an instance of the modifying effects of redemption. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," {Matt. 6:33} says the Lord to the disciples in the same chapter which contains the prayer. Does that adequately describe the condition of a Christian man now? Certainly not; because *he is now made* the righteousness of God in Christ. When the address was given by the Lord, the righteousness of God was a thing still to be sought: as yet none could be said to be made it. But since then

> He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

There (2 Cor. 5:21) we are not said to be in quest of it; we are made God's righteousness in Him. Planted in Christ, a new and divine righteousness is ours. It is our present portion, but none could say so before redemption. They were told to look for that righteousness and to ask for the Holy Ghost previously. But when they received both, never will you find the saints still seeking and asking for them, as if they had them not. It would have been to overlook their best blessings. Again, in Matt. 7:7, it is written: "Ask, and it shall be given you," &c. Here there is not, and could not be such a thing as asking in the name of Christ. It was precious and most surely not in vain, even then; but what an accession of blessing was there, when Christ, in view of their being set in this world in and as Himself before the Father by virtue of His all-sufficing work, could add "*in my name*!" "Hitherto" (I must repeat) "have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

May we too receive things as the Lord puts them in His Word. May we rise above our natural thoughts and be thoroughly rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith as we have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

{Short Appendix omitted. This paper is taken from a pamphlet; also found in *The Bible Treasury* 16:3, etc.}

Appendix 2 for Matthew: The Lord's Prophecy on Olivet in Matthew 24, 25 [67]

In this discourse the Lord unfolds, first, the future of the Jewish disciples; secondly, that of the Christian profession; and thirdly, that of all the nations tested by the gospel of the Kingdom before the end comes, and He Himself reigns. Such are the simple divisions of the two chapters; and so it was or will be in fact. The discourse grew in His wisdom out of their directing His attention to the splendor of the buildings, from which their hearts were not yet weaned. They believed that Jesus was the Christ; they were born of God; but they had as yet their hearts associated with Israel's hopes, yea, even till the day that He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:6-11), though theirs was no small advance when He rose from the dead.

The Lord therefore begins with His disciples as they then were, who fittingly also represent those who are to succeed in the latter day, when the work of gathering out the Christian' company for heavenly glory is complete, and God begins to prepare His people on earth for the reign of the returning Son of man. It is also the order of fact. No other division of the subject matter could be so satisfactory. In this connection were the disciples viewed not only generally throughout the Gospel, but evidently when He sent forth the twelve in Matt. 10:

> Depart not into a way of Gentiles, and into a city of Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather unto the lost sheep of Israel's house. And as ye go preach, saying, The kingdom of the heavens hath drawn nigh.

That this was superseded by the Christian testimony, as we shall see still more markedly in the discourse on Olivet, is true; but it is plain from v. 23 that this Jewish mission will go forth again before the end:

> for verily I say to you, Ye shall not have finished the cities of Israel until the Son of man be come.

Christianity is a parenthesis.

Again, in the chapter (23) immediately preceding, the Lord says to the crowds and to His disciples,

> The scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat: all things therefore whatever they tell you, do and keep; but do not after their works, for they say and do not.

The disciples clearly are here viewed, not as Christians, but as Jews; and this is confirmed by the pointed language of v. 34 to the end of the chapter. For sad as the retribution must be, a change should come to the people before His return.

> Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall in no wise see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed be he that cometh in Jehovah's name.

Thus the repentance of a remnant will pave the way for His return; some suffering to death for His name, others preserved to welcome the Son of Man when He comes. Of both we hear much in the Psalms and the Prophets, as well as in the Revelation.

The first part of the discourse with its various sections suitably follows in Matt. 24:1-44.

> And Jesus went out, and was going forth from the temple, and his disciples came to [him] to show him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said to them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say to you, Not a stone shall in anywise be left here on a stone, which shall not be thrown down (Matt. 24:1, 2).

The rejected Messiah pronounces sentence: most solemn to hear for believing Jews who justly regarded the temple as the great external and public witness of the one true God and His worship on earth. It had been destroyed before, after the reigning son of David apostatized and made it the seat of Gentile idols. But had not there been a gracious return (not of Israel, it is true, but) of a Jewish remnant from Babylon to rebuild city and temple and to await Messiah? Alas! now, He whom they believed to be the anointed Son of David doomed it to another demolition which should not linger, when not the first but the last Gentile world-power should execute it; not because of idols, but because the Jews were first to refuse and then by Gentiles crucify their own Jehovah-Messiah: the two impeachments which Isaiah so long ago had predicted against the chosen people (Isa. 40-47. and 49-57).

> And as he was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be? and what [is] the sign of thy coming, and of the completion of the age? And Jesus answering said to them, See that no one mislead you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and they shall mislead

67. {This paper is taken from *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 4. W. Kelly's paper, "The Christian Calling and Hope, as Distinguished from the Portions of the Jew and of the Gentile, in the Great Prophecy of the Lord Jesus, Matthew 24, 25," *The Bible Treasury*, NS 10, is similar and is omitted.}

> many. And ye shall be about to hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled; for they must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in places. But all these [are the] beginning of travails. Then shall they give you up to tribulation and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated by all the nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be stumbled, and give up one another, and hate one another: and many false prophets shall arise, and shall mislead many. And because lawlessness shall be multiplied the love of the many shall grow cool. But he that endured to [the] end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable [earth] for a witness to all the nations, and then shall the end come (Matt. 24:3-14).

From Mark 13:3 we learn that Peter, James, John, and Andrew were those who thus enquired, When shall these things be? i.e. the temple's destruction; and what the sign of His coming and of the consummation of the age? In the Gospel of Luke we find the first of these questions fully answered, and the overthrow of the city involving that of the temple, and Jerusalem trodden down by Gentiles till their times be fulfilled, running on still since the sack of Titus {in AD 70}, and very distinctly severed from the Son of Man's coming when the redemption of the godly Jews draws nigh. Here the answer as to the impending ruin, already given in the parable of the marriage feast (Matt. 22:7) is passed by; and the Lord passes on to the second question, which rightly enough brings together the sign of His coming and of the completion of the age.

It is important to note the inexcusable error, in both the A. V. {KJV} and the Revision {of 1881}, of confounding the end of "the age" with that of "the world." There is not a shadow of ground for it; for the coming age of a thousand years and more is after the age that still is, and before the eternal scene. Even disciples, as yet preoccupied with Jewish hopes and prejudices, and wholly unintelligent of the new and large and heavenly associations of Christianity, knew better. They did not say *τοῦ κόσμον* ("of the world") but *τοῦ αἰῶνος* ("of the age"); and the Lord in Matt. 13:38, 40 had amply guarded against such a confusion. The field or sowing place was "the world"; the judgment on the darnel and the display of the wheat should be at the close of "the age." The new age will be characterized by the King reigning in righteousness, when the Father's kingdom is come on high, and the Son of Man's here below when His will is to be done on earth as in heaven.

The Lord gives first a general sketch of the ruin about to ensue. Moral amelioration, truth prevalent, peace for mankind, as yet were misleading dreams against which they should be on their guard. The rejection of Himself would open the door to many false claimants to lead astray many. Wars and their rumors should be heard. Only when He takes His great power and reigns could it be otherwise, as Isaiah predicts. His disciples were not to be disturbed any more than deceived. Such evil things must he, as the King was rejected; and the end is not yet. For instead of learning war no more as when He comes in His kingdom, nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; nor this only but providential inflictions such as famines and pestilences and earthquakes in places. Yet all these are a beginning of birth throes. At this time should His disciples be objects of persecution, betrayed, and even killed by all the Gentiles because of His name. Worse still, stumbling should befall many; and mutual treachery and hatred among themselves. Many false prophets should rise and mislead many; and because of the lawlessness that should abound the love of the many would wax cold. But he that endured to the end should be saved.

The Lord in these verses is contemplating souls with Jewish expectations, and tried by Jewish opposition and unbelief with the hatred of all the nations; but the one that endured is specially assured. The Deliverer will come in due time; but not a word about the church, nor yet the gospel in its depth. Yet

> this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable earth for a testimony to all the nations, and then shall come the end {Matt. 24:14}.

It is a testimony and not without fruit everywhere, without a word of effect farther. The change for dead and for living, for heaven and for earth, is reserved for Him Who is worthy, at His coming -- the rejected Christ.

Now the remarkable and evident fact is that the Lord has here before Him Jewish disciples in early days with their counterpart before the end, but without reference to the Christian light and privilege which would come in. And we have plain enough proof in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle of James, that in Jerusalem there was pertinacity in this respect that has often struck Christian readers as strange, not only after the great Pentecost was fulfilled, but to the eve of the subversion of the city and sanctuary. The Epistle to the Hebrews a little before gave God's final warning and proof, that for the Christian the Jewish system was now null and void. In this way one can apprehend how the Lord provides instruction for Jewish disciples before the end is come. Still thus far all is general; but from ver. 15 we are given much that is precise, He Himself referring to the last chapter of Daniel.

> When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation that was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in [the] holy place (let the reader understand), then let those in Judea flee unto the mountains; let not him that is upon the house come down to take the things out of the house; and let not him that is in the field return back to take his cloak. But woe to those with child and to them that suckle in those days But pray that your flight be not in winter nor sabbath. For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from world's beginning until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been cut short, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be cut short. Then if any one say to you, Behold, here [is] the Christ, or there, believe [him] not; for there

> shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall give great signs. and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you before. If therefore they say to you, Behold, [he is] in the desert, go not forth; Behold [he is] in the inner chambers, believe not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east and appeareth unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Wherever the carcase is, there will be gathered the eagles. But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land mourn, and they shall. see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from [one] end of heavens to the other (Matt. 24:15-31).

Here we learn the awful mark of Jewish wickedness in guilty and fatal alliance with the Gentiles, as Daniel warned. It needs the more attention; for this too had been done by the order of Antiochus Epiphanes long before Messiah's first advent. An idol was then set up in the holy place which brought desolation on all who acted or submitted, as it also drew out the uncompromising opposition of the Maccabees. This was predicted fully and plainly in Dan. 11:31, as the pious heroism that rejected the abomination follows. For this reason it is the more distinguishable from the future of like and even more portentous apostasy. For all has been accomplished up to v. 35,where a blank is without doubt implied leading to the "time of the end," which we have here also in the Gospel. Then "the king" of the last time appears, not "of the north" as Antiochus Epiphanes had been in his day, still less "of the south," but demonstrably distinct from both. For at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him; and the king of the north shall come against him (Dan. 11:40). He is thus the object of hostility to both, and has for his sphere "the goodly land" between those two powers of the future on either side of him.

But he is also more widely the great religious enemy of Jehovah and His Christ; for reigning over the land of Israel, he will set himself forth as God in the temple of God. For this is the man of sin whom the apostle portrays in 2 Thess. 2, citing or applying Daniel's words. And to this future abomination of desolation the Lord refers in Dan. 12:11, with which is connected a date of 1290 days, and a supplement of 45 more, before the blessed time comes which the then faith of Israel awaits {Dan. 12:11}. Then the prophet himself shall rest and stand in his lot; and better still the Son of Man reign over not Israel only but all peoples, nations, and tongues: His dominion an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

This public act of apostasy the Lord makes the signal for immediate flight. That some ancients and moderns have interpreted it of Cestius Gallus or of Titus is familiarly known; but either is really out of the question. For neither the one nor the other set up an idol in the holy place; and as the one gave ample time to flee without the precipitancy here enjoined, so the other afforded none. For the city was surrounded and sacked; and the victor (far from setting up an idol) sought in vain to spare the temple from the flames of utter ruin. The error arose from not seeing that the divine design was to present us with the Roman capture of Jerusalem and its results in Luke 21:20-24. But here the Lord passes these over in the corresponding place of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, and dwells only on the unequaled wickedness and tribulation of the future days, expressly said to be followed immediately by His own coming in clouds with great power and glory, closing man's evil age and opening the long-desired day of Jehovah. Luke omits that awful crisis.

As the sign for flight is unmistakable, so are those disciples contemplated by the Lord

> then let those in Judea flee to the mountains.

This in our future could not be for Christians, who, as we know from other scriptures, had been ere that translated to heaven. But God, on their disappearance, works in souls by His word and Spirit, to have an earthly people also, but first and especially among the Jews, the mass of whom are then deceived by the Antichrist. The godly Jewish remnant are thus therefore in question; and the Lord here points out that their danger is so immediate that there is no space to come down from the house-top for going into the house and taking their property out: they must flee at once. If one is in the field on the other hand, let him not turn back even to secure his cloak. It touched the Lord to think of women at such a crisis impeded personally or by their babes. And He urges prayer that the flight might not be in the rigor of winter or to the dishonor of Sabbath. Can any intelligent Christian fail to see how godly Jews are here in view? From "the holy place" in Matt. 24:15 to "sabbath" in v. 20, all point to disciples in that form of relationship, at that future epoch, and in that limited area.

So is the tribulation that comes next (Matt. 24:21, 22). "In the world ye have tribulation" applies to the Christian in principle: but no specific one is ever held out for him; he should expect it always. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But the tribulation beyond parallel even for Israel is during the last three-and-a-half years from the setting up of the abomination of desolation in the sanctuary. It is a judicial dealing of God through their enemies because of their audacious apostasy, and has no point of contact with the Christian, save that merely nominal Christians' fully share it. The Gentiles as such play their part in it; so we read in Rev. 7:14 of "the great tribulation"; out of which come a crowd of faithful ales who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For the Jews and the Gentiles in the latter day will be thus visited in their respective measures, when the Christians are no longer here but in heaven with Christ. But those days are cut short for the elect's sake: otherwise no flesh should be saved: for here the Lord speaks of Jewish disciples preserved on earth

for His kingdom, not of Christians that endure suffering, and reign with Him when changed at His coming, which is not even supposed in this question.

Not less clear are the intimations in Matt. 24:23-26. They suppose Jewish dangers and deceits of the most trying kind, but not at all such as Christians are exposed to. For we know that when the Lord Jesus comes for us, we shall be changed, dead or living, and be caught up to meet Him in the air. This is so definitely revealed in the very first Epistle written to correct the mistake in the assembly of Thessalonians, just gathered unto the Lord's name, that it is hard to conceive a Christian that is not now apprised of it. Hence were any to tell him that the Christ was here or there, in Rome or in London, he would reject it, and treat the alleged as a false Christ, and the herald as a false prophet; nor would great signs and prodigies weigh in support of so glaring a contradiction of the word of the Lord. But Jewish believers who have no such a promise did and will need the Lord's fore-warning to keep them from the snare. Whether therefore they say, He is in the desert or in the inner chambers, they were to believe neither.

> For as the lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man {Matt. 24:27}.

Not so does the apostle John put His coming to receive us to Himself, but as the Bridegroom for the bride. But the lightning flash appositely describes His judicial presence for the Jewish disciples beset with Jewish and Gentile enemies animated with Satanic rage and hatred. And this is fully confirmed by the figure attached:

> wherever the carcase is, there shall be gathered the eagles {Matt. 24:28},

the swift instruments of divine vengeance on the dead prey which ought to have been a living witness for God. What a contrast with His coming and our gathering together unto Him! the blessed motive to deliver, the deceived Thessalonians from being troubled by the false assertion that His day was there (as in 2 Thess. 2:1, 2).

Then the Lord states that "immediately after the tribulation of those days" there should be a total subversion of governmental order above, the sun, the moon, the stars, "and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken," signs physically of the great change in progress for the earth.

> And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in the heavens {Matt. 24:30}.

His appearing there on high is the sign of His coming to set up His kingdom and judge the quick. "And then shall all the tribes of the land" (for the context seems to favor this rendering, rather than "of the earth:" the word means either) lament: a result never expressed with His coming to translate us.

> For they see Him coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

But He acts on and by more than men. He has His angels; and these

> He shall send with a great sound of trumpet; and they shall gather His elect {matt. 24:31},

meaning here those of Israel as well as of Judah who are written in the book, "from one end of the heavens to the other." We may compare with the many references in the Psalms and the Prophets, Isaiah especially.

To interpret scripture we need a power and wisdom above our own. We cannot understand by forcing the lock: the key is wanted, and grace gives it in Christ as taught by the word and Spirit of God. If you have Christ by faith, you have already the key. In faith apply Him to the Bible, and the Holy Spirit enables you to understand it. It is not a question of a superior mind or of great learning; for many learned men have been most foolish in their mistakes. The simple saint who knows not beyond the mother-tongue may understand the Bible, if he with true simplicity submits himself to the Lord and has confidence in His love. This is produced by the Spirit of God: this, and only this, makes men humble, giving withal confidence in God and in His word, by taking away objects which darken, misdirect, or overpower his own mind.

Take the advice of a friend; read the scriptures carefully but believingly, and you will understand what is infinitely better than anything found in the various schemes of man. It is just the same as regards the interpretation of prophecy as in doctrine. No man should convince a Christian that one part of the word of God is sealed up and the other open. Once on a time it was so. When Daniel of old received those very communications to which the Lord directs the reader, he was told to seal up the book; when John was called to have the same communications and yet greater ones, he was told not to seal up the book. Perhaps you have seen the difference, and the reason of it. The principle lay here: Jewish saints could not enter into the true and full meaning of the future till Christ came, at least until the end comes. For then indeed, when the last days of this age are come, the godly remnant will understand. The wicked shall not understand. You cannot separate moral condition from real intelligence of God's word. But the Christian already has, not Christ only, but the Spirit in virtue of redemption; and hence he is called and qualified to search all things, yea the deep things of God. They are now revealed fully and finally.

When the grace of God gives faith and the desire to do the will of God, then souls become able to understand both doctrine and prophecy. They learn that all the revealed mind of God centers in Christ, not in the first man. When you are not bent on finding in prophecy, England or America, the cholera, the potato disease, or your own time; when you are delivered by grace from all such prepossession, then with Him as the object of the soul you have a fit moral condition; because such absorbing ideas of men no longer govern and blind you. Hence the only way to understand any part of the Bible is just by grace to give up our own will and desires, for Christ; then we can face anything. We are no longer afraid of what God has to reveal; nor do we try to read anything of our own into the Bible, being then content to gather God's meaning from it. May this be truly the temper and endeavor of our souls now.

Has it not been clearly shown that thus far the Lord Jesus speaks of disciples connected with the temple, and Judea, and Jerusalem, but not of Christians? Take these further proofs of it. He says,

> And pray that your flight be not in. the winter nor on a sabbath day {Matt. 24:20}.

The Lord's day is our day, the first day of the week. The Jew rightly and properly keeps Jehovah's sabbaths. As to this, there are languages in Europe more correct than what we hear more commonly spoken around us. The Pope's tongue, the Italian, keeps up the right distinction; it always speaks of Saturday as the sabbath day, and Sunday as the Lord's day. How curious that it should be so, where such gross darkness reigns on almost everything else

In our own land and for a long time has been a great deal of confusion as to the sabbath and the Lord's day. Let none be offended at the remark; for its truth is certain and of importance. The Lord's day differs from the sabbath, not by a lower but by a higher degree of sanctity, not by leaving Christians free to do their own will on that day, but by calling them to do the Lord's will always in a complete separation to His glory, the holy services of divine praise in works of faith and in labors of love. In short, the Lord's day differs essentially from the sabbath day in that it is the day of grace, not of law, and the day of new creation, not of the old. The consequence of seeing this will be very important differences indeed in heart and practice.

Suppose a Christian had the strength to walk 20 miles on the Lord's day, and to preach the gospel six or seven times, would he be guilty of transgressing Gad's will? It is to be hoped that not a single person perhaps in this place would venture to think so; yet if really under the sabbath law, what can absolve from the obligations of that day? All under the law are bound within defined limits. Are Jews free to use the sabbath in indefinite labor even for what you know to be the active purposes of goodness? We must obey in our relationship.

Granted that the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath; but are the Jewish. disciples also lords of the sabbath? You cannot do freely what you count ever so good: Jews are under stringent regulations as to that day. If the sabbath were your day, you are required to keep it as such. As you, a Christian, have to do with the Lord's day, seek to understand its meaning, and be true to it. Without question the Lord's day is a day of consecration to the worship and to the work of the Lord: It is not the last day of a laborious week, a day of rest that you share with your ox or your ass. It is a day that is devoted to the Lord Jesus, especially to communion with His own in the world. Nor is there sin in the most strenuous labor for souls then; on the contrary such labor in the Lord is good and blessed wherever it is found, if He guide in it, (and we need this).

But the Jewish disciples contemplated here are told to pray that the time for their precipitate flight should not be in the winter nor, on a sabbath-day; for the one would seriously impede from its inclemency, and on the other they could not go farther than a sabbath-day's journey. But how could this affect us as Christians? Even if once Jews, we are no longer under such restrictions. The Lord is speaking not of Christians but of future Jewish disciples, subject to the law and its ritual, and animated by Jewish hopes.

Further, it is said,

> For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not even from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would be saved {Matt. 24:21}.

All this is plain enough. It is not a question of heavenly things but of His Kingdom. They sought to live here and be the subjects of the blessed reign and glory when the Lord comes. It is glory on earth, not in heaven. "But for the elect's sake those days should be shortened."

> Then, if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is the Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as if possible to mislead even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. Therefore, if they say to you, Behold, [he is] in the desert, go not forth: Behold, [he is] in the inner chambers, believe [it] not {Matt. 24:23-26}.

It is clear and certain that the elect here are Jewish. Improbable for a Christian to be deceived by such rumors for an instant. But it is the fact that the Lord Jesus supposes considerable danger for such disciples as are here. In fact, being Jewish (not Christian), they might be deceived by the cry that He was here or there on earth; whereas no Christian could be in danger, who awaits the Son of God from heaven. Yet the Jewish disciples were exposed to it. For looking as they were for the Lords coming to the earth, they knew that the Lord's feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives. They might thus be taken in by deceits. Not so the Christian. He knows that he is to be with the Lord in the heavens, being for this taken up out of this world into the air to meet the Lord on high. But the deceits in question are addressed to such only as expect to meet the Lord on the earth. The whole of the scene thus far consists of the Lord's instructions to disciples connected with Jerusalem and Judea, and has nothing at all to do with the Christians looking to join the Lord above.

Here again is the reason why even Jewish disciples should not listen.

> For as the lightning cometh forth from the east and is seen even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be {Matt. 24:27}.

Commentators have applied all this to the Roman conquest. But the army of Titus did not come out of the east, as the lightning is said to do here, nor-did it shine unto the west: the very reverse would be a more apt figure, had the Romans been meant. So distinctly has the Lord Jesus guarded against he misinterpretations of men. The Son of man's coming will be quite different and surprise men like the lightning. It will be no question of going hither and thither to seek Him.

The Lord then has given these firm standing points, these landmarks as it were, in the prophecy, which hinder us

from being carried away by every wind of theory. We may see clearly what the Spirit has set before us. Nor has there been knowingly passed over anything material, or any violence done to a word. No wish is there to give aught but a clear, distinct, and positive impression of the mind of the Lord as conveyed in His own words. The disciples furnish occasion for others in the main like themselves in Judea at the close of the age.

Then it is said,

> Wheresoever the carcase is, there will be gathered together the eagles (Matt. 24:28).

Apply this to the church or to the Christian, and what can you make of it? Is the church "the carcase"? We have heard something still more dreadful. Men have not been wanting who say that the Lord is! Such are the results of attempting to interpret the prophecy on false ground. From early days Greek and Latin Fathers taught these strange and even profane ideas; and many down to modern time have followed in their wake. These crudities ought surely to be judged irreverent as well as grossly mistaken. Can any intelligent Christian deny it to be a rash and unworthy interpretation, no matter how (according to this scheme) they take "the carcase," whether applying it to the church or to the Lord? The church united to Christ by the Holy Spirit is His body (σῶμα): it is a wondrous privilege and a blessed truth; but is the church a carcase (πτῶμα)? Surely not; it is His living body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Nor is the Lord regarded as a body dead or merely alive, but as the risen and glorified Head. The Lord a carcase! What were, or are, they dreaming about?

The whole effort is on false ground. There is no getting a consistent meaning out of the passage when interpreted of the church. The moment you refer it to the Jewish people, it becomes strikingly true. For the mass of the Jews will then be apostate; and the eagles or vultures who come together are figures of the divine judgments executed on the guilty people [68] by the hostile nations of the earth. Whatever may be the instruments, they are judgments of God executed at this time. If the Christians were the carcase, they must be the object of the judgment, for there the eagles, figures of those that execute judgment, are gathered together. But this is not at all the relation of the Lord's coming to the Christian. Nor can any Christians be the eagles or instruments of divine vengeance, any more than the carcase, without abandoning all the truth and character of their calling. The changed saints undoubtedly will go up to meet the Lord; but is He then to be the carcase, and are the church the eagles? In such a scheme, there is only the choice of one evil less or greater than another; and it is generally so with an erroneous interpretation. Apply it to the object the Lord had in view, and harshness disappears. This is the test of scriptural truth: whenever men press a false interpretation, the general testimony of scripture is confused and dislocated or contradicted thereby.

Then the Lord adds,

> But immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken (Matt. 24:29).

Here it is that the popular view advocated by Dean Alford and others places the Lord's beginning to speak of His return personally. This however is not only to destroy the force of "Immediately after the tribulation of those days" with which the verse opens, but it breaks the connection with the true transition to the last days in v. 15, which introduces precise details of that epoch in their order; and it would seem, synchronizing with the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom in all the habitable earth as a witness to all the nations in the general history, "and then shall the end come." Thence forward it is, what happens in the temple, Judea, and strictly Jewish concerns at the end of the age. This is shown clearly by the reference to Dan. 12:11. For the prophet there tells us that

> from the time that the continual [holocaust] shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolation set up, [there shall be] a thousand, two hundred, and ninety days,

with a supplement in ver. 12 of "forty-five days" more to complete the incoming of the blessed time. Now count as men like from the siege of Titus, 1335 years for days bring in nothing of the sort.

The starting-point is wrong, and all modes of rectification are vain. It is really the last future crisis in and round Jerusalem, though it seems the gospel of the Kingdom goes on by godly Jews outside over the earth about the same time, the days in the prophet being literal days as here in v. 22. What has misled most is confounding the very different language and truth in Matt. 24:15, etc. and Mark. 13:14, etc. (who both give us what is entirely future) with that of Luke 21:20-24, which is entirely past, save the treading down of Jerusalem by Gentiles while Gentile times last, &c. Here it is unequivocally and. exclusively the Roman sack and its consequences to this day; while Luke's future reference commences with v. 25 and onward. It is an error to mix up this Roman episode in the third Gospel with the pointedly different description in the first and second Gospels which omit this, and then converge on the future only. They speak of the abomination of desolation, and of the unequaled tribulation, on which Luke is silent. But Luke tells of the Romans investing Jerusalem, and their desolation, of which Matthew and Mark say not a word; as he does not about the tribulation without parallel, but only of days of vengeance, and great distress upon the land and wrath to this people. The other Evangelists are wholly silent on the extreme slaughter by the Roman arms, and their captivity into all the nations; with the notable prolonged fact that Jerusalem should be

68. We see here an instance of the importance of rightly dividing the word; for Dean Alford through neglect of this lays down that the final fulfilment is "*over the whole world*, for that is the πτῶμα now." This is to confound the Jewish part with Christendom and the Gentiles, given later and separately in the discourse. In each case too the respective judgment is of a different character, and of course differently applied and described.

trodden down by Gentiles till their times are over, as they are not yet. All this is as carefully presented by Luke in exact consistency with the Spirit's design in his Gospel, as the other two omit it, and are devoted to the unprecedented horrors of the future which Luke omits.

But all three take up the closing scene, Luke not saying "Immediately after the tribulation etc.," as in fact he had not alluded to it in the least, but joining the other two about signs in sun, moon, and stars though as usual noticing moral state beyond the others. Next all speak of the Son of man coming, as he puts it in a cloud with power and great glory; and he alone adds,

> But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh {Matt. 24:33}.

Can any Christian be so prejudiced as not to see that not the heavenly saints are here in view? For we already have in Him redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our offences; whereas those here represented have yet to enjoy it in His Kingdom.

Luke's presentation is of the more value as settling the true force of "this generation shall in no wise pass till all things have taken place" among them, the end of Gentile supremacy over Israel and Jerusalem. The desire to limit "this generation," as here employed, to the destruction of their city by the Romans is thus certainly precluded. Further, at the consummation of the age the revived Roman Empire will not be against the apostate Jews, but rather on the side of the Antichrist or wilful king of Palestine, when the King of the North at the time of the end shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots and with horsemen and with many ships. But each shall perish successively and horribly under the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. The future (and these verses beyond just question strikingly speak of the future,) still more conclusively proves, for any acquainted with the prophets, the impossibility of interpreting the eagles of the Roman armies in the past, or any still more childish fancy of their symbolizing the church or Christians in the future, or the result (yet more offensive involved) of the carcase as figuring the Lord of glory.

> And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn (Matt. 24:30).

The Son of Man appearing in heaven is, I presume, the sign of His coming to enforce His claim on earth. It is not here the believers with joy going up to meet the Lord, but the tribes of the earth or at least of the land mourning when the sign appears.

> And they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt. 24:31).

Here too light is given of all moment to decide that the coming of the Son of man is in view of the land, the Jews (or mankind in general), and not at all to receive the heavenly ones for association with Himself in the Father's house.

For beyond controversy He is seen coming on the clouds of heaven before He sends forth His angels to gather together His. elect, here in question, from the four winds. Now it is a matter of positive revelation by the apostle Paul (Col. 3:4) that

> When Christ, our (or your) life shall be manifested then (τότε, not εἶτα) shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory.

It is not the moment when we are changed and caught up to meet Him in the air, but are with Him manifested in glory. The heavenly saints are already with Him when He comes judicially as Son of man; for this is His given office as such (John 5:27), to execute judgment. They are with Him already, not then translated, called and chosen and faithful, and therefore not angels (who are not "called" or said to be "faithful") but saints (Rev. 17:14).

Indeed we learn from Rev. 19:14 that the armies that are in the heaven followed Him upon white horses clothed in white pure byss, the righteousnesses of saints as interpreted just before; whereas angelic clothing had been said to be pure bright linen (Rev. 15:6). The elders, who represent the saints as chiefs of the royal priesthood, are seen on high from Rev. 4 to 19. Here they first appear in the quality of bride for the marriage of the Lamb above, and next, accompany Him as armies when He issues from heaven to judge and war in righteousness. Hence it is in the teeth of scripture that we can be on the earth and see Him appear as the glorious Son of Man in heaven coming to judge the quick. On the contrary we shall be then manifested together with Him when He is manifested in glory.

The Lord had already intimated it before Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thess. 1 Cor.15. and Col. Only, though spoken, it was long after Paul had departed to be with Christ that John 14 was written and still longer than Rev. 4-19. These scriptures reveal that Christ will surely come to change and translate above the heavenly saints; as Enoch (Jude 14) and Zech. (14:5) say they come. with Him: a truth repeated by the apostle in 1 Thess. 3:13, 4:14. Then in vv. 15-17 he proceeds in a new revelation. to explain that this will be by His coming for them by His descent from heaven with a shout of command which gathers them in a moment to Himself. Clearly then "the elect," subsequently gathered after the Lord appears, are not heavenly, but rather His restored people, the nucleus of godly Israel, in harmony with the context.

Too many lay great stress upon gathering "His elect." Be not too quick, my friends. The "elect" may not necessarily mean Christians. If one speak of elect now, it is so; but had God no heavenly "elect" before there were Christians? And after these are taken to heaven, will there be no elect on earth? Was the Lord to make a solitude and call it peace? Was God precluded from mercy on earth, because His sovereign grace had given us and the OT saints our respective places in heaven? There were elect Gentiles in patriarchal days and later too. Take Job for one, and his friends no doubt also the same; were they not elect men?

Melchisedek, Jethro, and others; were not they elect? Need one enumerate the elect of Israel in the past? We find clearly elect Gentiles as well as Jews and Christians. When we read of Christianity, then the elect must be so explained; if we read about a Jewish state, then the phrase applies to a Jewish election; and so with the nations too. We must be governed by the context. As the Lord here is simply speaking about Israel, the sense should not be ambiguous. When we have "his elect" named, He means the elect of those described, that is, of Israel. This is not at all to bring in arbitrary rules. Is it not in fact a very plain and necessary principle of exposition?

The Lord in all the context is speaking about Israel and their hopes. Consequently "his elect" must be interpreted according to the object in view. These elect ones are to be gathered "from one end of heaven to the other," yet not for heaven but on earth. (Compare Isa. 27, 65, Rom. 11:5, 7, 28.)

Then "learn the parable from the fig tree." The fig tree is a well known symbol of Israel as a nation. This confirms what has been already said. In the Gospel of Luke, where the Lord takes a view of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, He employs this very symbol, but enlarged remarkably. He says "the fig tree, and all the trees." The latter are not spoken of in Matthew, because this part only looks at the Jew; but in Luke He refers to the Gentile as well as the Jew: hence He adds, "and all the trees." (Compare Luke 21:20.)

> Now learn the parable from the fig tree. When its branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know that it (or, he) is near, at the doors. Verily I say to you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things have come to pass (Matt. 24:32-34).

Mark the phrase "all these things," -- from the first troubles down to the last, and the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Clearly here "this generation" cannot mean, what some impute to it, a mere period of thirty years, or a man's life. The phrase means, what it frequently does in scripture, a line characterized by certain moral tokens entirely independent of length' of time. Hence we find in the Psalms very particularly this use of "generation." One text is enough to prove it in the most convincing manner. In Psa. 12:7 we read

> Thou shalt keep them, O Jehovah, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

"This generation "is supposed to go on, and it is an evil generation, a generation which has no faith, a stubborn and Christ-rejecting generation. "This generation," or the non-believing race of the Jews, is not to pass away till all these things have taken place. Thus the same generation which crucified the Lord of glory is going on still, and will, till He comes again in the clouds of heaven.

Some of you, probably have read in a respectable Review, an article of no small notoriety which boasts that the Jews of the present day are really what they were in the days of our Savior -- a noble-hearted generous race (though they made that mistake!) as compared with their rude forefathers in the days of Moses, &c. Alas for the judgment of man! What a confession that "this generation" has not passed away They are still the same proud, self-righteous, Christ-rejecting race as they were then.

But the grace of God will make them anew, "a generation to come." The Lord will judge the unbelievers at last, dealing with them righteously after His immense long-suffering, but delivering a godly remnant in His grace. The Messiah has great things in store for Israel. There will be this double action indeed, that the mass of them will fill up the cup of iniquity which their fathers began; and the remnant will become the holy seed, the Israel of the millennial day. Of the former He speaks when He says that

> this generation shall not pass away till all these things have come to pass.
>
> The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of the heavens, but the Father only (Matt. 24:35, 36).

The next comparison (Matt. 24:37-41) is not to the fig-tree or anything else taken from the physical world. A figure is taken from the dealings of God in the Old Testament.

> But as the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man; for as in those days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women [shall be] grinding at the mill, one is taken and one is left.

Had heavenly saints been in question, Enoch would be the appropriate type; but as the Lord meant saints, not caught up, but carried through the waters of judgment for the earth, He justly chose Noah as the pattern.

Again, instead of being an indiscriminate slaughter or captivity such as the Jews had executed upon them by the Romans, there is a direct contrast to this. Here is unfailing discrimination: one man taken and one left; one woman taken and another left. The Lord will deal with perfect discernment in each case: not so did the Romans, nor any army that ever took a city. Notoriously if not necessarily at such a time, there is scarce thought of, or leisure for, discrimination. The rule is wholesale bloodshed. and often slavery. It was especially so when Titus sacked the city. So alas! it may be to this day. But when the Lord Jesus comes in judgment of the quick, it will be quite otherwise. One, whether of men or of women, is taken for judgment, one left for blessing in the land.

The Lord winds up this part of His prophecy by saying,

> Watch therefore, for ye know not on what day your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the house-master had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be digged through. Therefore, be ye also ready, for in an hour that ye

> think not the Son of man cometh (Matt. 24:42-44).

There closes the portion of the prophecy which refers to the Jews. It began by referring to the Jewish remnant, because such the disciples as yet were really, though believers. Christ took them up just as they were; though we know they subsequently became Christians. They then passed into a new relationship. Faith in Him they had already; but instead of His reigning and blessing them on the earth another order of things was founded in connection with His ascension to heaven. Hence the same disciples merged into a new form of relationship with God, of which the Holy Spirit sent forth was the power. They were taught no longer to expect the Lord's restoration of the kingdom as their proper hope, but, contrariwise, that the Lord would come to receive them to Himself, and take them to the Father's home in heaven. This is the Christian's hope; this is what they await. The Lord calls them out from everything on earth to Himself. They had been expecting the Lord to establish them on the earth up to the day when the Lord Jesus went up to send down the Holy Ghost.

Christianity thus comes in, as if a drawbridge had been opened and let them into an entirely new thing. The disciples at the beginning were on one side of the bridge, the disciples at the end would be on the other side. The drawbridge opens, and the new thing, the church, passes through. It is the calling of Christians out of the world, of those called in one body, waiting till Christ comes to receive them to Himself and take them where He is. The Lord Jesus, having accomplished redemption, has Himself first taken His seat in heaven. Thus the disciples become heavenly (1 Cor. 15:48) and are being transformed spiritually (2 Cor. 3:18). Finally, at His coming, the Lord Jesus will take them completely out of their natural environment, conformed in body to His own glorious body. The state of things on earth since redemption, till He come to take us to be with Him on high, is truly well enough called Christianity.

It is not denied that the saints of old, before Christianity came in, will share in the resurrection, when they too will shine in the likeness of Christ. Only there is an enormous difference meanwhile. We are brought, since His cross, into salvation with new relationships in union with Himself; and the Holy Spirit gives a fresh and incomparably greater power to those who are now gathered to His name. It is possible that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were more faithful than many, perhaps than most of us. For ourselves we cannot take high ground; but we boast in God and of what Christ has given us. This really brings in grace and truth which makes our unfaithfulness more manifest; for the greater the Christian privileges, the more strictly is our unfaithfulness measured. But the hope does not make us ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.

Very striking is the fact that "the Son of man" is here dropped, only to be resumed in the third section where all the nations come into review. For it will be shown that the clause containing that title in the Christian portion (Matt. 25:13) is spurious. So in Dan 7 we see this title used when He comes to deal with the Gentile powers, the last in particular, to the deliverance of the Jewish people.

From this point the Lord begins to open out a new thing, namely, what the disciples were going to enter. Evidently this was the proper order. The Lord had begun with them as they were, and then He leads on to what they were soon to become, with the new relationships to Christ dead and risen, when fresh power would be given by the Holy Spirit. As a mark of this, you will see that the Lord drops all allusion to Judaea, and any reference to the temple, the prophets, and the sabbath. The Lord widens out now into parables of a general and comprehensive nature, which would be equally as true at Timbuctoo as at Jerusalem -- it does not matter where. They belong to Christianity. What Christ died and rose to establish by the mission of the Spirit is not one of the narrow systems of men, nor of their broad worldly associations. Christianity is exclusive of nothing but sin; it is the practical expression of Christ, not only in grace and truth but in resulting practice. The Lord definitely marks this opening out into wider principles of a moral nature, which embrace all Christian disciples, wherever they might be in this world, and at any time till He comes. Hence we find three parables which apply thereto.

The first parable is the prudent servant contrasted with the evil one. It is a question of faithful service in the house, the duty of the highest and the duty of the lowest, not of intelligent activity with variety of spiritual endowment in each for trading with his lord's goods as given in the parable of the Talents (Matt. 25). The form is very striking. We have, seen as one, a profession carried out and ending very differently; and this in relation with the Lord, not with Israel as before.

> Who then is the faithful and prudent bondman whom his lord set over his household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed [is] that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find so doing. Verily I say to you, that he will set him over all that he bath. But if that evil bondman shall say in his heart, My lord tarrieth; and shall begin to beat his fellow-bondmen, and shall eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of that bondman shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour that he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth (Matt. 24:45-51).

It was another case with the nation. In Judaism there was an enormous unbelieving mass in former times falling into idolatry and all kinds of wickedness, and hence persecuting the faithful brethren. But one of the characteristic marks of Christendom is that all are professors of Christ, whether truly or falsely; and it is therefore presented here as one whole strikingly. The Lord in the parable says the faithful and prudent servant shall be made ruler over all His goods. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he comes shall find so doing. It is the responsibility of all in the house. Hence He goes on to say, "But if that evil servant" etc. They are surprisingly joined thus. On what does his ruin turn? The evil servant says in his heart, "My lord delayeth." His

coming is not a mere idea: man likes to have his notions; and. nobody is the better for them. But He refers to what is deep and real, the heart's indifference to the coming of the Master. The evil servant says in his heart, "My lord delayeth." He believes what he likes; and what he likes is that the Lord should delay His coming.

Most affecting it is to see that the Lord treats the heart's putting off His return as leading to assumption within and laxity without. That evil servant when he says in his heart (for so it is), My lord delayeth, shall begin also to beat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken. What a contrast with Christ, and practical denial of Him! It led back the professor to the world in self-exalting oppression, and in allowed intimacy with the ungodly and immoral. He is therefore appointed, when the Lord is come, to have his part with the hypocrites. The Lord does not treat him as a Jew or Greek, but according to his responsibility.

How different is it with the faithful and wise servant He waits and longs for the Lord because he loves Him who first loved us. Hence the hope of Christ is quite distinct from prophecy. One might be greatly versed in the prophetic word, and wholly lack that hope; one might have the heart filled with the hope, and be altogether unacquainted with prophecy. No one could rightly deprecate those solemn warnings of what will burst unexpectedly on the world. But, next to believing in Christ for life and redemption, with worship and service and walk following, the Christian needs and is called to wait for the Son of God from heaven. Now if you love anyone, you delight to see him. The absence of the person beloved is trying to you. There may be the wisest reasons for delay, but the delay taxes your patience;. and the hope of the speedy return of the one you love is the greatest joy to the heart.

The Lord gives this feeling, and strengthens it, toward Himself. It is the proper hope of the Christian, not the Kingdom but Christ. Grant that it may be hindered by the influence of prophetic notions; yet there is in the heart of all true Christians a genuine desire for the coming of Christ. But when the soul is not in peace through a full gospel, one is afraid. Those who give them an uncertain gospel are responsible for it; as they thus keep souls in dread, they do the greatest injury to the grace of God. One does not speak of such as quite falsify Christ or His work, but of those who do preach it partially, who fear to set forth the full value of the sacrifice of Christ, in the perfect deliverance which His death and resurrection have wrought for the believer. The result of this defect in teaching is that Christians are apt to be alarmed instead of rejoicing at the immediate coming of Christ.

They do not own that the acceptance of Christ is the acceptance of a Christian; they have not learned the truth that the Lord by His death has not only effaced their sins but had their sinful nature condemned completely; and this in order to their walking now in the Spirit, to be followed by a perfect conformity to Christ's image in resurrection at His coming (Rom. 8:1-4, 11, 29).

Who can exaggerate what Christ has wrought for the believer? If you rest on His redemption, all difficulties Godward are taken away. Then there is nothing left but the need of daily self-judgment for every inconsistency, the duty of serving Him now, and the delight of being with Him and seeing Him then, as also of worshiping both now and for ever by grace. He has done all for each to bring us to God, taking us out of every evil. How can the believer not rejoice in this and in Him? Therefore all Christians, wherever or whoever they may he, are entitled to have joy and delight, though for many dimmed unhappily, in the prospect of His coming.

Notwithstanding all their imperfect notions, it is certain that all Christians love Christ here, and in principle await Him too. To say this may not please some zealous pre-millennialist friends; but surely this hope belongs to every Christian heart. Would you doubt it of S. Rutherford? or of the late S. Waldegrave? Yet the system of the latter in his *Modern Millennarianism* was wildly unscriptural. For he believed the First Resurrection reign over, and that we are now in the little space, before Christ sits on the great white throne; and this he made His coming, when heaven and earth had fled!

There are false prophetic views which hinder; but as the new nature goes out toward Christ, so it longs for the day when we shall be for ever with the Lord. Waiting for Christ supposes waiting for His coming; but if put into precise forms and logical propositions, damage may easily ensue. If the object be to prove that many Christians do not look for Christ's coming, abundant grounds appear for working on. But if, on the other hand, you are child-like, God gives sufficient evidence that those who are Christ's, notwithstanding obstacles, do look and at bottom long for His coming.

Only let the children of God get clear of those clouds of noxious and unwholesome vapors that constantly rise up between the Lord and them. Let them cherish in their souls the hope He gave them. If you bring in a millennium first, it is hard to see Christ's coming clearly; it must act as a veil, which dulls the hope of that day. It may not destroy the hope, yet one cannot but look for His coming in an imperfect manner. If you bring in a great tribulation first, this also lowers the outlook and enfeebles the hope greatly; it occupies one with evils as they rise, produces a depressing effect, and fills the heart with that judicial trouble and the shade of desolation. They are the mistakes of theorists. The one puts a mistaken hope between you and the coming of the Lord, kindling meanwhile a dreamy excitement in waiting for that day. The other case produces a sort of spiritual nightmare, an oppressive feeling in the thought that you must go through so dreadful a crisis.

Be assured, my brethren, that the scriptures deliver us from both the dream and the nightmare. They entitle the believer to wait for Christ as simply as a child, being perfectly certain that God's word is as true as our hope is blessed. There is to be God's glorious kingdom; but the Lord Jesus will bring it in at His coming. Without doubt the great tribulation is to come, but not for the Christian. When it is a

question about the Jew, you can understand it well: for why does the greatest tribulation come upon him? Because of idolatry; yea, of the Beast and the Antichrist worshiped. It is for him a moral retribution, with which the Christian has nothing direct to do. The predicted judgment falls on the apostate nations and the Jews. Those called to be witnesses of Jehovah and His Christ will at last fall into the dreadful snare of allowing the abomination to be put into the sanctuary of God.

What connection is there between this and the Christian looking for Christ? Here the prophecy of the blessed Lord drops all allusion to anything peculiar to Israel. His coming will surely be for the solemn judgment of all who pervert grace and indulge in unrighteousness, receiving a sentence so much the more stern, because the gospel reveals God perfectly in light and love, which they abused to fleshly licence. As to this the Fathers taught falsehood and unholiness.

Then comes the parable of the ten Virgins {Matt. 25:1-13}. It is essential to disengage the Christian from the thought that the early part of this prophecy {Matt. 24:1-44} is about him: such an idea completely perverts his judgment. For it presents, as we have seen, the Jewish people distinctively. Here we have a future comparison of the kingdom of the heavens.

But we have also in our day to do with another and opposite error, an error that takes away the parable of the Virgins from properly applying to the Christian. We may affirm, on the contrary, that it has nothing to do with the Jewish remnant directly; who, as they are not called to go out to meet the Bridegroom, could not have oil in their vessels, and lastly will not be exposed to the temptation of going to sleep. The Jews ought to abide where they are, or only flee to escape death in their refusal of idolatry. And those who survive, for the Lord's appearing and their own deliverance, only receive the Holy Spirit after He appears. All is in contrast with the Christian position. But many a one who had been a Jewish disciple became a Christian, in the true sense of the term, as Peter uses the word in his First Epistle, and Luke in the Acts. In this parable, then, the Lord shows the kingdom of heaven will be likened to ten virgins. They all went forth to bear their testimony to Christ as the torch was to give light. They were to shine as lights in the world. Each virgin taking her lamp, they went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

Now this is characteristic of the Christian. The Israelite did not separate from the world of which he was head. The Christian goes forth to meet Christ, who is gone to heaven. If he had been a Jew, he leaves his ancient association and hopes behind. Again, if the greatest grandee in the Gentile world, or if of the poorest condition, he alike abandons his old obscurity or his old grandeur. He willingly forgets all that is of the world. He is called out of every snare which can arrest or fascinate the heart of man. He has got a new and all-absorbing object in Christ; and Christ in heavenly joy and blessedness. It is not the Judge coming to deal with the wicked. If the Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom, does such a parable fitly bring an image of terror? Well he knows that the same Jesus who is the Bridegroom will be the Judge; he knows well that Jesus will put down all those who oppose Him; but He is not the Judge and the Bridegroom to the same persons, any more than both will be at the same precise time. Where would be the sense of such confusion? The Lord purposely brings in the bright figure of the Bridegroom to Christians who are waiting for Him.

But there are other elements of moment. Here are persons true or false. They are not presented as one object: consequently the idea of the bride [69] is not the expressed aim. When we talk about Christians, real or professing, we do not fix our mind on unity; we think of individuals who go forth. He was about to show profession, and so introduce: foolish as well as wise virgins. It is Christ looking at Christians professing the Lord truly or falsely, not as the bride of Christ. The Christians are here characterized by quitting every object on earth to meet the Bridegroom. Even the Jew, attached as he was to the old religion (and they had a religion which could boast an antiquity before which all others grow pale), when become a Christian, leaves all to go forth unto Him with joy, as we read it Heb. 13:13, "bearing His reproach."

Here you have the same great principle. As the Christian, even though once a Jew, was called to leave all the old things behind, so the Virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps but no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

Is it true that the Jewish remnant at the end of the age could have oil in their vessels? They will never have such an unction till the Lord Jesus comes and sheds the Spirit on them. For it is well known that oil symbolically means the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not merely the washing by the Spirit, however vital; for beyond doubt the Jewish remnant will have this. They will be really cleansed by the word in the heart. The Jewish disciples found at the end of the age do not receive the outpouring of the Spirit till the Lord appears; they wait for that day. It is only when the kingdom comes that the power of the Holy Spirit will be for them. They will when converted welcome Him in their heart, saying, Blessed be He that cometh in Jehovah's name. They will go through a serious inward process next; as we are told, when they see the Lord Jesus, they mourn as for an only child. They have a fountain opened in Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness; but the power of the Holy Ghost will be given only after they have seen the Lord. There is this difference with the Christian, who receives the oil or unction from the Holy One while the Lord is unseen and on high. The Jewish remnant

69. It is a strange fact, however, that two uncial MSS. (DX) eight cursives, several ancient versions, including the Itala and the Vulgate. and fathers Greek and Latin endorse this addition, and represent the virgins as going to meet the "Bridegroom and the bride." Of course, it is a mere gloss. Had a bride been named, it would have detracted from the perfect finish of the parable and brought in confusion. as Christians real or in name are meant by the ten who go forth to meet the Lord.

will only receive it when the Lord comes back.

Again, there is at no time in their case, what we see in these Virgins, a class that went forth to meet the Bridegroom. The Jewish disciples will not disappear from Jerusalem until the idol is set up and the tribulation is at hand. Then they flee from the enemy's power and its consequences from God. It is a flight from the sore scourge in retribution and judgment for the people's iniquity. It is no going forth to meet the Bridegroom in joyful hope.

The Christian has another course and hope altogether. Whether it be light or dark, the Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. What is the original hope of the Christian? It is our object and calling revealed in and from heaven. That object is Christ, the blessed One whose grace has been proved, and whose coming one awaits: hence one goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. Not so the Jewish remnant; they expect to see the Lord coming to deliver them by the putting down of their enemies. As Christ ascended, so the Christian waits to be caught up out. of the world; the Jewish saint waits for the Lord to come judicially into the world. It is a totally different kind of expectation. The parable speaks solely of the Christian, and in no way refers to the Jewish remnant.

We shall see other proofs of this. It is said that the wise took oil in their vessels: the foolish took no oil. This meets another error. It has been supposed that the foolish virgins mean Christians who are not pre-millennarians. This gives a very undue value to correct notions of prophecy. Granted entirely that those who look for the Lord to come before that reign are right in their judgment. Those who put the millennium before the Lord's coming are mistaken. But how can one sympathize with those who put a slight upon such Christians as have not been taught as you and I? These are self-flattering delusions, and are empty manifestations that bear the brand of sect or school written on them. The best blessings we have are those which God confers on His children, on the body of Christ, in other words on all those in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, who rest on Christ and redemption. These are the persons spoken of here. The Holy Ghost is a divine spring for sustaining testimony, as well as a divine power of understanding the word of God, and for communion with the Father and the Son.

The foolish virgins never had oil in their vessels {Matt. 25:3}. [70] Some ask how they can have had their torches burning. The answer is easy. They could light the torch: there is no mystery about that. The foolish virgins were not real Christians. The weakest Christian as well as the strongest has the oil. The apostle John so tells not the fathers, nor the young men, but the babes, the little children. He tells the feeblest they have an unction from the Holy One. For those who had no oil could not be Christians, in any real, full, or divine sense of the name. Hence a deeper evil is in question than denying the millennium to be after Christ's second coming or before it. The heart was a stranger to the Lord's grace: a thing more momentous than right notions about the word of prophecy.

If you have Christ, if you know the blood of sprinkling, if you rest on a crucified and risen Savior, you surely have the oil in your vessels. You are not one of the foolish virgins. Their folly consisted in a want very much deeper than in a right or wrong prophetic scheme. The foolish lived a life of religious levity, not of necessity hypocrisy but of self-deception, ignoring God and His grace; and, consequently, not having the Spirit of Christ, they were none of His. The foolish virgins have not the Holy Spirit dwelling in them; so the Lord means and deals with them.

We often think of the early Christians with their great advantages; we see that, many of the scriptures applying to them fully, we can only get the principle of them. But your attention is called here to the fact that there are other scriptures which apply more emphatically to us now. There is thus what one may call a divine compensation. We can only take the general spirit of what was said to the Corinthians. For instance, they had tongues and other miraculous powers among them. It is plain that we have not; and only a few enthusiasts pretend to have them. Alas! wherever there are pretensions to such gifts, their falsity is soon found out.

The fact is that God, for the wisest reasons, has not been pleased to continue these miraculous powers. The present condition of the church would make it to be a moral impossibility that God should at present bestow these miraculous virtues. For if the Lord were to restore them now, one might ask, Where? Most people would begin with themselves. Were the Lord to confer these powers upon the various sects of Christendom, it would be putting His seal upon what His word says is wrong as if all were right. How could He thus contradict himself? How could Ho thus sanction the broken fragments of His house or put honor upon its fallen condition? Without this we are ready to be self-satisfied; we are too prone to think more highly of ourselves than we ought: and the Lord will not help us to bo more so.

But He has left what is infinitely better; He continues everything due to Christ and good for the soul in every true want. Ho has taken away nothing needful for edification. He still gives peace and joy in believing. Now as of old He put this inward power in the church; but He marked it of old with a brilliant signature before the world. Those who look for the restoration of those powers are not alive to what befits our fallen condition. It is morally most important for the Christian to know what the church was at first and what it is now, grieving before God at the difference. What sympathy ought there to be with the Christian who is not a mourner because of the state of the church? It is well to have joy in the Lord; but we should he humbled about ourselves and the church. Ought we not for the Lord's sake to feel deeply this condition of ruin?

In the parable, you will observe, the Lord marks the

70. {JND translates:

> They that were foolish took their torches and did not take oil with them.}

failure from the original calling.

> While the bridegroom tarried, they all nodded and went asleep {Matt. 25:5}.

What a state of departure, from forgetfulness of the Lord's return I It was a general and total insensibility to the hope. When sleepy, they haply turned in here or there to take repose. It was no longer true that they went forth to meet the Bridegroom. The wise who had the oil slept like the foolish who had none.

But now mark another thing. It is midnight, and there was a cry made, "Behold the bridegroom; go forth to meet him." Has this been fulfilled? In measure this, or rather it is being fulfilled now. It is a cry made by divine grace. [71] No sign appeared, no outward warning, no seeing of a prophecy accomplished, as for the Jewish remnant in Matt. 24. In us God works invisibly by His word and Spirit. The Lord is interposing to break the slumbering condition of Christendom, and this not only for the wise, but for the foolish.

Have there not been times when men were impressed with the fear that judgment-day was coming, when they yielded to sore panic at the cry that "the end of the world" was at hand? In the year 600 they were sure it would be then. But time passed on, and the end of the world did not come. They slumbered again. Then, in the year 1000 (surely 1000 was the fatal number!), there was yet greater alarm all over western Christendom; and the clergy took advantage of this, and got the barons and people to give their gold and their silver, lands and possessions, to build grand cathedrals and religious houses some of which, as is well-known, exist to the present day. This fear passed away, and the end of the world did not come. Then followed a long slumber indeed.

Further there have been partial awakenings at various times since, but they were of the same character. At the period of the great rebellion, when the Puritans got into power in England, there was a momentary shaking in this country; and bold men rose up, who tried to establish the Fifth Monarchy, or present power in the world in the name of the Lord Jesus. Movements such as this took place at various epochs; but where was the going forth to meet the Bridegroom? There was not even a resemblance to it.

In past ages then there was alarm, sometimes to the utmost degree; and this state is represented in the well known medieval hymn or dirge, "Dies Irae," the extreme expression of Catholic terror. Such was the feeling of the middle ages. Since then in later times, Protestant fanatics tried to get power into their hands. But this means seizing the earth at the present, not quitting all to meet Christ.

The momentous fact is that two spiritual characteristics, very distinct from ancient or mediaeval or modern views, mark off truth from error as to this. Are we not to be humbled because of the evil that has been done in Christendom? And are we not practically to take our stand on what was the Lord's will from the first? if the Lord at the outset called all Christians to go out to meet Him, they should ever cherish this as their calling and joy of heart. The consequence of a revival of the Christian hope of meeting the Lord is resumption of the original position, that of going forth to meet the Bridegroom. How could believers honestly continue in what they know to be false and unscriptural if they look for the Lord to come back any day? Thus the practical effect is immediate and immense where heart and conscience are true to Him.

Awe-stricken come the foolish virgins to the wise, saying, "Give us of your oil"; but this is beyond the Christian, and the wise bid them "Go, buy oil for yourselves." There is One who sells, [72] but freely, without money and without price: to buy even from an apostle is fatal. The cry was given to revive the hope, as it had the effect also of recalling to the original and only right attitude of the saints toward Christ. It was enough to sever the wise as alone ready to act accordingly. It was too late for the foolish: who could give what they wanted?

What is the meaning of all the recent agitation? People zealous for religious forms, who know not really of Christianity. It is the foolish virgins in quest of the oil, leaving no stone unturned to get what they have not, the one thing needful -- taking every way except the right way. There is only one means of procuring the oil: solely can it be through Christ Himself, without money and without price. I remember the time when men bearing the name of the Lord's ministers spent their time in fishing, hunting, shooting, and dancing. Clergymen joined in worldly pleasures without shame. You rarely hear of such things now: the Oxford delusion has altered the form. The same sort of men now-a-days look very demure: they are in general busy everywhere about religion. Do you believe they are any better than the men who used to hunt and dance? They have a zeal; but is it according to knowledge? Is it Christ, or is it not what they call the church without Him? Form deceives most.

All the fashionable ecclesiastical millinery or machinery, does it change people's state or suppose real renewal? The decking of ecclesiastical buildings, the fantastical costumes of clergymen, the modern taste for church music, processions, and stations, simply show that the foolish virgins are at work. They are not in a fit state to meet the Lord, and fear it themselves. They are troubled with the rumor of they know not what. The consequence, then, of this midnight cry is that a double activity is going on. For the Lord is awakening those who know Himself, and are wise by His grace, to go forth to meet the Bridegroom. The others, if indirectly, are none the less powerfully but in their own way affected by the cry and its effects, which rise not above nature and the earth.

---

71. {It was the Spirit of God that sounded the cry. The human instrument first used was J. N. Darby.}

72. Which is farthest from the truth? -- Chrysostom's notion that those who sell are the poor, the indirect occasion of good to such as walk in love; or Alford's, who deduces from it "a mean" enough argument for an appointed and paid ministry.

Utterly ignorant of the grace of God, they are trying to make up by what is called "earnestness." They know not that they are far from God, yea, dead in trespasses and sins: their superstitious trust in baptismal regeneration blinds them. So they think, or hope, that being "earnest" they may somehow or other get right at last. What delusion can be more hopeless? If you ask them whether their sins are blotted out, and they are saved by grace, they count it presumption. They are as ignorant of the true power and privilege of redemption as the heathen or the Jew. They have no Spirit-taught certainty that the Son of man came down to save the lost. If there be such a thing as a present salvation, their occupation is evidently gone. Neither grace nor truth admits of all this religious self-importance, bustle, and vain show. As sinners, we need a Savior, and a divine salvation; as saints, let us seek a calm but complete devotedness to the name, word, and work of the Lord Jesus. But man prefers his own works; and to win the world he finds that scenic representations of Christian facts or forms act most on the masses, and attract the light, sentimental, despairing, and even profane. Individuals in the midst of such histrionic religion may seek with a certain measure of the gospel to win souls; yet they subject Christ Himself to the church. But the movement as a whole is just the activity of the foolish virgins, who have not the oil and in vain try to get it as best they can.

At length the Bridegroom comes, and "they that were ready went in to the marriage; and the door was shut."

Afterwards come the foolish virgins. N ow they cry, but it is with horror and despair. Their religious energy is at length seen to be of the old man. In an agony they cry,

> Lord, Lord, open to us {Matt. 25:12}.

But the Lord of peace, the Giver of life and glory, has only to tell them,

> I know you not.

Do not fancy that this is said to faulty believers. It is said of the foolish virgins who had no oil; of those who bore the name of the Lord, but had not the Spirit of Christ. Of and to them it was declared that the Lord knew them not. "Watch, therefore," says He, "for ye know neither the day nor the hour" {Matt. 25:13}.

There is no authority for what follows ("wherein the Son of man cometh"). You have heard the names of Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, and Tischendorf; of Dean Alford, Dr. Scrivener, Drs. Tregelles, Westcott and Hort in this country. It is no peculiar thought in the least; for all biblical critics worthy of the name agree in this omission as required by the best authorities. Copyists added the clause from Matt. 24:42 and bring in the sense of the coming Judge. But this is quite incongruous with what He here urges, which is the delight of meeting, yea, the going forth to meet Him, the Bridegroom. Man as such, must be judged; all the guilty tribes mourn before the Son of man. But the calling and hope of the Christian is fraught with other and joyous expectations: and this, spite of their unfaithfulness during the night while He tarried, for *all* slumbered and slept.

The middle parable is a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens. There only is found an historic or dispensational view of the state of things among those professedly Christ's on earth while He is on high. There accordingly the constant expectation of those who took the place of entering into the interests of His love is treated, with the issue at the end for such as were "foolish" and had no share in the unction of the Spirit; for this alone could enable any to be "ready" for going in with Christ to the. marriage. The "then" of the comparison (Matt. 25:1), when judgment is executed on the evil servant of Matt. 24, carries us up to the foolish virgins shut out and disowned by Him as known to Him: a complete disproof of the strange notion that they could be saints. Indeed the theory, if it deserves such a name, that any member of Christ's body will be left behind when He comes to receive His own to Himself and translate them to the Father's house {i.e., partial rapture}, is not only baseless as opposed to the clearest testimony of scripture, but quite unworthy of a spiritual mind. Think of Christ's body without an ear or an eye, a finger or a toe The bride of the Lamb mutilated and deformed in glory!

But even worse is that extreme form of the speculation, which supposes persons possessed of eternal life, the knowledge of and communion with the Father and the Son, yet condemned to be tormented in the flame of Hades during the thousand years reign of Christ and the glorified saints. And why? Because they were not immersed as professing believers in the water of baptism, and were not intelligent enough to accept premillennialism! For who does not know that there are thousands of saints, neither premillennials nor immersed, yet far more intelligent, devoted, and spiritual than multitudes of such Anabaptists even if they fully accept premillennialism? No,

> they that are Christ's at His coming,

not some who plume themselves on this or that external mark or of truth quite subordinate to what they have or love, will be raised to share the kingdom when He reigns and be with Him before the kingdom and during it and after it, having His presence and love in a glory deeper and higher. The scheme that denies this revealed certainty as in John 17:24, Rom. 5:17, 1 Thess. 4:17 (last clause), and Rev. 22:5, is not only anti-scriptural but repulsive, yea destructive of all sound judgment and of the best affections.

In the third parable (of the Talents) it is not the collective responsibility so strikingly depicted in the first, nor the heavenly hope separating from other objects and attaching to the Bridegroom's coming, but a kind of pendant on it.

> For [it is] as [if] a man going abroad called his own bondmen and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his several ability, and went his way. Straightway he that received the five talents proceeded, and traded with them, and made other five talents. Likewise also he [that received] the two, and he gained other two. But he that received the one went off and dug in the earth and

> hid the money of his lord. After a long time the lord of those bondmen cometh and settleth account with them. And he that received the five talents came forward and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst to me five talents: behold, I gained five other talents [besides them]. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many: enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also that [received] the two talents said, Lord, two talents thou deliveredst to me: behold, I gained other two talents. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many: enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent came forward and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering whence thou didst not scatter; and being afraid I went off and hid thy talent in. the earth; behold, thou hast that which is thine. But his lord answering said to him, Wicked and slothful bondman, thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather whence I scattered not. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have got mine own with interest. Take away therefore the talent from him, and give [it] to him that hath the ten talents. For to every one that hath shall be given and he shall be in abundance, but from him that hath not, even what he hath shall be taken away [from him]. And cast out the useless bondman into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth (Matt. 24:14-30).

Here it is the Lord working by diversity of gifts; and as He is sovereign, so confidence in Him is what severs the "good and faithful" bondmen from the wicked and slothful one, as it was in Matt. 24 a question of prudent or wise fidelity. Zeal according to that confidence was followed by blessing and fruit. Here we have marked variety, and individual responsibility in faith, in contrast with unbelief and blindness to grace. When we know Christ, and the unprofitable one professed this, it is profound wickedness, and none in general worse than such a professing Christian. When confidence in Him is wanting, all is wrong, though this may be shown in fear to use what He has given for profit. Had he truly known the Lord, he would have served Him gladly, especially as he had a gift of power; but he knew Him not from God, and was judged according to his distrust and the falsehood which unbelief readily yields to. Unbelief receives what itself says, according to what the evil heart suggests when it listens to Satan's lie. And the Lord deals with the wicked as his slander deserved. While those who work on in confidence of His grace enter into the joy of their Lord, those who would not, distrusting Him shall be consigned to the outer darkness with all its horrors and misery. Bliss with Christ is beyond rewards, though this too has its place of moment.

Here the Parable of the Ten Pounds (or, Minas) in Luke 19:12-27 is most instructive. It is peculiar to his Gospel and given before the last visit to Jerusalem; whereas that of the Talents was when the visit was drawing to a close. In Luke there is the same gift entrusted to each of the servants, and their responsibility and right use as yet was strongly in evidence, and to have authority over so many cities is the reward in the Kingdom, not entrance into their Lord's joy. But how profound the mistake to set a place of outward honor above sharing the Lord's joy with Himself! The good and faithful will receive that also, both being in the Kingdom.

If the faithful and wise servant, contrasted with "that evil servant," set forth the general place in the house, faithful or the contrary, the parable of the Talents shows us those who trade with the goods of Christ, and that blessing in this work turns on confidence in Him and His grace.

This is the third and concluding section of the Lord's prophetic word. No part of it has been less understood; yet it is clearly defined as distinct from the other two by internal marks which ought to have carried conviction to every believer. But such has been the fate of scripture; not that God's word fails in plainness of speech and certainty of meaning, but because it crosses man's will, who therefore seeks to interpret it according to his own thoughts. Every scripture is for us, and, being of God, is also profitable for man; but is not all about us, and we can only learn surely from itself concerning whom it speaks.

1. We have had a Jewish remnant believing, but without the full privileges of Christians, as the Lord addressed those who then represented it down to the end of the age. Then He appears as the Son of man, and in that day delivers not only such, but the elect of the nation, the "all Israel that shall be saved," immediately after unparalleled tribulation.

2. Then (without a vestige of allusion to Judea, the city, the temple, or any association local or temporal) the discourse takes up what applies directly and exclusively to the Christian profession, sound and unsound, in the three intermediate parables which were therefore couched in terms of altogether general import. Here "the Son of man" disappears according to the overwhelming testimony of the best MSS, Vv., and early citations for Matt. 25:13.

3. There remained accordingly only to tell and hear of the Gentiles. For every reader or enquirer is aware that the mass of mankind, devoted to idols and impostures, has to this day resisted the Christian testimony. But the Lord had given in the first part (Matt. 24:14) the remarkable intimation that "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable world [73] for a witness to all the nations, and then shall the end come." Here He lets us know the fruit of this preaching, of course (if we are caught up) by the believing

73. Even those who try to limit "the inhabited world" to the Roman Empire are obliged here to abandon it; for they admit that at this very time the Beast and the False Prophet will have banished it thence. We can understand the term employed by the Romans in pride of power, and so cited in scripture as in profane historians, and loosely used by the speakers in Acts 17:6, 24:5. But it is not possible so to confine it in Acts 17:31, Rom. 10:18, Heb. 1:6, Rev. 3:10, 16:14, any more than in Matt. 24:14. Compare also Matt. 4:8 with Luke 4:5.

Jews of that day, as its place intimates, just before the end comes.

Hence the last section has its suited peculiarity which differentiates it from both the preceding ones, that pertaining to it alone and characteristically. For the specific ground for the King's decision turns on a preaching of the glad news of the kingdom which only came through His brethren (evidently converted Jews) before "the end" and is here shown to result among all the nations in some heeding the message and in others despising it. It is therefore unique in its circumstances as a whole; though no principle is involved which cannot be justified from other scriptures.

> But when the Son of man shall have come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit down upon his throne of glory, and all the nations shall be gathered before him; and he shall separate them from one another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats (or, kids); and he will set the sheep on his right but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to those on his right, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the world's foundation. For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, When saw we thee hungering, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink? and when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked, and clothed thee? and when saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King answering shall say to them, Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did [it] to me. Then shall he say also to those on the left, Go from me, accursed, into the everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me not to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and ministered not to thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of these least, ye did [it] not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life everlasting (Matt. 25:31-46).

The Son of man will have already come. His war-judgments are over, as it seems, not only what He executed by the appearing of His presence (2 Thess. 1:8), but when He put Himself at the head of His people, as in Isa. 63, Ezek. 38, 39, Micah 6, and Zech. 14. Now the "King" (found here only) enters on the sessional judgment of His throne, before which all the nations must appear; for then all the peoples, nations, and languages must serve Him. It is part of that judgment of the quick and the habitable earth by the risen Man whom God appointed, as the apostle proclaimed to the Athenians. The judgment of living man on the earth, in the midst of his busy and selfish (not to say, sordid and sinful) life was much pressed by the Lord and the apostles, as it is largely in 0. and N. T. prophecy: but it has been lost to the living faith even of saints in Christendom, alike nationalists and nonconformists. Yet even the creeds confess it, however little it was realized when they were written, and even increasingly less since. As the Jews let slip the judgment of the dead, save to hurl it at the head of the Gentiles: so Christendom practically forgets the judgment of the quick. Here we have it applied by the Son of man judicially when He enters on the exercise of His world-kingdom. Hence it is a question of men at large, not Jews, and of course not Christians (both whom we have already had), but of "all the nations," when the Lord is come and sits down on the throne of His glory, as here.

It is the fullest and plainest contrast with "the judgment before the great white throne"; for then the earth and the heaven fled from His gaze, and no place was found for them. And "the dead," the great and the small, stand before the throne {Rev. 20}. There "the dead" (none else are spoken of) are judged according to their works out of the record of all done in the body, the book of life sealing it by its silence. This is not the coming of the Son of man to reign over the earth (as in our scene); for the nations are destroyed, and the earth fled, and even the heavens. Our scene on the contrary shows the Son of man come to the earth, and all the nations gathered before Him. Here they are all living, to whom alone "nations" could apply; there not dead only, but the wicked dead alone, for the righteous dead had been raised long before for the first resurrection.

With all the nations then alive agrees the character of the test applied, There is no such scrutiny as Romans speaks of for the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by our Lord Jesus, as before the great white throne. Then it will be that as many as sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as sinned under law shall be judged by law; and still more terrible will be the doom of those that rejected the gospel or even neglected so great salvation, as other scriptures declare. But here it is a simple and sole issue, which applies only to that living generation of all the nations: how did you treat the King's messengers when they preached this gospel of the kingdom before the end came? The end was now evidently come. The test was an open undeniable fact; but it proved whether they had, or had not, faith in the coming King. Those who honored the heralds of the kingdom showed their faith by their works, and so did those who despised them manifest their unbelief. The test was not only just but gracious. And "the King" pronounced accordingly. The form was new, as the circumstances were, but the foundation is the same for all the objects of God's mercy on the one hand, and for the objects of wrath on the other. So it was before the deluge, so it will be when the Son of man on His throne of glory on earth shall deal with all the nations. Apart from faith it is impossible to be acceptable; for he that approaches God must believe that He is, and becomes a rewarder of those that seek Him out.

So it will be with the blessed of these nations. Their conduct to those who preached the coming kingdom evinced

their faith, and the King's grace accepted to their astonishment what they did to His brethren, even the least, as done to Himself. The trials and sufferings of these "brethren" gave the Gentiles occasion to faith working by love, or to the total absence of it. It was so that Rahab the harlot was justified by works when she received the messengers; but her faith is as carefully stated by the apostle Paul: without faith indeed her works would have been evil. But she rightly judged that Jehovah and His people were above king and country; and this was a turning point for her not then only but to eternity. So it was with the sheep; and the sad reverse was no less true for the goats.

There is another element overlooked by those who confound Matt. 25:31-46 with Rev. 20:11-15. In the judgment of the dead but one class is stated, the dead who were not in the resurrection of the just. So only the unjust appear; and they are judged according to their works in all their life. Here appear not only the sheep and the goats, but the King's brethren, a third and highly honored class; none of them dead or risen, but all alive. Can there be conceived a more striking contrast? The traditional view is nothing but ignorant though unwitting contempt of this scripture, which many Christians do not really believe in simplicity, and therefore cannot understand. The resurrection state must exclude what we find herein. With the judgment of the quick, and in particular of "all the nations," all here is harmonious. At the end "of the age" He comes; at the end "of the world" He does not. There is then no world to come to. It is all gone, to appear afterwards quite new for eternity.

The decision is final, which led many to gloss over the marked distinctions, and mix it up with the close of Rev. 20 which is final too. But the one was at the beginning of the thousand years' reign, and the other at its end, when there could be no coming of the Lord to surprise the careless world, as He Himself teaches, but earth and heaven had fled away. To interpret the two (yea, and the three!) as the same is in effect to lose each, if not all, of these grand and solemn revelations.

Let it be observed that the righteous, though they had faith in the kingdom and therefore treated its preachers as became the truth, were evidently little instructed. For we see how little their intelligence rose above that of their unbelieving countrymen. But their heart was right by grace, as the King knew perfectly, who from the first separated these to the right and the others to the left. He allowed this ignorance to come out that He might give to all a profound lesson never to be forgotten. This is quite compatible with the righteous as they were alive in their natural bodies. But is such lack of intelligence consistent with the risen condition? When that which is perfect is come (and it surely comes at the resurrection of the just), that which is in part shall be done away. This was not at all the state as yet of these sheep, the righteous Gentiles; and the King only communicates to them before His throne what every Christian may be assumed now to know, with a vast deal more quite beyond them. Yet was the kingdom prepared for these, as for the righteous generally, from the world's foundation.

Notice also that the everlasting fire to which the unbelieving Gentiles of that epoch are consigned is said to have been "prepared for the devil and His angels," not for the goats, save that they fitted themselves for it by their evil ways. Compare also Rom. 9:22. The devil and his angels were not yet cast into the lake of fire. This will only be after Satan's last effort at the end of the millennium, as Rev. 20:10 tells us. But here the goats have now their portion, as the Beast and the False Prophet had a little before them, as we read in Rev. 19:20, and that while alive too.

Premillennialists like Alford, Birks, and almost all, are nearly as confused as the postmillennialists. The cause is evident: the ancient and general error which connects the scrutiny of "all the nations" in our chapter with the judgment of "the dead" in Rev. 20:11, &c. Resurrection is not nor could be predicated of "the nations" in the one; whereas it is the positive and essential statement in the other. When they are jumbled, dimness reigns, and alas! irreparably for distinctness of truth.

It must be borne in mind that stupendous facts had just taken place before all the nations are gathered here, facts ignored by most, yet all-important for understanding the position. The vast hosts of the west will have been destroyed from above at a stroke when the Beast and the False Prophet meet their doom. Soon after the eastern hordes led by the Assyrian of the prophets (Daniel's king of the north) will have been dissipated like the chaff. Edom will have met its final judgment (Isa. 53); and so will Gog with his numerous allies (Ezek. 38, 39). The Jews, and Christendom, will have been already judged, as we see in this discourse. Hence "all the nations" here summoned are composed of what remains after these executions of judgment; and, from the nature of the case, they must needs be exclusively living men who were quite lately placed under the responsibility of having heard "this gospel of the kingdom" preached by God-fearing Jews, whom the Lord will have sent for the express purpose before the end come.

This alone explains the peculiar criterion by which "the righteous" were marked off from their unbelieving fellows. It was His grace that blessed those who received these glad tidings; and now they hear of their blessed portion from the lips of the King. They were as amazed to learn His estimate of their faith working by love, as the hardened in their incredulity were to meet their awful end. We have no ground to believe that either the sheep or the goats ever heard the full gospel of God such as was preached by the Christian witnesses, any more than that the converted Jews themselves knew it as we do. We must leave room for the sovereign ways of God, dealing variously in His wisdom with the future quite as much as with the past. But for every sinful soul there must be faith for life eternal; and faith is from a report, and the report through God's word. Thus only can any fallen man be brought into living relation with Him. The measure has differed greatly at different times, as it will; but the principle is the same. This of course applies only to those who hear.

We may further and particularly note that there is not the least allusion to the resurrection here for either "the righteous" or "the accursed." On both sides they were Gentiles living in their natural bodies; for they are expressly said to be "all the nations" when they were gathered before the glorious throne of the Son of man. It is not, as in Rev. 20:11-15, impenitent sinners of every age and nation, and of mankind before there was a nation as in the ante-diluvian world. These had all died, and were now raised at the resurrection of the unjust, to be judged each according to his works. In Matt. 25:31, &c., all the Gentiles there find their doom decided by the way they treated the King's brethren, the messengers of "this gospel of the kingdom."

He had said that it should go forth "in all the habitable world for a witness to all the nations" {Matt. 24:14}. And now comes out the solemn issue. Some had shown, not merely benevolence, or self denial, or moral excellence in any formal degree, but love in varied ways to the servants who preached in the King's name the same truth which He had preached at the beginning of His public ministry. But it was faith which wrought in their love. If the King and His coming kingdom had been but a myth in their eyes, they would have at least ignored His messengers as impostors. They believed the message, contrary to all appearances, to be of God, and therefore treated its preachers with kindness; and are to enjoy the gracious result. Ancients and moderns lower, deprave, and destroy the true force of Christ's words by taking it as kindness to "the poor." Thus Chrysostom, for instance, one of the best of the Fathers, makes this lack of giving to the poor to be the fatal evil, even in the parables which set forth Christendom, of course with more appearance there, but everywhere wrong. It was not good done even to the sheep, but specifically to "My brethren," even the least of them.

So the King puts the difference of the two classes on the only right ground that could apply to "all the nations" then before His throne, after such a preaching as had by grace reached them before the end. Now it had come: the new age was begun. The King had done what none else; for He separated them all, and, as it is evident, individually with unfailing discernment.

Instead of their giving account to Him, He recounts to them why He set some on His right and some on the left. The ground for it He lays down with a majesty and a touching yet righteous character, appropriate and peculiar to Himself, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Yet it turned on faith that it might be according to grace, or alas! on unbelief where no grace was, but only self. Hence He said to the wondering righteous,

> Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren [whatever the living work to His despised and suffering messengers], ye did it to me {Matt. 25:40}.

How awful on the other hand for the unjust to hear, in answer to their more hurried summary,

> Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of these least, neither did ye [it] to me.

Yet was it altogether righteous.

Thus all at bottom rests on Christ, though His grace makes the most of what to others might seem little. But the point is lost when the special circumstances of these-. Gentiles is ignored, and men generalize, oblivious of the principle. Take Alford's note on "my brethren" as a sample (and he is far from the least intelligent):

> Not necessarily the saints with Him in glory -- though primarily those -- but also any of the great family of man(!). Many of them here judged may never have had the opportunity of doing these things to the saints of Christ properly so called (!!).

But here God took care that the preaching did reach them; and that the circumstances of its messengers should give opportunity to all the Gentiles here gathered for this manifestation of faith and love, but also of total indifference, to say the least. The faith working by love in the one class, and the utter unconcern of the other, laid bare respectively their fitness or unfitness for inheriting the kingdom. In all cases of saints, works are the evidence, faith of the word the instrument, Christ s work the ground, and God's grace the source.

It is well also to observe that the King does not call them adopted sons, as is the portion of Christians (Gal. 3:26), nor do they exhibit the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is characteristic of such, any more than either can be predicated of the OT. saints. He calls them "blessed" of *His* Father, but does not add of "yours"; for this was not their privilege to know as it is ours. Nor does He speak of the blessings according to God's counsels for us in the heavenlies, to which He chose us in Christ *before* the world's foundation. Even Bengel like others before and since made this strange confusion. The King bade them inherit the kingdom prepared for them *from* the world's foundation. They are elect and born of God, as all saints must be; but they do not reign with Christ in that day, any more than even "His brethren" among the Jews who survived this last crisis before the kingdom; whereas such as had been at that "time of the end" slain for His name will be raised to reign with Him as shown in Rev. 20:4. But those saved of Gentiles like the saved of Israel will have a distinctive place of honor over those born during the millennial reign, as we may gather from Rev. 7 and 14. As elect Jews will have known "flesh saved" from the tribulation which is to befall the rebellious people, so elect Gentiles emerge out of "the great tribulation" in their own quarters: contra-distinguished from the church, whom the Lord declares He will keep out of the hour of trial that is about to come on the whole habitable world to try those that dwell on the earth.

If there were the slightest value in "universal consent," it would be hard to find a clearer sample than in the traditional interpretation of the sheep and the goats gathered before the King. Is there a single commentator of note who does not educe from it what they call "the greatest judgment of all mankind" at the end of the world? The postmillennialists are at least more consistent than most premillenialists; because the former are entirely in error,

whereas the latter know enough truth to make their system incoherent and themselves without excuse. Let us seek to realize what the hypothesis means. If the terms admitted of all the dead being then raised from the grave, how do the criteria apply to the ante-diluvians? Had they the opportunity of receiving the King's brethren in their varied trials, or of neglecting them to His dishonor?

No such mission of old can be sustained for a moment. Noah alone preached to warn in his day of coming ruin through the deluge; but it was only to that generation, and not at all "this gospel of the Kingdom." Again, how or where were His brethren? And how can it be shown in "the world that now is" since the deluge? In due time Jehovah gave Israel His law; but this was as far as possible from "the gospel of the kingdom." Where comes in at that time the preaching of "this gospel?" Now the law and the prophets were till John, who first preached that the kingdom had drawn nigh, because Messiah the King was there. And so the Lord preached, and the Twelve. But His rejection interrupted this, and the cross postponed it, giving meanwhile a new and mysterious form to it during His absence on high (Matt. 13) till Israel's heart turn to the Lord, saying, Blessed be He that cometh in Jehovah's name. A righteous remnant takes up the word before the end comes, whom the Lord will convert and send forth, and preaches it as a testimony to all the nations, before the Son of man appears to establish it in power.

During the many years that precede this extraordinary mission to all the habitable world, the ground of statement as stated in Rom. 2:12 is for mankind generally wholly different. For there is no respect of persons with God, who will then judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, which, can scarce apply to this scene. Hence, while there is a resurrection of life for such as (hearing the word of Jesus and believing God that sent him) have life, eternal life, there will be at length also a resurrection of judgment for those who, believing not, produced only evil works. This is the judgment in Rev. 20:11, &c., where all had been dead but raised and judged according to their works, and are therefore lost. But it is an evident and total contrast with the King's decision about the living Gentiles, to whom His brethren, the converted of the Jews, are to preach before the end, and proved righteous or reprobate as they behaved to the bearers of "this gospel of the kingdom." Clearly the test here employed by the King suits only the living Gentiles who had treated well or ill His brethren with whom they are confronted, because of their faith or unbelief in the King who pronounces on both. The character is peculiar and necessarily determined by the brief mission of "this gospel of the kingdom" before the end. It was in no sense the end of the *world* (*κόσμου*, but of the *age* (*αἰῶνος*), when the King had not yet come to reign over the earth. This appraisal of all the Gentiles is when He shall have come in His glory, and shall sit on His throne. It will thus be plain that Rev. 20 in the two resurrections exactly agrees with the Lord's discourse in John 5:21-29; while Matt. 25:31-46, though equally true, wholly differs from both.

We may see an interesting link between Matt. 24:14 and Matt. 25:40, 45. "His brethren" were those who at the time of the end carried "this gospel of the kingdom" to all the nations, which are blessed or cursed by the King's decree according to their behavior toward those who thus and then brought the word of God. It was not brethren of the intervening Christian character, but the converted Jews to the Gentiles. And as these brethren are thus honored by the King, so are the Gentiles blessed who received and entreated them well, the Son of man being come and reigning over both. It is the age to come, not the judgment of the dead; and the ground on which the solemn decision depended fits into no time or circumstances of the Gentiles, save the eventful mission by a future remnant of godly Jews who preach the gospel of the kingdom just before the Son of man comes to enforce it.

Appendix 3 for Matthew:
The Lord's Great Prophecies in the Gospels
Matthew 24, 25; Mark 14; Luke 21

{From "Elements of Prophecy," Chapter 9, *The Bible Treasury* 10:327.}

It is allowed by the historical school that there is a real difficulty in every hypothesis, so as to make caution peculiarly needful in treating of this prophecy; and indeed that many who differ from the Futurists elsewhere seem almost ready to adopt their exposition here. The prophecy begins with troubles in the apostolic age; it closes with the second advent of our Lord; yet there are express words in it, besides the apparent connection of its parts, which seem to confine it within the limits of one generation. But these considerations being inconsistent with each other, which of them must be modified or abandoned?

Three answers, it is alleged, have been given. That of Bishop Newton and others, who adopt a figurative construction of the closing scene, and thus cut it off from all immediate or direct reference to the Lord's personal return; that of the Futurists (Burgh, McCausland, Tyso, &c.), who sever its beginning from apostolic times, and regard all as converging on the end of the age; that of Bengel, Horsley, &c., who would trace a continuation from the siege of Titus to the second advent. As the moderns confess the untenableness of the first view, which chiefly rests on an unfounded restriction of "this generation" to the apostolic age, we must look a little more closely into the other two.

The truth really is, that Luke 21 furnishes, not a parallel to Matthew 24 or Mark 13, but a most important supplement. This is lost, if one regards his vv. 20 *et seqq*. as an inspired paraphrase of the two other Gospels, and thus miss the true force of "the abomination of desolation" on one side, and of "the days of the vengeance" on the other. The parallelism of the prophecy is admitted; but this is perfectly consistent with the belief that the Lord uttered truths, some of which the Spirit led one to omit and another to record, and *vice versa*. No parallel in the Gospels is absolute, nor indeed in any part of scripture. The measure of correspondence depends on the degree in which the divine design in each permits or opposes it. It was the same occasion, and substantially the same discourse; but the design of the Holy Spirit working by each writer accounts for the difference in each reproduction of the prophecy. Inspiration is characterized by the Spirit's selection in accordance with His special object by each instrument. This is the true key, not the notion that Luke 17 is the real parallel to Matthew.

Again, the point of departure in no way decides this question. Granted that in all three Gospels the prediction starts from times close at hand, instead of pointing at once to the end of the age; but how does it hinder the Spirit from vouchsafing the true link of transition in one Gospel, while the other two pass this and converge on what precedes the close which it omitted? It is the less reasonable to reject this solution; as it is confessed that between the first and second Gospels there is a very general agreement in the words of the prediction, while in the third there are much more numerous deviations. To assume that a marked deviation in Luke is a comment on Matthew and Luke is of all explanations the least satisfactory; that it should supply what is lacking in the others, because in accordance with its own design, is as simple as sure, and worthy of God who gave them all. The meaning, of "the abomination," &c., in Matthew or Mark is not therefore to be explained away by the compassing "with armies," any more than "the holy place" points to the mountain on the east, or the "desolation" is that which has now lasted almost eighteen hundred years.

But it is a total misconception that the denial of the absolute parallelism of Luke with Matthew and Mark involves the thought that no part of the prophecy relates to that destruction of the temple which was then imminent, for this never should have been a matter of hesitation to any believer. Further, it is puerile to say that the abomination [or idol] of desolation corresponds in identity with our Savior's words a little before,

> Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

This is no better than verbal trifling. Nor does the historical fulfilment of Luke 21:20 afford the least evidence as to the true and proper meaning of Matt. 2415; for this is the question -- its meaning, rather than its fulfilment.

It is a plain error that our Lord's prophecy is professedly an answer to the specific inquiry about the destruction of the temple; for they say,

> Tell us, when shall these things be, and what the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age? {Matt. 24:3}.

For larger and more remote events were thus in question. It is not a choice therefore between the views which look only at the next ensuing generation, or at the last generation before the second advent; for the truth is that, while all three Gospels start from events at hand, and all close with the presence of the Son of man in power and glory, only Luke 21:24 gives the transitional "times of the Gentiles," during which Jerusalem is trodden down by them.

Again, it appears to me demonstrable that, as Dan. 11:31 refers to the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, long passed when our Lord prophesied on Mount Olivet, so the reference in Matt. 24:15, Mark 13:14, is exclusively, as well as certainly,

to Dan. 12:11, and therefore an event not only not accomplished at the siege of Titus, but wholly future and bound up with the final tribulation and deliverance of Israel. It is ridiculous to identify, as some of the historicalists do, Dan. 11:31, 12:11, for one is wholly past, and the other absolutely future, and neither of them in any way connected with Titus. It is allowed that the phrase, "in a holy place" *ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ* is not so precise as those in Acts 6:13, 21:28; but the other part of the clause is not "an," but "*the* abomination of desolation," and means that idol which brings desolation on the Jews, their city and temple.

The true place of transition is then indicated in Luke 21:24, but this is an added statement, owing to the peculiar design of his Gospel, and in no way a comment on one word in Matthew or Mark. But the great and unparalleled tribulation in these two Gospels is clearly proved by Dan. 12:1 to be not a past but a future event, just before Israel's blessing at the end of the age, and far more precise than the mere "days of vengeance" in Luke 21:22. His comparatively moderate terms, in v 23, "there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people," were historically verified, and are in the clearest contradistinction from the statements of Matt. 24:21, 20 and Dan. 12:1, which, beyond doubt, are future, and as yet unfulfilled.

It has not been adequately considered how completely Luke 21:32 settles the real bearing of those much-debated words,

> This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.

As long as they were regarded only in the light of Matt. 24 and Mark 13, there remained room for doubt; and certainly there could not but be doubt without a just and sure understanding of their context; and this was the very thing most contested. Those who restrained the chapters to the apostolic period, or to the end of the age, interpreted the clause according to their respective theory. But the truth is larger than either of these human views; and when its extent and precision withal are seen, the light which flows from these words of our Lord is no longer hindered or perverted. To this end the third Gospel contributes invaluable help, not certainly by swamping the other two, but by the fresh wisdom of God communicated by Luke, making us understand each so much the better because we have all, and thus furnishing a more comprehensive perception and enjoyment of the entire truth.

Here then God has taken care for the first time to introduce "the times of the Gentiles" still going on after the Roman siege of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. Then from v. 25 we have the signs of the last days, and finally the Son of man seen coming in a cloud with power and great glory, proving the futility of the scheme which would confound Titus capturing Jerusalem (vv. 20-24) with the Son of man appearing in v. 27. But it is after this that we read in v. 32:

> Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.

It is not till they "begin to come to pass," of which we do read in v. 28, and a call to the faithful when they see it to "look up and lift up their heads." This generation is not to pass till ALL *be* fulfilled (*γένηται*). No language can be more accurate. This Christ-rejecting, unbelieving, stubborn and rebellious generation of the Jews should not pass away till then. A new generation will follow. The expression has a moral, and not a mere chronological, sense. (Compare Psa. 12:7 (Heb. 8) in contrast with the generation to come. [74] See Psa. 22, 30 (31), 31, (32). The clause therefore seems to be meant in its unlimited strength, and so put by the third Evangelist as to render all other applications impossible. Nor is there the least ground for taking it otherwise in the corresponding places of Matthew and Mark; but Luke demonstrates this.

The case then stands thus. On the one hand Matthew and Mark do not notice the times of the Gentiles, which Luke was inspired to present very distinctly as well as the successes of the Gentiles, not only when their armies conquered Jerusalem, and led the people captive into all nations, but also during their continued occupation of that city as in fact has been the case for 1800 years. On the other hand Matthew and Mark, but not Luke, notice distinctly the setting up of the abomination of desolation and the unequaled time of trouble just before the Son of man comes for the deliverance of the elect in Israel at the end of the age, passing at once from the early troubles in the land (while Jerusalem was still an object of testimony) to the last days, when it reappears with its temple and the Jews there, but alas! the deceived of Satan and his instruments till the Lord appears in judgment. Hence it will be observed that there is no question in Luke 21 as to "the sign of His coming and of the end of the age." In all this I see not confusion, but the perfect mind of God giving what was exactly suited to each Gospel. It is the comment which confuses the truth, instead of learning from each and all. In Matthew and Mark the future crisis follows a preliminary sketch of troubles put so generally as to apply both to the apostolic times and to the earlier epoch when the Jews return and rebuild their city and temple in unbelief before the age ends: Matt. 24:4-14 (Mark 13:5-13) being the general sketch, and vv. 15-31 (Mark 13:14-27) the crisis at the close or last half-week of Daniel's unfulfilled seventieth week. Luke alone gives us anything like continuity in the very brief words of Luke 21:24, as he alone gives us distinctly in this prophecy the past destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, as he does also in Luke 19:43, 44. Luke 17:22-37 I do not doubt also refers to Jerusalem, but exclusively in the latter day, when the Son of man is revealed, not when Titus sacked it. In that day there will be a perfect discrimination of persons in the judgment, which proves it to be divine, not a mere providential event however awful.

74. {"This generation" is the Christ-rejecting generation of Israel, beginning in the time of Moses. The "generation to come" will be the new Israel under the New Covenant.}

Appendix 4 for Matthew: Matthew 18:20

"Unto My Name"
Matt. 18:20

It is humbling and grievous when a servant of the Lord gives up any truth of God which he had not only held but advocated publicly, then doubted, and finally denies, from mere sentiment wasting scripture to popular error. Such is the character of "Gathering in the Name of the Lord Jesus." The friend who sent me the tract regards its writer as the best-taught man in their circle. Yet here he has sunk lower than many of his associates, even on his own showing in the first paragraph of p. 7; for they, if mistaken in their claim to be gathered to that Name, at least own it to be the only right aim for true worshipers. So sadly has he lost this truth as to stigmatize it as "the Corinthian school of Christ" (p. 8) "against all the names of Paul, Apollos and Cephas!" "This is carnality," he says! Is it not deplorable to see a Christian become more unbelieving as he grows older? carried away by the Laodicean spirit of the day beyond many who probably, know less, and blinded to excuse and spread utter laxity under cover of grace which is not grace? Can one honestly say less?

T. N. knows that those who in faith regard it as a special privilege and duty, to be gathered together to the Lord's name, are the farthest of any on earth from setting it against Paul, Apollos and Cephas. It was therefore wholly different with these frivolous Corinthians; who, while abiding in the same fellowship, did really and irreverently from their old philosophic habit set up in rivalry not those blessed servants only but the Divine Master as heads of opposing schools! Is there the least approach even to superficial resemblance? We dread all schism; we disclaim denominations or sects. These are what the apostle calls "heresies," and warns, in 1 Cor. 11:18, 19, as the sure issue [75] of unjudged schism. Yet the gist of this tract is to make light even of that graver evil, and goes so far as to rebuke the better desires of his own companions who left the sects, in order (as they judged) to be gathered to the Lord's name.

According to his present view, and "the Keswick motto," whether maintaining sects, or abjuring them, all Christians in the existing disorder and confusion, are alike gathered to His name. If he said that, as members of Christ and walking consistently, they are entitled to be received in His name and are free to take their place, it is true. But what if they ignore it and prefer a gathering according to their own views, or an organization that sets aside God's? Can it be that standing to this looseness, go where he will among orthodox denominations, he and other believers honor that precious privilege as truly as in apostolic days? There was an early man among Brethren (A. N. G.) [76] who seems to have entertained or slipped into a similar negation of all divine principle. To simple and intelligent souls this was ever abhorrent. For it stultifies all scripture which treats of the church, and in particular this Epistle which T. N. perverts to his aid. Can he honestly believe that, when the apostle addresses the church of God that is in Corinth, "with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" {1 Cor. 1:2} he sanctions separate sects, and accepts what he calls a heretic (Titus 3:10, 11) as all the same gathered {together?} to the Lord's name? This is beyond doubt what the argument involves, as foolish a thought as it is faithless.

It is therefore mere evasion of "gathered {together} to the name of Christ" if we pretend that when gathered as "Presbyterians and Episcopalians, Baptists and Methodists, and those who refuse all separating titles" (to take his own phrase in p. 8), Christians, however earnest, are nevertheless gathered {together?} to His name. They are never so gathered {together} while they abide in religious corporations framed on these extra-scriptural lines. Nor is the refusal of "separating titles" enough. There must be the positive gathering {together} to His name as the divinely given, only, and adequate center for God's children, to the exclusion of all that is incompatible with it by the word and Spirit of God. Matt. 18:15-20 supposes but one communion, no matter in how many places even in the same city they may meet. [77] The church or assembly here and everywhere else in scripture implies inter-communion, and never allows of a fellowship independent and differing one from another. As the Head is one, so is the church according to God's will, who has sent forth the Holy Spirit to act as the power and bond of union for this end. "For also in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all given to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). See also Eph. 4.

But it is a delusion to fancy that if souls break away from divine unity for divers doctrines and governments of man's device, they are notwithstanding gathered to the Lord's name. Sect or heresy is insubjection to the Lord, whatever the plea

75. {He means that *schisms* existing inside the assembly (as they did at Corinth) issue in *heresy*, i.e., *sect*, outside when an open split ensues. See his notes on 1 Cor. 11:18, 19. This is the Scripture meaning of schism and heresy, not as in a dictionary of the English language}.

76. {Anthony Norris Groves.}

77. {The reader might observe that this paper was published in 1905, the year of W. Kelly's death.}

to vindicate such a departure. The same apostle who laid down the principle of one body is the one to pronounce the man guilty of such self-will as perverted and sinning, being self-condemned. Heterodoxy or strange doctrine [78] is quite another evil, which may go so far as to deny God's everlasting judgment of sin, or His glory who bore it away from all who believe. Surely great is the sin if one deliberately seeks to make light of the evil of denominations which directly oppose that for which Christ died: not, it is true, to save the lost, but to gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:51, 52). How bold to assert, that if Christians set up new limits of fellowship which narrow or broaden the divine will, they are to be notwithstanding condoned, and no less gathered unto His name than those who are faithful and obedient! Some may flatter themselves that this amiability is growth in grace; whereas it is increasing looseness, and the unwitting desire to excuse themselves and other careless Christians at the cost of Christ's honor and word, to say nothing of the personally present Spirit.

As to a junction of such believers to supplicate God the Father in the Son's name, they surely may, and never in vain for what is His will. But any union for the nonce falls far short of being gathered together unto His name. For this is nothing less than the constitutive principle of the church, abides always (even when not assembled) in its relation and its consequences, and has its "within" and "without" with incumbent duties permanently. He who refused subjection to righteous judgment of his manifest wrong, even to the extreme point of equitable and gracious desire to win him, was to be for a passing season as one of the outside Gentiles. He must, till repentance, lie under the stigma; as the rest would enjoy the standing privileges of their common relationship. For "the church" was to take the place of Christ-rejecting Israel on earth, of Jerusalem and the temple, though in living association with heaven far beyond Moriah or Zion. This is to read in faith what the Lord put into these verses; the tract forgets and tries to blot it out. Neither first nor last was the church to be a rendezvous for casuals. To be believers is not the point but to have His presence as the sanction of acts when gathered together to His name. To have the bishop as the center with presbyters and deacons was the device of the second century and onwards; to have nothing but believers of all orthodox sects or of none is an abuse; to own the Lord in the midst of those (were they but two or three) who own no center but the Lord is the sound and sole principle of God's church. But if it came to "two or three," what grief and humiliation became them, and utter refusal to arrogate to themselves {the title of} "the" church, though eschewing all sects but taking their stand upon that ground of grace and truth and nothing else!

To assume that to be saints in the denominations makes them notwithstanding truly gathered together to the Lord's name opens the door to nullify the church, for which it substitutes a mere rope of sand. It is the device of latitudinarianism, and the abandonment of the Lord's promise to those who are gathered together unto His name. And what can be plainer, to those who have learned from scripture the impending ruin evident already to inspired eyes and revealed in the Epistles and the Revelation, than that the Lord before the beginning here as elsewhere intimates that the falling away might be so great that only two or three here and there might be thus gathered in faith of God's will ecclesiastically for fidelity here below? Yet does He deign to provide the sanction here promised to those who obey His word in face of trial and ill report, instead of following the multitude in pride of antique error, or turning to indifference, novelty, and what not.

In earlier days believers were freely received as Christ's members who, having no right notion of the church, were hardly to be counted guilty of departure from what was of God. Yet those who personally departed could plead for no such favor. But there is now an ominous change foreboding "the apostasy." No saint in those days tolerated the sacerdotalism of Christendom with its lie of apostolic succession as the warrant, its saving ordinances, and its idolatry with the real presence of a demon. Still less had we to challenge those who countenanced the gross scepticism of the Higher critics, though we had to refuse such as fell into the denial of God's judgment of sins or the soul's natural immortality. We are now bound to apply the later tests of scripture.

When giving up in principle that blessed privilege, how self-deceiving it is to say, "Oh let me ever be gathered, when gathered at all, in that Name And what I prize so much myself let me not refuse to any saint of God." Some at least of his own company will not deny that he has himself falsified the Lord's mind, and that what he has just written does not come from God but can only mislead those who heed it. It is no question of refusing to any saint of God his true place and privilege, but of convincing the erring that to be of a denomination contradicts it, and that to claim both is unfaithfulness and folly. As I have no wish to expose bad reasoning and misapplied kindly feeling, I refrain from doing more than, for the help of souls, pointing out the writer's radical mistake and sad declension, with much regret that it is a plain duty to do so.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:295-298 (1905)).

78. {W. Kelly held that the forming of a sect, i.e., a heretical group, may not necessarily involve heterodoxy, i.e., fundamentally evil doctrine -- or it might involve it, but not necessarily.}

Scripture Queries and Answers Regarding Matt. 18:20

Q. -- Matt. 18:20. It has been recently stated that men like Mr. J. N. Darby sought to help out their interpretation [of this scripture] "by a quite unwarrantable change in the translation of the words *εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα*, which they rendered unto my name, and took to import a gathering to Christ's Name as a rallying point." Is there any doubt of the right version? or any warrant for so evil an imputation?

A. -- None whatever for either: no true scholar could have weighed the usage and given such an opinion. The evidence is decisively for the change. The aim for opposing it is to set aside the ecclesiastical character of the context, on which the Lord has impressed it so indelibly, that almost all the jarring parties of Christendom recognize that character, though they naturally overlook a word which none of them heeds, and which does mean a living and exclusive center. Its denial is a very bold exegetical error; for any serious inspection of the Lord's words suffices to prove that the case adduced had passed out of individual dealing to "the church" or assembly (not the synagogue). Then the Lord (Matt. 18:18) strengthens this with His solemn averment of heaven's sanction of their binding and loosing (not the keys), and His gracious assurance of His Father's answer to the united petition of even two. Then He closes with the general principle for the worst of times (v. 20) that He is in the midst, where two or three are gathered unto His name. The last promise is an invaluable guard against party work, as well as unbelief and the world. It speaks little to hearts which never had, or have lost, faith in His word or presence.

As to usage, the case in question quite differs from *ἐπὶ τῷ ὀν.* in ver. 5, where His name is made the motive, condition, or ground for receiving a little child, and *εἰς* would have been out of place. It is therefore strictly "on," not "in"; and so in Acts 2:38 Peter bade repentant Jews be baptized, each of them *on* (*ἐπὶ*) the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins; and they should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. If they had repented, they were already born of the Spirit, as where real is invariably the case. Compare Matt. 24:5, Mark 9:37, 39, 12:6, 9. In Luke 1:9 it shades into "after." In Acts 10:48 the same Peter commanded the Gentile believers to be baptized *in* (*ἐν*) the Lord's name. See Mark 16:17; Luke 10:17; John 5:43 &c. It would have been just as possible and true to have said "*on*"; but *it* is not the same thought or expression as in virtue (or, in the power) of His name. In Acts 11:16 Peter speaks of the Holy Spirit's baptism, contrasted with John's, as *ἐν Ιν. ἁγ.* in the Holy Spirit, where *ἐπὶ*, on, would have failed, for *ἐν* means in the power of the Spirit Himself. In Acts 19:5 as in 8:16 the object proposed in baptism occurs, and here it is neither "in" nor "on," but "unto," εἰς. The Revisers correct the faulty "in" of the A. V. but say "into" which is refuted by their own rendering of 1 Cor. 10:2 (where "into" would be improper), and by the A. V. of Acts 19:3. The Greek admits of either "unto," or "into" according to context, which here requires the former. Water baptism does not imply more than "to" or "unto." It is profession only; and the very aim of the apostle in 1 Cor. 10 is to insist that it might be without life. So in our Lord's commission in Matt. 28:19, it is baptizing "to" or "unto" the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It was baptism with water, and could not itself carry deeper. But the baptism of the Spirit has quite a different power, and effects incorporation, not "unto" merely as profession, but "into" one body, Christ's body {1 Cor. 12:13}. Dean Alford gave up "in" but argued for "into" invalidly, his views being uncertain here as too often.

In Matt. 10:41, 42 we have indeed the peculiar phrase of receiving a prophet; a righteous man, and a disciple, "unto" (*εἰς*) each's respective name, or as such. Here it is perhaps hard to avoid *in English* saying "in the prophet's name"; but it really means as aforesaid, and not what would have been imported by *ἐν*, in the power or authority of each, as in Christ's name or even without any preposition as in Matt. 7:22. But Meyer thinks that here "by" Thy name is preferable; and this may well be the just sense of a Greek phrase which differs from the rest, the instrumental dative.

Again, such forms as *ἕνεκεν τοῦ* or *διὰ τὸ* (or, *ὑπὲρ τοῦ* are indisputably "for thy Name's sake," so that we need not say more.

In the A. V., &c. Phil. 2:10 is, we all know, rendered "at" the name of Jesus, a rendering on which a well known and pervading practice of superstition was founded. The Revisers here say "in" (*ἐν*). If right, it means as usual in virtue of His name all creatures shall bow.

In l Cor. 5:4-13 where putting out for wickedness is laid down peremptorily and perspicuously, it is in (*ἐν*) the Lord's name that the assembled saints were charged to act. It was ordered of God that the written word should enjoin excommunication, when no apostle was actually there, nor apostolic delegate like Titus, and no elders had yet been appointed. This abides as the inalienable duty, as does the divine warrant for the assembly's act, whenever the sorrowful need calls for this last resort. The Corinthian saints were light in various ways and had shirked or ignored what was due to the Lord, not even mourning that one so guilty should be taken away from them. The apostle insisted on purging the leaven out, in accordance with the sacrifice of Christ our passover; and the Spirit took care that as Christendom would show special disregard of this Epistle, it should be more impressively addressed than in any other, not to that assembly only, but coupling with it "all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, both theirs and ours" {1 Cor. 1:2}. Slight is therefore verily inexcusable.

As a matter of fact too, it was not till *long after* the Christians referred to had gathered {together}, not as belonging to denominations, but simply as members of Christ, recognizing the one body and one Spirit according to the word, that the precise force of the Lord's word in Matt. 18:20 struck any. Believing in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost, they had learned the immense value of every inspired word. Tradition had no place in their eyes. Since they accepted every scripture as God-breathed and profitable, they sought entire subjection to it as a living word, while declining either to claim more than they had or to substitute human devices in lieu of what they had not. Any scholar who looks into the text in question must allow that, unless there were an obstacle from our idiom in this particular case, "unto" must be the exact force; for "into" would be absurd, and ἐν properly, not εἰς, means "in." But, far from a difficulty, the context here favors nothing so much as the proper import of εἰς, gathered "unto" My Name as the central presence on which they all depend and confide.

It was thus and only then perceived to be a confirmation of their position, already founded on the revealed principles of God's assembly, modified as this must be by the ruin not less carefully fore-shown in the later Epistles and the Revelation, of which we are bound to take account, if we avoid that assumption which is so unworthy of Christ and so unbecoming in all that are His. How blessed to know that Christ remains as ever the center for even two or three gathered to His Name!

But it was received as certain truth, on the evidence of scripture better understood and independently of any ground other than the precise and -- full meaning of our Savior's words. Just so for many other truths of moment we have learned since: we acted on the little that we first knew to be from God and of God; for we need the Spirit as well as the word. "To him that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken from him." Nothing more perilous to man, nothing more dishonoring to God, than to give up what we once confessed and enjoyed as divine. Who can tell where departure once begun may end?

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:94-97).

Q. Matt. 18:18-20. In a company of 40 or 50 saints gathered to the Lord's name, can "two or three" be said to constitute the assembly to the exclusion of the rest? Is the decision of a few to be regarded as that of God's assembly, and binding not only on all the rest, even if their consciences are distressed, but on all assemblies elsewhere, even though some of the grounds taken are now acknowledged by the few themselves to be unfounded? Is a hasty act thus done to be viewed as ratified in heaven and irrevocable?

G. W. Y. (Hamilton, Canada.)

A. Such a pretension is intolerable. It is not only without an atom of scripture but directly opposed to the nature and truth of God's assembly, where exclusion e.g. is not binding unless carrying with it the consciences of all. In peculiar cases there might be of course near relatives or friends, perhaps even partisans or accomplices more or less, whose opinions ought not to be given and if given ought to be rebuked rather than heeded. But as a rule discipline according to the Lord must and does carry the simplest as well as the spiritual with it. Where will or personal feeling works, it would destroy weight, and such persons are not in a state to guide the assembly. It might be that the condition of those gathered might show such a lack of conscience, destroyed by error or given up to self-will and laxity, that godly souls might be forced after due waiting and solemn warning in vain, to withdraw from the meeting as no longer God's assembly. This is possible no doubt, but very delicate and extreme case. But the notion of two or three out of forty or fifty constituting the assembly, and staying in with those whose protest they ignore and despise, is a snare of Satan to force their own will, and is a return to the Popish principle that the clergy are the church. I do not believe that such a decision is bound in heaven or binding on assemblies on earth or individuals; though it does not therefore follow that hasty action would be right, either as to receiving elsewhere the one wrongly dealt with or as to the withdrawal of those aggrieved by it. Prayer and humiliation would be the resource, not agitation nor separation. The Lord knows how to interfere and correct what is amiss; for it is the merest superstition that a wrong or mistake by an assembly is to abide unrescinded. And if the assembly deliberately accepted such a principle as that "two or three" could make up their minds and go through the form of putting away, for instance, contrary to the judgment of the rest, yet binding it on the consciences of all, it is evident that neither the discipline nor the assembly is really according to scripture; and, after due testimony if the evil were persisted in, both should be disowned as not of God.

Indeed the truth is more stringent far. For the putting away to be valid must be through God's action on the consciences of all (allowing for such exceptions as have been stated); and the action of a few, if ever so right in their thoughts, against the consciences of others is no longer the assembly's act. Not even two or three godly men who do not go with the action can be rightly ignored. [79] The rest are bound to wait. The majority is a human principle and essentially different from the assembly where God dwells and in which He acts to glorify the Lord. As the rule, it is when action is precipitate or excessive that it fails to carry along the consciences of all. Nor is haste a slight fault in such cases. It

79. {On the other hand, recalcitrant persons, and partisans, are not to be allowed either.}

is flesh, and not of the Spirit; it breeds parties, no less than excess does, which produces reaction in the saints, and leads to sympathy with the evil-doer who is thus wronged, instead of all the godly uniting in their horror of his evil. If a few were ever so right in their judgment, yet forced it on spite of others who conscientiously differed, it would not be of God, as being a practical denial of His assembly. Hence one must not push things beyond their conviction as before God. Nothing is rightly done unless they prove themselves clear in the matter. Grace thus turns the godly exercise of extreme discipline by the assembly into exercise of soul and positive blessing in their humbling of themselves before God. Human will, whether in one or in many, brings in terrorism or wheedling, confusion and every evil work, self-exaltation and party-spirit, to the utter destruction of waiting on God by faith, subjection to the word of the Lord, and the gracious and holy uniting power of the Holy Ghost.

(*The Bible Treasury* 11:47-48).

Appendix 5 for Matthew: On the Revised New Testament: Matthew

This article from *The Bible Treasury* 13 has been inserted here as an image file.

ON THE REVISED NEW TESTAMENT.

BELIEVING that it may be of service to examine the just published result of the ten years' labour bestowed by the Committee of Revision on the New Testament, I proceed to give a review of their more noteworthy changes from first to last. In this way the reader will have in the simplest and fullest way the evidence of their work for good or for ill before his own eyes, so as to preclude (as much as possible) any representation of its character otherwise than it really is. The close of the survey will afford a more just and fitting occasion to offer an opinion as to its value as a whole. It is but natural to us all to be either carried away by a hasty conclusion based on what pleases us at a first glance and a general impression, or to be unfairly repelled by corrections which, however well-grounded or wisely applied, shock the prejudices of our ignorance. Nevertheless none can well overlook the fact that the revisers have studiously sought to pre-

serve the dignified simplicity of the Authorised Version, as they have assuredly purged it from an immense number of inaccuracies, known more or less to the christian scholars who have studied our Bible during the last two centuries and a half. Indeed it was the impulse given to Biblical research by the mass of materials brought to light or considerably better known within the hundred years just passed which forced on this revision, notwithstanding the rather strong obstacles offered through the enormous circulation of the Authorised Version by the chief Bible and other Societies and by the public or private printers, who would obviously dread the probable depreciation of their vast stocks, &c. Apart from such influences, every sober and godly believer desires to have revealed truth in the purest form.

But there are two principal sources of difficulty: one of the original text; the other of translation. Of the two the harder to settle is the question of the Greek text; and the answer to this, though not the avowed object of the revisers, was necessarily their first and urgent duty to meet before the task of rendering could be carried on. Although able critics have for a century sought to edit the Greek Testament on documentary evidence of Greek manuscripts, ancient versions, and early citations, none as yet has succeeded in commanding more than partial confidence; neither Griesbach nor Scholz, neither Lachmann, nor Tischendorf, nor Tregelles; neither Meyer in his Critical Commentary, nor Alford nor Wordsworth. Hence it has been a necessity, for any careful and conscientious scholar who would really know the sources, to compare several of these editions, and search into the grounds on which their differences depend, so as to have anything like a correct and enlarged view of the text, and to judge fairly of the claims of conflicting readings. But few of the revisers themselves entered on their grave and responsible task with adequate and special knowledge of that which was essential to the right execution of their undertaking; and though no doubt their long and unremitting occupation with the subject has helped most of them to a much better understanding than they possessed at first, yet it is certain that, in order to do such a work well, mature spiritual judgment, with continual dependence on the Lord, is just as essential as a sound and thorough familiarity with the ancient witnesses of all kinds. For it could not but be that in so mixed a Committee the few adepts, who were at home in all the external matters of debate and possessed of superior learning and ability in these questions, would have an easy and habitual preponderance over the less intelligent majority, especially after these had exposed to those their own shortcomings at an early day. But N. T. critics however skilled and competent, might be men of strong bias and committed to a mistaken or narrow school of recension, which would be sure to tell unfavourably on the revision, unless there were others of equal power and knowledge to stand for larger views with no less firmness and decision. How far one or other of these alternatives may apply to the working of the Revisers is best known to wise men among themselves: the fruit of their labours is before us, and we would now without further preface look into the details, which may disclose enough to outsiders.

The Gospel according to St Matthew.

The first thing that strikes the mind, as undesirable in an accurate version of the Scriptures, is, that words supplied by the translators, which have no counterpart in the original, should not be designated as such by italics as attempted more or less fully in the Authorised Bible. Dr. Scrivener's Cambridge Paragraph Bible sought this more systematically, and therefore is happier in this respect. In the Revised New Testament, on the contrary, the indication of supply is less than ever. It would have been better for the reader had the amount indicated been far greater. Take the instance of "the Lord" so common in the Synoptic Gospels, especially Matthew and Luke, where the Greek word is anarthrous, and means Jehovah. (See Matt. i. 20, 22, 24.)* Not so the official title of Christ, unless employed predicatively which would of course deprive it of the article. Again, in i. 20 we have "take unto thee," and in 24 "took unto him," without indicating that the pronouns are supplied. So with "our" in iii. 9. It seems arbitrary to print "it" in Roman in ii. 3, and in Italics in iii. 15. Many an unlettered preacher is thus exposed to dwell with emphasis on words merely inserted by the translators as if they were the veritable expressions of the Holy Spirit, from which error they were better guarded by the Authorised Version, and ought to have been yet more now. It is allowable in a version of a Greek or Latin Classic or of any human composition to supply what seems idiomatically requisite in our tongue without distinct notification to the reader. But Scripture stands alone, and deserves the homage of carefully distinguishing what man judges necessary in the language which reflects the original. In some cases it may prove a danger signal; in all it seems due to God and man. As the tendency of the day is to deny the difference between the word of God and any other book, it is the more imperative.

* Here is a list of these occurrences: Matthew i. 20, 22, 24; ii. 13, 15, 19; iii. 3; iv. 7, 10; v. 33; xxi. 9, 42; xxii. 37, 44; xxiii. 39; xxvii. 10; xxviii. 2. Mark i. 3; xi. 9; xii. 11, 29 (bis) 30, 36; xiii. 20. Luke i. 6, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17, 25, 28, 32, 38, 45, 46, 58, 66, 68, 76; ii. 9 (bis), 15, 22, 23 (bis), 24, 26, 38, 39; iii. 4; iv. 8, 12, 18, 19; v. 17; x. 27; xiii. 35; xix. 38; xx. 37, 42. John i. 23; xii. 13, 38. Acts ii. 20, 21, 25, 34, 39; iii. 22; v. 9, 19; vii. 31, 33, 37, 49; viii. 26, 39; xii. 7, 11, 17, 23; xv. 17 (bis). Romans iv. 8; ix. 28, 29; x. 13, 16; xi. 3, 34; xii. 19; xiv. 11. 1 Corinthians i. 31; ii. 16; iii. 20; xiv. 21. 2 Corinthians iii. 16, 17, 18; vi. 17, 18; x. 17. Hebrews i. 10; vii. 21; viii. 2, 8, 9, 10, 11; x. 16, 30 (bis); xii. 5, 6. James v. 10, 11. 1 Peter i. 25; iii. 12 (bis), 15. 2 Peter ii. 9, 11; iii. 8, 10. Jude 5, 9, 14. Revelation i. 8; iv. 8; xi. 17; xv. 3, 4; xvi. 5, 7; xviii. 8: xix. 6; xxi. 22; xxii. 5. It is only, it appears, when the Greek answers to Adon, not Jehovah, that the article is used of God. As said of Christ, it follows ordinary rules, Jehovah being regarded as a proper name, to which it approached in "the Lord" as a title also. He too is Jehovah. But, Winer notwithstanding, a preposition or a genitive can have nothing really to do, with its anarthrous usage, any more than with Θεός, or other words of the kind.

It is singular that the Revisers have left ii. 1 as it stands in the Authorised Version, when a slight and lawful change of rendering would guard the reader from a really groundless misapprehension of the history. As it stands one might infer, with superficial poets and painters, according to tradition, that the visit of the magi followed close upon the Messiah's birth. And this error has been greedily misused by sceptics. But a comparison of Luke ii. shews that it was not so; confirmed by the accurate ascertainment of the time by Herod, and his consequent slaughter of the male babes at Bethlehem from two years old and under. Room must be left for several months', if not a year's, interval. As we know, the parents came up to Jerusalem for the passover every year; and is anything more intelligible than the interest which would draw to Bethlehem those who knew that the Child was the promised son and heir of David's throne? Then, on a subsequent occasion, came the magi who had seen the star in the east, and gone to Jerusalem in consequence. They had learnt, through Herod, from the scribes that Bethlehem was the predicted spot; and the star, to their joy, re-appears to guide them, till it stood over the place where the Child was. The aorist participle leaves the sense quite open, where "*Now when*," &c., limits it in this case unduly. Translate, therefore, "Now Jesus having been born," or "Now after Jesus was born," &c.

In iv. 18, 20, 21, the difference between a "net" (ἀμφίβληστρον) and the "nets" (δίκτυα) is not marked even in the margin (both distinct from xiii. 47); whereas they have properly done so as to the "baskets" in xvi. 9, 10. So there is no attempt even in the margin to distinguish between ἀγαθός and καλός, both indiscriminately rendered "good;" though the one means "kind," "beneficial," "excellent," the other "upright" or "honourable."

In vi. 11 (as in Luke xi. 3) the rendering is "daily," which the context seems to refute as tautology. "Needful" or "sufficient" I believe to be the true thought, in contrast with περιούσιος, "abundant," "superfluous," "more than enough." Doubtless the word is unusual, coined (Origen thought) for the purpose. Bishop Lightfoot argues against this source, as if the form in that case should be ἐπούσιος. But ἐπιετής is opposed to this rigidity of derivation, being as far as we know a word of late formation like ἐπιούσιος, without question of the digamma. Hence οὐσία does not require the derivation ἐπούσιος. Still less must we restrict οὐσία to mean "essential being" or "substance" in that sense; for the New Testament itself uses it only in the meaning of "subsistence;" and its application in well-known orators, &c., to "property" real (φανερά) or "personal" (ἀφανής) is certain and common. It is unnecessary therefore to trace the word to ἐπιοῦσα (ἡμέρα) "the morrow," and if we did, we could not without harshness make it mean "till to-morrow," that is of to-day, which (as we have seen) does not suit the context. Nor is the mystical sense, founded either on ὁ ἐπιὼν κ. (the coming world) or on ἐπι-ούσιος (supersubstantial) worthy of serious argument. Nor is it worthy reasoning, finally, to say that, because the disciples were not to be anxious for the morrow, they were not to pray for their bread to-day.

It would have been well, if so small a point as "wine-skins" (ix. 17) is carefully substituted for "bottles," that "demons" and "demoniacs" (viii. 28, 31) had always taken the place of "devils," &c., keeping the word "devil" for the different term which scripture gives to their chief.

A seriously mistaken change of reading is adopted in xi. 19, ἔργων, "works," on the authority of ℵ B$^{p.m.}$ 124 (a Vienna cursive of cent. xii.) and of some ancient versions, instead of τέκνων as in all other authorities, not to speak of Luke vii. 35. Even Origen lends "works" no support, any more than Chrysostom. It is monstrous to suppose that we are carried back in thought to the moment when Wisdom's works were planned. The contrast is with "this generation;" as the Lord also in the verses following sets forth, the latter as objects of more than outward judgment, whilst the former are objects of the Father's sovereign grace. That the Wisdom of God should be justified of its works seems a truism—of its children is a weighty truth.

Timidity, or want of knowledge, is manifest in perpetuating (xiii. 39 and elsewhere) "the end of the world," and relegating to the margin the unquestionably true rendering, "the consummation of the age."

In xxviii. 1 the old and common error reappears, which has created immense confusion in arranging the order of the facts of the resurrection. The word ἐπιφώσκειν applies equally to the dusk as to the dawn, the context alone deciding. The Jewish day began with the evening. Here it is assuredly the dusk, for the dawn of the first day could not be ὀψὲ σαββάτων. The women came to the tomb on Saturday evening as here, as well as on Sunday morning early to which no doubt the earthquake in verse 2 belongs, when they were there again.

It is a pleasanter task to note some of the improvements of the Revisers, though almost all of moment are familiar to Christians for many years, and may be found in versions of private men. Thus it has long been felt well that Old Testament names, as in chapter i., should follow the Hebrew rather than the Greek form. Again, the tendency to assimilate the Gospels has been watched against, as in i. 25 (cf. Luke ii. 7); v. 44 (cf. Luke vi. 27, 28); ix. 13 and Mark ii. 17 (cf. Luke v. 32); xvii. 21 (cf. Mark ix. 29); xviii. 11 (cf. Luke xix. 10); xix. 16, 17 (cf. Mark x. 17, 18, Luke xviii. 18, 19); xx. 16 (cf. xxii. 16); xx. 22, 23 (cf. Mark x. 38, 39); xxiii. 14 (cf. Mark xii. 40, Luke xx. 47); xxv. 13 (cf. xxiv. 42, 44). The repetition of our Lord's name, Jesus, is corrected as in iv. 12, 18, viii. 5, xiii. 36, xiv. 14, 25, xv. 16, 30, xvi. 20, xvii. 11, xxii. 37, xxiv. 2. This was probably owing to ecclesiastical influence, like the doxology at the end of the prayer for the disciples (vi. 13), and the "Amen" at the end of the Gospel, and indeed of all the Gospels.

The are also notes BY W. Kelly on *The Revised New Testament, American Corrections* in *The Bible Treasury* 14:335.

MATTHEW.

i. 7, the marginal "for baptism" is fair; 10 (Luke iii. 9) "lieth at" hardly gives the moral force. —vi. 11 (Luke xi. 3) is neither "daily" nor "coming day," but "sufficient"; 27, "a cubit to the measure of his life" would be strange phraseology. "Stature" is the clear sense of Luke xiv. 3, and so here, and in Luke xii. 29.—viii. 4, and elsewhere, "go" might suffice without "thy" or "your" way.—ix. 6, the truth is that the usage does imply "power" (8) as well as "authority." It is a nice point, sometimes, to say which predominates. Compare Rev. ix. 3, 10, 19; xi. 6, xx. 6, —x. 39, and often in the Gospels elsewhere, "life" is right, not "soul."—xii. 23 seems a needless, even if lawful, change; though the Revisers expose themselves to it in John iv. 29; 31, slender indeed is the authority for the awkward marginal "unto you men."—xix. 14 seems no less uncalled for.—xx. 1, "that was" or "is" is alike uncalled for. Are we to say in Luke ii. 15 "the men the shepherds"? In chap. xiii. 23, 45 52, xviii. 23, it is simply an enemy, a merchant, a householder, the shepherds. In fact, it was not emphatically a *man* that was hostile, but the devil, and a King who in truth was not a mere man. So in xxi. 33, which may have led the Trans-Atlantics to "that was."—xxii. 23, they are right in correcting the oversight of the Revisers; for it is a question between divided authorities, and not of mere Greek rendering; some deprecating "which say," others "saying" only.—xxiii. 9, "he who is in the heavens," if we adopt the more generally adopted reading; 23 is not "justice" but "judgment," as in the Authorised and Revised Versions. So Luke xi. 42, xxvi. 29. (Matt. xiv. 25, Luke xxii. 16, 18) is "will," not "shall."—xxvii. 27, the prætorium, or governor's palace: so elsewhere.

Appendix 6 for Matthew: The Sermon on the Mount

Matt. 5 -7

Articles taken from The Bible Treasury

The Sermon on the Mount as a Whole

Matt. 5 - 7

As the different parts of our Lord's wondrous instructions have been before us from time to time, though not in the orderly form, it seems not without interest to survey it comprehensively. Also it is well to take note of the striking difference between the task assigned to the First Gospel as compared with the Third. In the latter we have various portions dealing with the persons or things to which the instruction applies; whereas the former presents all in an unbroken fulness. Hence if we had not Luke's Gospel, we should not have known the interruptions, which in fact did occur, on the occasions for drawing out the teaching applicable.

It is known that many excellent persons have tried to make out, for the clearing up of what enemies treat as discrepancies, that our Lord repeated the same or very similar instruction under different circumstances. Assuredly on the one hand no one would affirm that the same truth may not have been often reiterated in the course of His service here below. But on the other there is no proper ground for doubting that the Spirit of God has in a remarkable and deeply interesting way presented the same teaching in a differing connection and with distinguishable shades, according to the divine design of the books which incorporate it. Thus there is no need to conceive a new rehearsal, in order to reconcile (as it is called) the writings, or to vindicate the credit of the writers. It is on the contrary the wisdom of God in which the Holy Spirit acted when He thus directed the so called Evangelists. For we must not assume that Matthew and Luke entered fully into His reasons for so inspiring them. What is certain is that they were so led of Him as to give us the truth of God, the more perfectly to fulfil His purpose in each.

Take, as the first instance in fact, the account of Luke 6:12-49, and compare it with the chapters of Matthew; as also Luke 11:1-13. and 33-36. Quite aware that pious men have argued from "the plain" in "Luke 6:17, opposed to the "mountain" in Matt. 5:1, one is constrained from the clear evidence of both to reject such a solution of the difficulty felt as to the identity of the discourse at the same place and time. For Luke's language does not mean "a plain," but rather a level place or plateau on the mountain, up to which the Lord went to pray all night, before calling the chosen twelve, and then corning down with them, so far as to meet a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of the people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem. It was clearly the same discourse; but the Spirit acted, not as a mere reporter (which is not the manner of inspiration) but as an infallible editor, as it were, for the distinctive design of each Gospel.

Hence we may observe that Matthew does not relate here the apostolic institution, as Luke does at this time and place, like Mark, who omits the sermon as being occupied with His work rather than His words. Matthew was led to reserve that call as its fitting place to the mission to Israel in his ch. 10 which corresponds with the beginning of Luke's ch. 9. Ignorance or error is out of the question for the Evangelists, but too true of those who carp at what they do not understand. The first striking distinction in the discourse is, that in the briefer sketch Luke was given the address personal, "ye," not the abstract "the" as in Matthew before the final benediction of v. 11; while Matthew was led to reserve his far fuller woes till Matt. 23. which was a later time.

The Kingdom has no such place in Luke as in Matthew. It is those that gather to Christ and follow Him truly who are blessed; and thus for man as he is, outside and despising Him. The contrast of what Messiah authoritatively said with what was said to the ancients is peculiar to Matthew. Luke gives fully the great and new morality of loving our enemies, being merciful as our Father also is, not judging or condemning, but remitting according to the divine pattern; as Matthew gives the pointed teaching on practical righteousness in acts and words, prayer and fasting, as directed against hypocrisy; and the prayer for disciples comes in here in his ch. 6:9-13. In Luke it is not only reserved for a moral connection with heeding the word as the appropriate exercise of life according to God, but we learn too that it was the Lord's answer to a disciple's request. To record this in Luke's Gospel was as suitable, as to leave it out in Matthew's who presents the Lord in all meekness but full of authority, without taking notice of any such human circumstances.

This too explains why the First Gospel gives it not only as an unbroken whole, but in immediate sequence of a very broad and general view of His service and the wide

impression produced (Matt. 4:23-25). In a similar way His teaching next follows, though historic detail was given later.

But not to see that these ways of the inspiring Spirit are perfect for the adequate revealing of Christ's various grace and glory, and in no less admirable adaptation to man's condition and wants -- to conceive that they are blemishes of human infirmity, is indeed to be dim-sighted if not blind. Such are those who, if they do not altogether deny God's word, "Just hint a fault and hesitate dislike; Willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike." But if we are to be kept in these difficult and dangerous times, if we are not to be carried. away by superstition or by scepticism, we need uncompromising adherence to scripture and dependence on His guidance who inspired every word from God but through man, and to be now characteristically (I do not say absolutely) able to say, as could not be of old, "we know," as we read in the Epistles of Paul and John particularly, not said of themselves only but of Christians their brethren, who have God's Spirit dwelling in them.

As to the sermon, it is instruction in the righteousness proper to all that enter the Kingdom of the heavens. Those born of the Spirit alone can meet the state of soul blessed in the Lord's eyes.

It is not a requirement as on Sinai, but Christ's description of such as suit the Kingdom. Not a word of grace to sinners is uttered. It is not the gospel of God's grace to the lost, but His words for His disciples; and personal obedience is the rock at its close. To misrepresent this is mere error; and it is evangelical men who find most difficulty. Others no doubt are wholly wrong; but we must not confound it with redemption or saving grace.

Matt. 5 is not only a sketch of what the blessed ones are, but with the authority of Law and Prophets fulfilled, not weakened, the higher conduct suited to the Kingdom, in contrast with what God of old forbore with, now that the Fathers name is revealed, and relationship with Him.

Matt. 6 speaks of the inner life or ways as seen of the Father, distinct from the world, and its cares apt otherwise to be absorbing.

Matt. 7 shows their due attitude to others, saints or sinners, with counting on God encouraged, and avoidance of false prophets (no matter what their gifts), and practical submission to Christ's words . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:7.)

The Beatitudes

Matt. 5:3-12

In what is called the Sermon on the Mount the Lord does not treat either of new birth or of redemption. He addresses His disciples that came unto Him, and begins with pronouncing who are the blessed in the kingdom. It is a solemn test whereby every disciple may try himself.

> Blessed the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
>
> Blessed they that mourn; for they shall he comforted.
>
> Blessed the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.
>
> Blessed they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.
>
> Blessed the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.
>
> Blessed the pure in heart; for they shall see God.
>
> Blessed the peace-makers; for they shall be called sons of God.
>
> Blessed they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
>
> Blessed are ye when they shall reproach and persecute you, and falsely say every wicked word against you for my sake. Rejoice and exult; for your reward is great in the heavens; for thus persecuted they the prophets that were before you.

Such are the qualities, said the Lord, which suit the kingdom. They are not those of man fallen nor even unfallen. The first man in Paradise had none of them any more than the outcast race. "Ye must be born anew," and even then have your new character formed and impressed by the Lord Jesus. None other He owns (Matt. 7:21-23), nor can others have to do with the Kingdom save for judgment. Those only do the will of His Father that is -in the heavens. But the Savior Son of God elsewhere shows, and is, the unfailing way.

> As many as received Him, to them gave He authority to become children of God (John 1:12).

Who are they? "Those that believe on His name." They are born of God, They have life eternal, and can each say

> I live, no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that which I now live in flesh I live by faith in the Son of God that loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

O, believe Him in Whom is life producing every quality God values! There is none other in His sight. Believe, and it is yours now; and with an evil nature in an evil world as is the fact, here it is indispensable as well as for heaven.

You, my brethren, may not have noticed that there are seven characters, all blessed in vv. 3-9, divided as after into four and three. Four righteous qualities are first, three gracious follow; and they rise respectively in each class. Christ manifested each and all in perfection. Those that follow Him, having Him as their life, must have his qualities reproduced and manifested in them.

Poor in spirit is the first named. It is just the opposite of

fallen man's aspiring spirit. Outward forms of poverty will not do. Under that garb what pride may lurk, what self-seeking, what party-spirit!

> It shall not thus be among you, but whoever would be great among you, let him be your servant; and whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave

in this evil age and rebel world. Such was the Son of man in life and death. He is the disciple's example; for his is not a present place of honor but the kingdom of the heavens whether to faith now or displayed by-and-by.

And who was such a mourner where His Father was unknown, and His own light and love scorned? Here too the disciple treads in His steps and looks for the comfort wherewith He was comforted and comforts.

Next, as He was meek and lowly in heart, so must he be who takes His yoke and learns from Him, assured of inheriting that earth where the hard and haughty have now their brief portion.

The last of these are such as hunger and thirst after righteousness, which marks not only persevering energy but this in inward personal desire, and they shall have satisfying fruition in and like "Jesus Christ the Righteous."

After this, we have the higher characters of grace, but with righteousness preceding. As Jesus was full of grace and truth, so His followers not only exceed in their righteousness that of scribes and Pharisees, but show mercy not known to these. And truly they shall find mercy, as they have found it plenteously.

Theirs too is purity in heart, and as by faith they see God now, so shall they beyond others by-and-by (Rev. 22:4).

In fine, they are the blessed peace-makers who now represent the God of peace; and His sons shall such be called as they are.

But observe that the Lord reveals a supplemental blessedness for each of the two great classes. "Blessed they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake" answers to the opening class in vv. 3-6, and so fitly repeats the opening blessing, "for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." The last of the two rises to the highest, and leaves the abstract for direct personal words of love: "Blessed are ye when they shall reproach and persecute you, and falsely say every wicked word against you for my sake." This was suffering for grace in full. "Rejoice," says the Lord therefore, "and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens; for thus they persecuted the prophets that were before you."

As Christ only is all-sufficient now for evil and lost man, if he believe, so in His day shall the poor in spirit have the true and abiding riches. What then must be the lot of all who despise Him?

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:8.)

The Salt and the Light

Matt. 5:13-16

In the preceding verses the Lord lays down the character of such as belong to the kingdom of the heavens. Now He states their position here below. Is it truly applicable to you? Do you in unbelief treat it as impracticable or indifferent?

If I own myself a lost sinner, and in me, that is in my flesh, no good thing dwells, neither salt nor light is mine, but sin dwells in me. It would be sheer presumption to claim that I am born either the one or the other. Naturally I am corrupt, and as to God and His things dark as night. Important as baptism is, it in no case according to scripture produces so mighty a change; but life in Christ does, which the believer receives through the Spirit and the word of God. As its fulness and perfection were in the Son, so of His fulness did all we receive, and grace for grace. It is no presumption to believe God, nor what He declares He gives to those who receive Christ.

Let me beseech you, fellow-believer, not to slur over nor shirk the position in which the Lord sets you here below. These are His words: --

> Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing save to be cast out and to be trodden down by men. Ye are the light of the world: a city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do they light a lamp, and put it under the bushel but upon the stand, and it shineth for all that are in the house. Thus let your light shine before men, that they may see your comely works, and glorify your Father that is in the heavens.

Let us earnestly seek to make this good, instead of slipping it through or shoving it on to a Jewish remnant.

As there were two broad characteristics among the foregoing "blessed," righteousness and grace, both displayed in Christ and in Christianity, so is it with the position of the disciples. In vv. 3 to 6 are the righteous characters: in vv. 7 to 9 the gracious: followed by the blessing of the persecuted for righteousness' sake in v. 10, and by those persecuted yet worse for Christ (i.e. grace) in v. 11, and their joy, exultation, and reward above in 12. The position too is presented accordingly. In v. 13 we have the righteous side; in v. 14 and the rest the side of grace, but both to be verified in our practice.

Salt is the righteously preservative principle. It is sharp rather than sweet, but guards from impurity and decomposition. It gives fixity to what is good and wholesome. It proves all things, and holds fast the right. It keeps aloof from every form of wickedness. When then the disciples are called the salt of the earth, the Lord designates them as set

apart to God the Father, and in patient continuance of good work seeking for glory and honor and incorruptibility at Christ's coming. They obey the truth, and are to hold fast what they have till then. If they lose the good savor, it is fatal. Saltless salt (and such a change was familiar in those lands) cannot be restored. It is not fit for anything but to be trodden down on the streets, as it often was.

How has it fared with the holy deposit in Christendom? Has the salt there retained its virtue? Did the favored Gentile abide in goodness, any more than the Jew under law? If not, cutting off is the sentence of God (Rom. 9:21, 22). All the more should every faithful soul humble himself, repent, and look to the Lord who is as willing as He is able to make Him stand.

But are we not responsible as "the light of the world "? If it is not the property or power of salt to cure corruption, it is for light to illuminate the dark. It goes out and around.

And we may notice it is to "the world" at large here in this appropriate diffusion by grace, as the salt is "of the earth," the ordered scene of privileges. As being the light, it is compared to a city set on a hill and not to be hid'; and not this only, but as penetrating the home, it is as a lamp (not absurdly under the bushel as its extinguisher, but) upon its stand, that all in the house may enjoy its brightness.

Only let us not forget the Lord's momentous caution as to this. "Thus let your light (your living profession of Him, Who is the true Light and made you light in Him) shine before men, that they may see (not your inconsistencies, but) your comely works, and glorify your Father that is in the heavens." He means the very reverse of men displaying their benevolent works before their fellows, so as to bring glory to themselves. He would have His own let their confession of Him, the one source of their light, shine, so that men may see the goodly fruits, and therefore glorify not the disciples but our Father in the heavens, the Father of lights, of whom is every good giving, and whence comes down every perfect gift from above.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:371.)

The Salt of the Earth

Matt. 5:13

The Lord had laid down in Matt. 5:5-9 the distinctive moral qualities suited to the kingdom of the heavens, with the supplemental blessednesses in sufferings (vv. 10-12). He now proceeds to state definitely their position here below according to His mind. The first is given in v. 13, answering to righteousness, as we saw in the earlier qualities He endorses; the second in 14-16, answering to the outgoing energy of grace, remains for its separate notice in due season.

> "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It availeth for nothing any more but to be cast without and trodden under foot of men (v. 13).

The disciples were familiar with salt not only in ordinary life but in the oblation to Jehovah, "the salt of the covenant of thy God": "with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt" (Lev. 2:13).

And so we read of "a covenant of salt" as expressive figuratively of what was to be preserved inviolate and unchanging (Num. 18:19; 2 Chron. 13:5). Accordingly the Lord, in Matt. 9:49, 50, declares that

> every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt [is] good; but if the salt become saltless wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another.

If fire represents God's avenging judgment of evil, salt does no less clearly His preserving power in relation with Himself. For, as the Lord lets us know, the figures of the law are now by and in Him translated from the past shadows into present and everlasting realities. There is therefore a necessary dealing with "everyone" because all are ruined by sin. Faith bows to this now, as unbelief braves the warning to find it solemnly true and too late vindicated for eternity before the great white throne, and the unquenchable fire that follows. But as grace sent the Savior to bear God's unsparing judgment when He made Jesus on the cross sin for us, so the believer judges himself all the more when he recognizes in Him that suffered without the gate the true and divine sin-offering, consumed to ashes without the camp; Whose blood enters in all its value the holy of holies, and entitles himself boldly to approach even there, with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having the heart sprinkled from a wicked conscience, and the body washed with pure water.

He then, there, and thus was salted with fire in a way of absolute perfection as none other could be, as those who reject Him must be in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. But all who believe enjoy the full efficacy of that fire of God which He endured for our sins, while given to judge ourselves as in the sight of God and to reckon ourselves dead with Him to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus; for he that died is justified from sin as well as sins. We have also the privilege of "every sacrifice salted with salt." It is not only that "our God is a consuming fire" against every evil thing, every inconsistency with relationship to Him and with His nature; but as offered to God, our bodies even as a living sacrifice, we know and have the seasoning with salt that we may be kept pure and incorrupt, abhorring any working of flesh as vile and condemned in Christ's death.

The disciples had yet to learn that wondrous and mighty sacrifice of His; but here they find themselves set in the only position which suited Him, and them too associated with Him. Its moral nature, not only inwardly but publicly, is here conveyed by the words. "Ye are the salt of the earth." To the

Son as to the Father anything but this pure and purifying or at least preservative savor was intolerable for the kingdom of the heavens which they were to enter on the earth. The law, as we are told, made nothing perfect. And Moses, in view of Israel's hardheartedness, allowed what could not be when God was revealed in a Son. In that divine light He looks for suitability to His holiness. How it was to be made good in them they did not yet know; for the discourses on the mount did not unfold redemption nor yet the new birth. But there could be no doubt that this was the plain and certain expression of the place in which the Lord set His own.

Let it be noticed that they, and only they, and they emphatically, were "the salt of the earth." The Lord does not say the salt "of the world." This will come for fuller elucidation when we consider what was meant by their being "the light of the world," not of the earth. But when thus distinguished as here, we may remark now in pointing out the force of our text, that "the earth" means that ordered scene where God had dealings beyond other parts. It was then as of old where Israel was set; as it was about to be enlarged by the outward profession of His name far beyond the land of Palestine. The Lord accordingly begins with that position of conserving purity, alike privilege and responsibility. "Ye are the salt of the earth." Less or other than this was unrecognizable since He, the Son, came and called into association with Himself. The life He communicated to the believer, and the redemption He would accomplish for his sins, would be explained fully in its season. But here He shows what consisted with the Father, as well as the kingdom He would establish.

But He adds words -- most grave words --

> If the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

Profession there would be, and an excellent thing it is, if it be a heart testimony to God, true not only in word but in deed. Here, at the beginning and still more clearly at the end of His communications the Lord prepares us to expect what soon and increasingly became evident how hollow and false it was to become; and He intimated by His question and comment that the true and holy savor if once lost would be irreparable. Whatever grace might work individually, or with a few here and there, the pure position cannot be restored. Salt is itself. Nothing outside can give the saltness that disappears. Wherewith shall it be salted?

He goes farther, and pronounces its unfitness even for the useful purpose of fertilizing supplied by that which is most offensive. Saltless salt is unavailing even to manure the earth. It is only fit to be thrown outside, and trodden under foot of men. And so it will be, as it has been. When Christianity vanishes and only a savorless Christendom remains, men have trodden it down as more worthless than Judaism or even Gentilism, and the more insufferable as so much prouder and more persecuting. And so it will be when the final blows come for Babylon; and the powers which once had their illicit commerce with her shall hate the harlot, and make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh and burn her with fire. Not only is God strong in judging her, but she shall be trodden under foot of indignant men.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:86.)

The Light of the World

Matt. 5:14-16

Here the character of the position for the disciples goes beyond "the salt of the earth." For this was expressive of righteousness; a righteousness not outward like that of the scribes and Pharisees (which sought reputation of man, and was little beyond the pride of a Stoic), but lowly and real as in God's sight. Whereas "the light of the world "is the shining forth of grace, and inseparable from the confession of Christ in that respect. Salt preserves, but does not make everything manifest as the light does.

> Ye are the light of the world: a city set upon a hill-top cannot be hid. Nor do they light a lamp, and put it under the dry measure but on the lamp-stand, and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Thus let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father that is in the heavens (Matt. 5:14-16).

"The world" had no such special dealing of God as "the earth." There moral darkness had reigned, which the light was to dispel as far as He gave it scope and power. Redemption, Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, would give the light a penetrating energy unknown before. For such was the deadly pall which overhung the favored land during our Lord's earthly sojourn that, contrary to nature, the darkness resisted the light, and "comprehended not" even the True Light in His person. But when He rose victorious over all the power of the wicked one, the old commandment became the new, and was true not in Him only but in us, Christians, because the darkness is quite passing and the true light already shines.

This is confirmed by the figure which follows and carries the truth out farther. "A city set, or situated, upon a hill-top cannot be hid." The sphere is no longer the circumscribed area of the earth or land, but, as for another aspect we read, "the field is the world." The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ would make Himself known at least in testimony, before power effectuates His will far and wide. As perfect

love He came down in Christ to man; but the world knew Him not, and His own people received Him not, yea insisted that He should be crucified. Now He sets Christ in the heavenlies above every principality and authority and power and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that to come, and put all things under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that fills all in all. And they, His disciples, are the light of the world: a city set upon a hill-top cannot be hid. Once darkness, they are now light in the Lord, and responsible to walk as children of light, corporately as well as individually. For the fruit of light is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. They are to prove what is agreeable to the Lord, and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather to reprove them.

Men treat their light more fairly than Christendom does the light of which our Lord spoke. Men shrink from natural darkness, its inconveniences, and its dangers; and when they light a lamp, they do not put it under the dry measure (which of course would quite hide it) but on the lampstand, and it shines to all that are in the house. But Christendom fears the light that exposes its neglect of scripture, and of the H dy Spirit's guidance, and of Christ who is and ought to be the all. Therefore, Christianity and the church being sadly misrepresented, all the privileges and duties suffer in the same proportion; as the Lord and the apostles prepare us to expect. But the faithful are bound with humility yet in courage of faith to let the light shine; for it is not of self, but the confession of Christ in everything going forth as God has taught them, whether men hear or forbear. It is meant by our Lord to shine to all that are in the house, and beyond too.

Do we want to make known God as He is? Christ is His image and alone perfectly represents Him. Would we show Him as Father? He the Son declares Him and is the way to Him. Would we see man as he ought to be? It is not on the first man we must look but on the Second. Would we measure the true wickedness of Satan? It is in his direct, constant, personal hatred of and antagonism to Jesus the Son of God. Do you crave the sight of life eternal in the midst of this evil and guilty world? There it is in word and deed fully revealed in the same Lord Jesus. Would you consider death in all its solemn nature? It is He who manifests it. Would you look at life in risen power? Jesus alone and perfectly discloses it. Do you wish a true sight of the highest heaven? It is where the Father received Him with the fullest love and glory. Would we warn of hell? It is the everlasting fire, in which all that despise, hate and reject Him must have their portion with the devil and his angels. Christ is the light that makes every thing and one manifest.

So it might be shown in the whole range of privilege and duty and from the least thing to the greatest. He is the measure of love and holiness, of service and worship, of devotedness, of suffering, and of communion. He is the standard of sin and of judgment no less than of righteousness. And as the Father is only known through and in Him, so the Spirit acts to make all good in the believer, that we might be delivered from all our thoughts and imaginations, and be led into all truth and kept.

> Thus let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good (or, comely, καλὰ) works, and glorify your Father that is in the heavens.

This is practical Christianity in its outgoing, as the salt is the preservative power of purity which we always need to have in ourselves. It is to confess and live Christ, not only in secret which is essential and so pressed elsewhere before Him who sees there, but also truly and unflinchingly before men. Benevolent works are no test, and are not what Christ looked for and here expresses. He spoke of works excellent in the sense of what suits the Father and the Son, and of which the Holy Spirit is the sole power in us. It is not His mind to let our good works shine before men, but our light, or confession of Himself in word and deed.

Nor can anything other or short of this secure the end He proposes. For I might dole out all my goods in what men call charity, or deliver up my body to be burned without confessing Christ, and therefore without in any way glorifying the Father. There is neither light nor love without the faith and the confession of Christ; and self might thereby be honored, but not the Father. Whereas let the light of Christ shine in your confession; and when men see right works in accordance with the will of God, they glorify not you but the Father who is the spring and aim of what you do.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:116.)

Christ Came Not to Make Void but Fulfil

Matt. 5:17, 18

From the outset of His ministry our Lord was careful to affirm that He came not to dissolve but to make good divine authority in the law or the prophets. In both He was predicted as the One on whom all blessing depended. He only could deliver sinful and seduced man. He was to be the sacrifice which would justify all previous offerings to God, and render their just interpretation, and furnish their efficacy. Fulfilment of a prophecy is the same word; but the context here points to a larger scope.

The law and the prophets testified to man's unrighteousness and to God's righteousness (Rom. 3:21). But they could not do more. Christ came, not to enfeeble or undo them as His blind enemies thought, but to make good that divine testimony which left the sinner without excuse and gave what God only in His grace could supply. It was far more than even pious men conceived, a mere making up, by His obedience of the law, what men failed in. This had merely been man's righteousness accomplished by Him for the unrighteous. Here too He has done incomparably more and better. He laid the basis in His obedience unto death for God's righteousness, that God might be just and justify him that believes in Jesus. For He who knew no sin glorified God being made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Hence God's grace is enhanced, not frustrated; for if righteousness is through law, then Christ died gratuitously. But it is not so: never was anything else contemplated or revealed but that the believers rest their hope on His death.

God took care therefore that promise should long precede and exist independently of it, as the apostle argues in Gal. 3. This at Sinai Israel in their self-confidence overlooked. Instead of asking for the unconditional promise of grace they undertook to stand on their own obedience. As no sinful man can subsist on such a condition, the law written on stones, even when brought down a second time with types of mercy accompanying, could not but be a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Cor. 3:7-9). For them it is said in the reading of the old covenant the veil remains unremoved; and the veil is more than on the face, being upon their heart. They did and do not look to Christ, law's end for righteousness to every one that believes. They strove to stand on a mixture of law and grace, which only adds to the sinner's condemnation, because the added grace increases his guilt if disobedient. But we look on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face and are transformed to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit {2 Cor. 3:18}, Who testifies to Him in the glory of God as the fruit not only of His person but of His work. And so the apostle preached the gospel of God's grace and of Christ's glory, as he had been converted.

The Epistle to the Hebrews told the Christian Jews that the "new" covenant of which Jeremiah bore witness held out under Christ a better covenant. It did not, like the old at Sinai, depend on Israel as the party on whose fidelity blessing depended. All hung for the new covenant on the Lord's sovereign grace.

> Because this is the covenant that I will covenant for the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: giving my laws into their mind, I will also inscribe them on their hearts; and I will be to them for God, and they shall be to me for people. And they shall in no wise teach, each his fellow-citizen and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord; because all shall consciously know from little of them unto great of them; because I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses and their sins, and their lawlessnesses I will remember no more (Heb. 8:10-12).

This was no real way to set aside the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them to God's glory and for man's salvation and blessing. Christ filled up the gap between God and the sinner for him who believes on Him. The law pointed to Him as the coming One who alone could restore the balance which the creature's evil had disturbed by weight overwhelming to all but the Savior. He alone could by redemption win and give the blessing which God's nature loved to bestow and God's counsels assured in due time. But all this and more Christ was by His word and Spirit bringing in a new and divine life by faith into the soul, before the day arrives when He will transform our body of humiliation into conformity with His body of glory according to the working of His power even to subdue all things to Himself {Phil. 3:20, 21}. It was not mere addition, as if the law and the prophets were not intrinsically complete and perfect for the end God proposed; but He is throughout assumed and predicted as essential to give the blessed result.

> For verily I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all come to pass (v. 18).

So even the NT speaks of filling up the gap otherwise left in it by the revelation of the mystery of Christ's headship on high and the church united to Him as His body. And the apostle in Col. 1:25 tells us of the stewardship of God given Him thereby to complete His word. For this was a secret hidden from ages and generations, and quite distinct from the kingdom, the new covenant, or the inheritance of Abraham's promise. It was a promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel and God's eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:6, 10) . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:70, 71.)

Christ, and the Law

Matt. 5:18-20

We have already seen how certainly and clearly laid down is Christ's position in ver. 17. He maintained the authority of the Old Testament.

> Think ye not that I came to destroy the law and the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfil.

He came to make good God's mind therein. This He confirms in ver. 18.

> For verily I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one point shall in no wise pass from the law till all things come to pass. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whosoever shall do and teach [them], he shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens. For I say to you that, except your righteousness surpass [that] of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of the heavens (18-20).

That the Lord obeyed the law is beyond doubt. This is not the meaning of fulfilling. He gave the full scope of the law and the prophets; and He did yet more, for He revealed God in Himself both by words and ways, and disclosed those secrets of the kingdom which were absolutely hidden of old. For His rejection and departure to heaven would and did give it a quite new form; [80] and beyond this the great mystery as to Christ and as to the church had to be made known, involving things still higher and deeper. But nothing in the new could weaken the authority of God in the old.

> Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one point shall in no wise pass from the law till all things come to pass.

Christ should be glorified in heaven, and the Holy Spirit sent down to baptize the believing Jews and Greeks into one body, the body of Christ, the temple destroyed, the city trodden down by Gentiles, and the Jews scattered over the earth for their sin against Messiah. But even these woes on the chosen race fulfilled the law and the prophets, and in a special way Christ's word; yet more remains, and darkness still, before the law and the Prophets are fulfilled in the salvation of Israel coming to and out of Zion. Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God shall bless to the full His long unblest people, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. O haste the day! Assuredly Christ came not to make void but to fulfil.

But the Lord is here addressing His disciples who were still under the law. He is not yet even predicting His death on the cross and the redemption through His blood to which grace turned it in the justifying righteousness of God by faith to be revealed in the gospel. Indeed, as we have often noticed and might through the entire Sermon on the Mount, not one word says He here of this work of sovereign love. He first sets out the characteristics that are proper to the kingdom in vv. 3-12; then position in 13,14; and now the relation, like His own in their measure, to the revelation God had given to His ancient people, however unbelieving and unworthy as a whole. He does not foretell what their rejection of Himself must entail on the Jewish nation, or what God would then do for them or others who believe.

Hence in v. 19 He still speaks to them as the godly remnant that heard His voice and clung to Him, born of God, but under law, and on this side of the cross and its blessed results to faith. Obedience first and last is insisted on. Here He begins with the law; but even in this chapter He goes on to what *He* is saying to *them*, which the ancients never heard. He brings in rich additions in Matt. 6 as declaring the Father's name from the close of Matt. 5, guards them from inward and outward snares in Matt. 7, and ends the discourse there with hearing and doing His words as the rock of wisdom and safety.

As undoing the word justly sunk one to be "least" in the kingdom, faithfulness to it raised to a great place therein. Evidently therefore the righteousness of such as entered must exceed and excel that of the Pharisee (v. 20) who honored tradition, the word of man, to the necessary disparagement of God's word.

It was the perfection of giving His disciples their food in due season. Many prophets and kings, some even inspired, desired to see the things which the disciples saw, and saw them not; and to hear the things which they were hearing, and heard them not. And greater things were at hand, even that most wondrous of all wonders, God's work in the cross and the resurrection and the heavenly glory of His Son. But if heaven and earth shall pass, as they are, and not the least tittle of the law and the prophets, how far above these to God's glory and man's blessing rise the words of the Lord Jesus . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:229-230.)

80. {He refers to the mysteries of the kingdom, i.e., its present form, unforeseen in the OT.}

Anger

Matt. 5:21-22

The Scribes and Pharisees were especially ritualist and external. This was letter, not spirit. Our Lord not only condemns a righteousness of mere outward acts, but insists on inward reality as indispensable for the kingdom of the heavens. He does not explain at this time how the requisite practical righteousness is possible and actually made good in sinful men. He had already let Nicodemus know -- of the necessity for a Jew no less than a Greek to be born anew, as well as to have redemption by His cross. Here to His disciples He expounds the absolute need of realizing the varied spiritual qualities brought before them in order to enter the kingdom. As the Pharisees fatally narrowed the scope of scripture, the Lord gave its fulness as none but He could. The first of these references is to the law of murder. But the Lord goes immeasurably farther for the kingdom.

> Ye have heard that it was said to those of old, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be subject to the judgment. But I say to you, that everyone that is [lightly] angry with his brother shall be subject to the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be subject to the council; and whosoever shall say, Fool, shall be subject to the hell of fire (Matt. 5:21, 22).

The law and the prophets He had vindicated. All must come to pass. Yet the law made nothing perfect. He speaks Who is above the law and gave fulness to all on His own authority.

Thus is the commandment made exceeding broad and deep. The axe is laid to the root of the evil tree. All violent feelings are judged as in God's sight, and every evil word of malice and contempt shown to be of sinful and dangerous consequence. As He said later in the same Gospel (Matt. 12:37),

> By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Here He warns, not so much of every light word, but of wrath, hatred, and contempt. The Judge of all the earth, Himself despised by man and abhorred by the nation, as was soon proved, could not fail to discern aright.

The danger He denounced is the burning sense of self, of the old man set on fire of hell. Circumstances might hinder its expression; but it stays in the heart it ruled, and makes itself at length felt in its malignity. He that formed the heart knows it, as He detects a feeling so contrary to His own nature, not only unbecoming in man, but wholly inconsistent with the peacemakers, the pure in heart, the merciful, as well as the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, and those hungering and thirsting after righteousness, the blessed ones that suit the kingdom of the heavens. How too could it agree with being persecuted for righteousness' sake? how with being reproached, and having all manner of evil said and done against one falsely for Christ's sake, yet, rejoicing and being exceeding glad to be thus defamed and ill-used for His name? But we know that very recently (Mark 3:1-6) the Holy and the True looked round with anger in the synagogue on those who watched with murderous hate, if He would heal a poor sufferer on the sabbath. Instead of shrinking from the issue, He bade the man rise up into the midst. They (the high and the broad) were silent; but the fire of their anger burned to destroy Him, after He also bade the man stretch out his palsied hand, restored on the instant. His holy anger was distressed at the hardening of their hearts who, in the vain confidence of tradition (ever spurious), were thus maddened against the active and blessed goodness of God as a reality among men here below.

Again, John the baptist said to the Sadducees coming to his baptism, Viper brood, who forewarned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce therefore fruit worthy of repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for father. These were scathing words; but if anger dictated a word, it was unselfish and holy. It was indignation at men who sought a religious form to cover their unbelief and wickedness. And He, whose sandal-thong John counted himself unworthy to untie, pronounced woe after woe on these Scribes and Pharisees, albeit standing highest in Jewish estimation. Blind guides He called them, fools too and hypocrites and serpents; how should they escape the judgment of hell? Was not the blessed Lord fully justified in His words, overwhelming as they wore to the highest degree? It was not enmity to tell an evil-doer the truth, that he might repent. Flesh hates fidelity.

If it be objected that so the Lord was entitled righteously to denounce, but no one else may, what are we to learn from one of like passions with ourselves? He on just occasion could say in the Spirit, to an erring saint at Corinth with questions about the resurrection, Fool! as he said before, Wake up righteously, and sin not; for some are ignorant of God: I speak to your shame. So in the next chapter he declares that if anyone love not the Lord, let him be Anathema Maranatha (accursed at the Lord's coming), 1 Cor. 15, 16. The same apostle tells the saints (Eph. 4:26), Be angry and sin not. If one truly follow the Lord and the apostle, anger then is a duty, not a sin yet one surely has to watch and pray withal.

The source, motive, and aim decide. If of God and for Him by the Spirit, anger has His sanction; if for self, it is evil that exposes to judgment: and so the Lord denounces on its various degrees expressed in a form familiar to Jews . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:244.)

Brotherly Reconciliation

Matt. 23-26

The Lord was not content, with authority peculiarly and emphatically His own, to lay down the hateful evil of anger in heart and word, even if not in violent deed. He proceeds to carry out the revealed mind of God for the kingdom by requiring reconciliation if any had stumbled one's brother. Throughout, disciples are in view, not mankind in general. Sin in disciples is exceeding sinful: good is peremptory (surely not evil) for the kingdom of the heavens.

> If therefore thou be offering thy gift at the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Make friends (or, be of good-will) with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the official, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say to thee, Thou shalt in no wise come out thence till thou have paid the last farthing (Matt. 5:23-26).

It is no less evident that Jewish disciples as yet under the law are those addressed. This is as plain in vv. 20, 21 as in those we are now considering. In fact it is the rule in this Gospel as a whole and in the others; and it must be so, till in the death of Christ the middle wall of partition was broken down, and thus the way was opened to reconcile both Jew and Gentile that believed in one body to God, the enmity being slain. The discourse of our Lord anticipates no such unity, nor even the call of the Gentiles, in any one clause. But it is a profound mistake that this indisputable fact takes away the profit of a single word from the Christian, though we stand now in a position of grace which could not be then. There is the richest instruction morally for every one who honors Him who spake as never man spake; a spiritual estimate of unequaled depth for those who know redemption and have the indwelling Spirit to enter in far more fully than those who heard His words of divine truth at the time He uttered them.

Thus the Lord enjoins the disciple who was bringing his gift to the altar, if he remembered that his brother had anything against him, to stop short of his devoted purpose as to God Himself, and be reconciled to his brother, before returning to offer his gift. What tenderness of conscience was looked for, brotherly affection, lowliness of mind, readiness to own wrong, and desire to win an offended brother! It was the very reverse of anger, contempt, or hatred, which He had just treated, as His servant in measure re-echoed at a much later day (1 John 3:11-15). And that reverse was the Jews' case. For absorbed in bringing their offering to the altar, they were blind to their wrong against Him who deigned to be their brother, with far more than brother's love, born for adversity as they knew not. But they refused to be reconciled, and persisted in their offering, however offensive to God. It was presumptuous sin, and high-handed self-will under cloak of religion.

What follows points to a still more solemn consideration. Who that weighs scripture can doubt that the Lord in vv. 25, 26 refers to the position in which the Jew then stood with God? This was a far deeper consideration than any other brother aggrieved: their Lord became their brother. The awful truth is that He who loved Israel and would die for them, Jehovah-Messiah, was made their adversary by their perverse disobedience and blind unbelief; and His presence, which had been their salvation and best blessing if received, must bring on the inevitable crisis by their utter rejection and hatred of Him. The Lord at this point avails Himself of the occasion in His infinite grace to urge their agreeing, ot making friends, with their adversary quickly, while in the way with him. How His heart yearned over them, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings But they would not. Their deadliest aversion was to their loving Messiah.

Hence the case was just about to come before the Judge, and the Judge would deliver to the official the convicted one, and he must be cast into prison till the last farthing be paid. It is no question here of eternal judgment, but of divine government morally on the earth; but all is plainly true of His people found guilty and consigned to suffer long. In that prison still lies the guilty debtor, till his heart turns to the One he despised. Then the word shall go forth, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry to her, that her time of sorrow (or, suffering) is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins (Isa. 40:1, 2). Who is a God like unto Thee, that forgiveth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? (Micah 7:18). Is not this the true unforced bearing of our Lord's words? One may apply it to Christian use or unchristian warning. But it is an evil to twist scripture or to complain of those who bow to its full force. Such ignorance has led men into the fable of purgatory . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 2:261.)

Impurity

Matt. 5:27-30

Throughout it is not mere acts the Lord demands, but state; the spiritual condition suitable for the kingdom of the heavens. As in the verses immediately preceding the Lord insists on a spirit of lowly grace, going immeasurably beyond Thou shalt not kill, so now on a purity as far beyond the non-commission of adultery.

It is plain also that here, as everywhere in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, it is not the grace which saves the lost sinner who repents and believes the gospel. The state of soul that befits entrance into the kingdom of the heavens exclusively occupies the Lord. He is teaching the disciples what suited the Father's name which He made known to them. All that He laid down therefore manifestly presupposes that one is born of God, as the essential requisite for His kingdom, not acts merely if they could be good, but renewal of heart. Christ Himself was the blessed pattern of perfection.

> Ye heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you that every one that looketh at a woman to lust after her committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye stumbleth (or, ensnareth) thee,pluck out and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand stumbleth thee, cut off and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee, that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell.

Violence and corruption are the sad characteristics of man's fallen estate. We see them marked in the antediluvian world, at least as the general signs of a ruined state, whatever the specific evil which aroused divine indignation and unsparing judgment. Throughout man's history as traced in the Bible, and particularly in the favored circle of Israel under the law, they are ever before us. Christ came, and grace and truth through Him, and redemption through His blood, everlasting redemption, to say nothing now of heavenly counsels made good in His person and place, and communications to the Christian and to the church. But man is essentially unchanged, and even avails himself of grace to become the worse.

> Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil {Eccl. 8:11}.

"But when thy judgments are in the earth," says the prophet, "the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." Showing favor to the wicked, who believe not, emboldens them to persevere. And as the Jew was no exception who dealt wrongfully in the land of uprightness and would not behold the majesty of Jehovah, so will the Gentile reject the gospel to his perdition, and be cut off irretrievably. The time also hastens.

But as of old, so now are the faithful men, of whom the world is not worthy, who lived and suffered as seeing Him who is invisible. And the Lord did not lower the standard but raised it, clearing it of letter and of all accretions or diminutions. He has the godly remnant in view, still Jewish as He spoke, who not only entered the kingdom, but had higher relations intimated as His rejection set in, till His session at God's right hand and mission of the Spirit gave all necessary to reveal and make good in the saints what had been ever hidden heretofore.

As violence then was judged and excluded in any shape for the disciples, so was impurity. The avoidance of the extreme act might satisfy a Pharisee or Scribe; but the Lord could not dispense with anything short of truth in the inward parts. To look at a woman lustfully was to commit adultery with her already in his heart; and it is not the outside only that God regards but the heart above all. It is only a new nature that delights in holiness; and he who has it by grace answers to the will of God his Father; and abhors himself if he slip even into a wrong look, as unworthy of his calling and hateful to Him who loves him.

But the Lord follows up His stringent condemnation by the call to deal promptly and unreservedly with anything that acted as an incentive. Therefore He specifies that which is part of ourselves, and when rightly used of the greatest value. Not even the right eye, or the right foot, can be allowed in presence of His displeasure which the saint fears, because he is a believer and God's child; as the Lord said elsewhere,

> Be not afraid of those that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will tell you whom ye shall fear. Fear him who, after he hath killed the body, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say to you, Fear him.

It is not the highest motive, but it is an imperative and most solemn and urgent appeal.

Therefore says He now,

> And if thy right eye stumbleth thee, pluck out and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand stumbleth thee, cut off and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee, that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell.

The right eye and the right hand present forcibly the mortifying of our members that are on the earth, to hinder sin against God. At all cost must the believer deny self; as we find elsewhere he must hate father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, yea and his own life also, or he cannot be Christ's disciple . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:276.)

Purity in Divorce

Matt. 5:31-32

In connection with the light of heaven on the lusts of the heart, the Lord adds His word on the permission of divorce in Deut. 24. It is here the woman protected against hard-hearted man. Positive sin in violation of the marriage tie alone calls for divorce. Men abused the licence beyond measure, as if the permission were a precept; and any vexation sufficed. But Jehovah hates putting away, as the last prophet testified to the Jews in their evil day.

In ch. 19 of this Gospel the question distinctly proposed to Him by the Pharisees, Is it lawful to put away one's wife for every cause? And He answered and said, Have ye not read that He that made from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God joined together, let not man put asunder. They say to Him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorce and to put away? He saith to them, Moses for your hardness of heart allowed you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it hath not been thus. But I say to you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, not for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery, and he that marrieth one put away committeth adultery. His disciples say to Him, If the case of man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. And He said to them, All cannot receive this word, but those to whom it hath been given.

Thus was the mind of God made clear. The indulgence of lust is incompatible with entering the kingdom of the heavens. The law forbade the act of adultery; the Lord condemns even the looking licentiously as adultery committed already in the heart. He insisted therefore on the most unsparing decision with all that gave occasion: Was it not better to pluck out the right eye or out off the right hand, rather than the whole body be cast into hell? Here (as in all the chapters of the first Gospel before ch. 13 where He begins as the Sower), it is not seeking sinners in sovereign grace, but saints, as He enjoins on the twelve in Matt. 10:11 "Into whatsoever city or village ye enter, inquire who in it is worthy." So the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5) describes what spiritual characters suit the kingdom, as the end (Matt. 7) declares that none shall enter but he that does the will of His Father that is in the heavens. Not even prophesying or miraculous powers, were it casting out demons through the Lord's name, could be a passport to the workers of lawlessness. Practical obedience of His words alone should stand. The rock here is spiritual reality. His word was incomparably more withering to self-righteousness than the law of Moses.

There is power of God given exceptionally to be above marriage, and live only to Christ here below. But, to far the most, marriage is God's order for man on earth. And the monkish rule with high pretension leads into horrible evasion, hypocrisy, and corruption even contrary to nature and abominable. God's mind is clear from the first; adultery alone justifies divorce.

Hence the necessity would be felt urgently and absolutely of receiving a new nature and an everlasting redemption in the Savior. No interpretation of our Lord's words here or elsewhere is more radically false than that He puts believers under the law as their rule of life. He is really condemning unbelievers and hypocrites far more stringently than the law did, and those sayings of the elders which took advantage of a legal permission for carnal indulgence and unfairness to a wife who through any cause became less attractive to her selfish husband. Such souls were inadmissible to the kingdom. Only the godly remnant are here contemplated, who abhor corruption as they do violence. The presence of Christ, not of the law given by Moses, was the suited moment for defining the character and conduct proper to the new thing He would set up. He was the standard of what pleased God, and must mark those who are His. "The law made nothing perfect" was a hard lesson for Jews; it seems quite as hard for those who inherit the traditions of fallen Christendom, and not less for Protestants than Papists.

To be content with being nobody in the world, and despised by its religion, is impossible to human nature; to be mourners as Christ was, feeling for God's will and majesty where lawlessness pervades; to be meek now, waiting for the glorious inheritance in. God's time, instead of clamorous for our rights; to hunger and thirst after (not ease or wealth, or power or honor, but) righteousness, cannot be without partaking of a divine nature. Harder still was the actively gracious spirit of mercifulness, purity in heart, and peace-making according to God, with the persecutions which such righteousness entails, and especially such maintenance of Christ's name as effaces ours.

Our Lord accordingly singles out of the Decalogue the two great prohibitions of murder on the one hand and of adultery on the other. Assuredly He came not to make void the law or the prophets, but to give their fulness. He not only went farther than either, but declared that a righteousness surpassing that of the Scribes and Pharisees was indispensable for entering the kingdom of the heavens. He most pointedly sets His word with divine authority, so as to contrast what He laid down far beyond the claims of the law. In the ease before us, as looking lustfully convicts of adultery before God, so whosoever put away his wife, save for cause of fornication, made her commit adultery, as well as him who married her. Thus He established a moral basis, not for a nation of mixed character, but fit for God's family and kingdom, which judged the heart's evil and allowed no concession to hardheartedness. And what can be plainer than on this later occasion (Matt. 6) His going up to the beginning, long before the law, to God's instituted order and word in Gen. 2? There again His own word is full and final authority, for the Messiah was the Jehovah God of Israel. Whatever had been allowed by Moses, He is Mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. It is God speaking in Him who is Son: "But I say to you" . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:294.)

Swear Not At All

Matt. 5:33-37

. . . Thus the Lord goes far beyond perjury or breaking a vow. He prohibits swearing altogether in the intercourse of daily life. Our word therein is to be, Yea, yea, or Nay, nay. That which is more than these has no sanction from God, and is therefore of evil, or the evil one, the enemy of God and man. All such asseveration as the Lord illustrates from the facts of Jewish habit arose from the constant experience of men in deceiving or evading. They therefore resorted to such means of insuring the truth. But these efforts defeated themselves; for we know from a reliable Jewish contemporary of the NT inspired writers that oaths by earth, heaven, sun, stars, and the entire universe, were not counted binding. Only those obliged the conscience which were by God's name direct and express; nay others might be transgressed. As the Lord supposed in those He addresses poverty of spirit and purity of heart, He proscribed absolutely all such swearing as offensive to God and incompatible with the place of His sons.

Nor is it only Jews then, but professing Christians now, that show themselves as indifferent to the Lord's authority as if He had never thus solemnly uttered His mind. Among Protestants there is some little care to avoid profanity by adopting light and foolish exclamations, or by repeating heathen terms derived from their Greek or Latin reading, forgetting that if the idols are nothing, the demons behind them are real and evil. Romanists are much less scrupulous. It is sad to think how perverts go farther in excuse for their blasphemous phrases than those born and bred in their vain superstitions.

Take the following proof from the late Cardinal Newman's *Lectures on certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Submitting to the Catholic Church*:

> Listen to their conversation; listen to the conversation of any multitude, or any private party; what strange oaths mingle with it! God's heart, and God's eyes, and God's wounds, and God's blood: you cry out, "How profane!" Doubtless; but do you not see that the special profaneness above Protestant oaths lies, not in the words but simply in the speaker, and is the necessary result of that insight into the invisible world which you have not? You use the vague words, "Providence," or "the Deity," or "good luck," or "nature"; where we, whether now or of old, realize the Creator in His living works, instruments, and personal manifestations, and speak of the "Sacred Heart," or "the Mother of Mercies," or "our Lady of Walsingham," or "St. George for Merry England," or "loving St. Francis," or "dear St. Philip." Your people would be as varied and fertile in their adjurations and invocations as a Catholic populace, if they believed as we (Ninth Lecture, p. 232).

It is grace alone which delivers from Popery and even Protestantism, and makes it a divine joy to be a Christian, neither more nor less. Irreverence of every sort, worldly or superstitious, becomes intolerably evil in one's eyes; and it is the first of duties for the believer to hear these words of Christ and reduce them to practice. But is it not an awful instance of Satan's blinding power, that while none but the vilest of Protestants would think of excusing his own ungodly badinage, a grave clergyman in his new born (or at least early open) apology for the shameless fooling of Papists should plead so barefacedly, not only for such ebullitions in word, but for turning the Last Judgment into a play of fireworks, and argue for it that "they are making one continuous and intense act of faith" (p. 237)?

But we must carefully remember, that our Lord in no way forbids an oath before the magistrate or judge. This is not of evil; but of good, being of divine authority. For men swear by a greater, and the oath is a term to all dispute as making matters sure. To refuse it is to deny God's authority in any who represent Him in earthly things, and hence called by His name and translated "judges," as in Ex. 21:6, 32:8, 9, 28. See also Psa. 82:6. The principle is asserted in Lev. 5:1, to which the Lord, far from setting aside on the mount, bowed when adjured by the high priest (Matt. 26:63, 64), though silent before.

In like manner James 5:12 with marked earnestness forbids swearing either by heaven or by earth. These were not judicial adjuration, which does not fall under people's swearing. It was rather being sworn in God's name. Nor did our Lord any more than His servant prohibit such appeals to God as in Rom. 1:9, 1 Cor. 15:31, 2 Cor. 1:23, Gal. 1:20, or the like. The scruple of Friends or Separatists has no foundation in scripture.

(*The Bible Treasury*, NS 4:308-309.)

Resist Not Evil

Matt. 5:38-41

The Lord here advances beyond all Jewish and indeed human thought, when He enjoins on His disciples patient grace on all kinds of inflicted wrong. To resist it is forbidden. He cites from the law the principle of talion, as it is styled, or retaliation, expressly to abandon it. It was particularly open to abuse; but even when applied with the strictest justice, and acting as a powerful check on human vindictiveness, how far was it from the mind of heaven which Christ was manifesting on earth, and laying down as the only conduct proper to the sons of His Father! Can we conceive a greater shock to Jewish feeling?

> Ye heard that it was said, Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil; but whoever striketh (or shall strike) thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And to him that would go to law with thee and take thy vest (or tunic), leave him thy coat (or mantle) also. And whoever shall impress thee for one mile, go with him two.

No doubt that on such a ground the world could not enter. To the natural man the rule of the. heavens is impossible. Yet it is a favorite theme for such persons as believe neither in the Deity of the Lord nor in His atoning worth to descant on the Sermon of the Mount as the perfect ideal of Christian legislation. It is no more than an academic recitation. Nor is it that they have the most distant notion of obeying it themselves, nor do they expect others to exhibit such unworldly traits. If wrong were done them in person or property, as the Lord describes, they utterly object to its applying as a living authority. Even pious men help their unbelief by crying out against understanding His words as they read, and argue for spirit against letter.

Now it is true that here as everywhere mere letter fails. One might imitate the outward acts described and come short of what the Lord aims at throughout His entire discourse. The most rigid obedience of Hi sayings in order to life and the Father's love would in such a case prove a more fiery law than that of Sinai. For the Lord begins with spiritual qualities in His own, in vain sought in fallen man, and such as characterize a divine nature of which grace gives the believer to partake. Blessed indeed are such, as He pronounced them, and the more, not less, when persecuted on account of righteousness in a world of lawlessness; and if reviled and persecuted for Christ's sake, called to rejoice and exult, because their reward was great in the heavens. What can man do to hurt those who are happier the worse they are treated? The secret is that they are more than conquerors through Him that loved them, and abjure all merit of their own. But they have a new life (and it is the life of the Second man, not of the first) whose internal marks were displayed practically, as the Lord described in the opening verses of the Sermon (Matt. 5:1-12), and their separate position before men follows (vv. 13-16). In all that thence is given us the Lord enlarges the law and the prophets, so far as to rise above them immensely in scope till, as here, we have grace in suffering from evil instead of punishing it as the law provided.

It was what God had sent His Son to manifest here below, and none fully follow. But suffering for His sake might be our portion as it often has been of our brethren. Thus all our meetness for God's presence depends on His death and resurrection, as our pardon on His blood; and we own our absolute indebtedness to His grace for all. It is our duty and joy to follow and imitate, as indeed this is our life; and He is the standard in not resisting evil.

But cavilers who would pare down and fritter away His words are not ashamed to argue that He meant them not literally, because when struck on the face for His answer to the high priest, He calmly remonstrated, while bowing to the insult. Was this paying evil back in its own coin? On the contrary it was One who did no sin nor was guile found in His mouth, who when reviled, reviled not again, and when suffering threatened not. In fact He presented far more than the other cheek, for they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and struck Him with the palms of their hands with the utmost contempt. No! the Lord yielded to wrong instead of resisting it; and such is the true calling of the Christian.

Here we may if need be follow Him in spirit and letter. As man is tenacious of his little goods, the Lord puts the case, not of offering personal violence only, but of depriving him of what attaches to man by a legal suit. What then does He call for?

> To him that would go to law with thee, and take thy vest, leave him thy coat {Matt. 5:40}.

How much better to lose one's clothes than consistency with Christ? The spirit of the injunction goes farther than the one cheek or the outer coat. What men seek is to evade all suffering and hold their human rights in defiance of His words, thus losing the reality of Christianity and retaining not even its semblance.

There was another claim in those days of which the Jews were prone to complain as an intolerable hardship. The imperial government authorized its officials, on their errands, in certain oases to require personal attendance, and with their beasts of burden too. How men are apt to be vexed with what after all is no great burden, and none so much as a people like the Jews under their heathen lords! The Lord would raise His disciples above all snob self-will.

> Whoever shall impress thee for one mile, go with him two! {Matt. 5:41}.

With what simplicity and force He provides His own with a spirit to carry them in meek dignity above the squabbles of the world! How unworthy of Him would be the letter of refusing to go four or five miles, if such were the requisition, because the Lord had said, "Go with him two!" The real mind of the Lord is that he should willingly exceed what he

was asked. It is grace in patience.

Can anything convince you, my reader, that you can neither be nor do what is essential to enter the kingdom of the heavens? There is but one way, Christ; and this way you can only get by renouncing yourself. So inseparable are faith and repentance. He saves by giving not redemption only, but a new and divine nature which hates self-will, and which loves and does God's will. Hence you obey according to the law of liberty, as contrasted with the Jew under the law of bondage.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:325.)

Grace in Practice

Matt. 5:38-48

There is nothing that comes before the eyes of men which strikes them more than the meek, lowly, thankful spirit which endures a wrong. The natural man resents, and, if he can, avenges everything of the sort. You might as well tell him to feel otherwise, as to walk in the air a mile or a foot above the ground. To the disciple such grace is a principle of his new life. It is what in its perfection he has beheld in Christ, and what suits his Father who is in the heavens and looks for the reproduction of His own character in His sons. Retaliation is here reversed and uprooted.

> Ye have heard that it was said, Eye for eye, and tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, Resist not evil; but whoever shall strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And to him that would go to law with thee and take thy coat, leave him to take thy cloak also. And whoever will impress thee one mile, go with him two. To him that asketh thee give, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away.
>
> Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father that is in the heavens; for he maketh his sun rise on evil and good, and sendeth rain on just and unjust. For if ye should love those that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the tax-gatherers the same? And if ye should salute your brethren only, what beyond do ye? Do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

It may be personal lawlessness, an unjust suit, or a hard law; but the disciple of Christ is taught by the Master to bow. What is a brutal insult compared with truly representing Him? Consistency with Him is far more than one's coat, and cloak to boot. Instead of begrudging the service pressed for one mile, add another to please Him who would have us walk by faith, not by sight, still less selfishly. Luke, who was led to note not the legal side but unauthorized violence only, omits the impressment, and inverts the stripping by letting the plunderer take the inner garment as well as the outer, the Lord no doubt exhorting to both. Nor did He end here, but bade the disciple give habitually to him that asked; for what had not he himself received from the divine Giver beyond all he asked? The object of countless and rich mercies, was he to turn away from one that would ask or borrow?

But the Lord goes farther in His next utterance. Whatever was said of loving one's neighbor and hating one's enemy, His word to His disciples was and is, Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you. So too the Epistles insist on those that bear His name. In the Gospel of Luke rightly stand the clauses, Bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray also for those that use you despitefully. These enlarge the grace which disciples are exhorted to show to hostile men of the world; and from thence they were imported into the copies of Matthew by scribes who were prone to assimilate. The inspiring Spirit was pleased through him to urge loving our enemies, and praying for our persecutors, which last pertained to Jews pre-eminently, because of their hot and proud religious prejudice in the flesh.

Such love and piety, to be of value, must be no mere form but a living reality, that they might be sons of their Father in the heavens; for such is their place of dignity. And what a pattern He sets! For He makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust. What rich grace in the first comparison, and what faithful goodness in the second

Nor was the Lord content with the pointed reference to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God. He would make them ashamed, as His disciples, of not rising above the practice of Jews and Gentiles. If they loved those that loved them, did not the odious tax-gatherers the same? If they greeted their brethren only, the scorned Gentiles did also the same. This was altogether beneath the Christian according to Christ.

> Ye shall be therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

A lower standard of feeling and con-duet was to the Savior intolerable.

Have we such confidence by grace toward God? Assuredly we have no competency as of ourselves: but our competency is of God, according to the spirit of the new covenant, not of the old. The grace of Christ alone suffices the believer. If you reject Him, you are lost. Flee to this the only refuge, if you would be saved; flee to Jesus now, ere the House-master shuts the door, when "Lord, open to us "will be in vain. Then will He judge strictly, instead of saving as He does now in all grace; then will He say, I know not whence ye are: depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:37.)

Giving

Matt. 5:42

In this verse we have a grand principle for the Christian. It comes in at the close of the exhortation to resist not evil, but rather to suffer it, privately, by perversions of law, or from public demand. Christ is the pattern for the disciple; and no sound exposition can explain His word away, however distasteful to flesh and blood. The new nature goes along with it loyally as the perfect law of liberty.

Only the fleshly mind seeks evasion by every disingenuous means.

> To him that asketh thee give, and from him that desireth to borrow of thee turn not away.

The disciple learns from God that he is a debtor to grace, not only in the outward mercies of every day which he shares with all mankind, but in that still deeper love which quickened him from moral death, death in offences and sins, when a child of wrath by nature. Here a Jew or a Gentile made no difference: as far as we all were concerned, it was a hopeless case of irremediable evil. But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love wherewith He loved us, quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, and made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus; that He might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.

Those whom the Christ then addresses had tasted already that the Lord is good; but they were soon to be brought into its full compass when He died, rose, and ascended on high, and sent forth the Holy Spirit in glorifying Him to guide them into all the truth. The Lord, having before Him such fulness of grace which we were to receive, looks for our appreciation of it by faith and the action of the Holy Spirit on our souls correspondingly. As He said elsewhere, Freely ye received, freely give. It is the mind of heaven reproduced on that earth which was full of sordid selfishness. None were more characterized by covetousness than the Jews, who, having for the time lost their place as Jehovah's witnesses, sought a vent and excuse for their energy in heaping up wealth; to which end cheating their Gentile masters only gave a greater zest. No wonder that souls so blessed by grace should be called to an entirely new walk and an equally new worship, unintelligible to such as do not enter into the Christian calling and hope. Yet the apostle says plainly that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God before ordained that we should walk in them.

But Christ came to save not only from wrath but ruin, not only from penalty but from sin, and to form a new character in those that hear His voice and follow Him. It was and could only be His own character. For what was that of Socrates, or of Antoninus Pius, of Gautama Buddha or of Confu tsé? Shades of vanity or pride, in comparison with Him who never did His own will but that of God the Father who sent Him, His only-begotten. It was His to come into this world of sin and self to give Himself up as a sacrifice, thus bringing God into it to put sin out of it, as He assuredly will in power as the glorious issue of what He has already done and suffered.

Therefore, as a part of the spiritual process, He would impress on His own the character of grace, and not mere law like a Jew, in which He was the constant witness and blessed perfection. Was there ever a need, a want, a suffering presented to Him without an answer of divine grace and power, and in all human tenderness? He that was about to give Himself up to God for us, what of good did He ever withhold? Money was too small and mean to give, save as meeting the temple-tax.

> Take that [from a strange bank!], and give it to them for Me and thee.

Hence the words in Luke 6:38,

> Give, and it shall be given you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall be given into your bosom; for with the same measure with which ye mete it shall be measured to you again.

It is literally "they shall give," but so often in Luke impersonally stated, and really pointing to God. Thus as His grace produces its like, so will He never forget it, however man may.

Now, my dear reader, you know that this is far beyond your heart and life; and that, if you strove to emulate such giving, you would soon weary, and find it a law more fiery than the ten words of Sinai. Only Christ set the example; only Christ gives the power. But you must first be at His feet as a lost sinner, casting your soul with all your sins on Him for life, for pardon through His blood, and peace. It is in vain for you to think of giving of your means, till you have come to Him as the neediest of all to receive of His fulness. Only then, when you have Him as your unfailing treasure, will you have the faith and love to make to yourself friends with the mammon of unrighteousness. Only then will you, with single eye and liberal heart, "give to him that asketh of you, and not turn away from him that would borrow of you," be he of the world, or of the household of faith; only then not grievingly, nor of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. And He is able to make every grace abound toward you, that, having in every way always all sufficiency, you may abound to every good work. When grace has saved you by Christ to God's glory, then it will be your joy to follow Christ; and you will shun and hate what is inconsistent with Him, both from your new nature, and in obedience to the word of God.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:340.)

Love Your Enemies

Matt. 5:43-45

This word of our Lord demands our earnest heed; for it is as foreign to the feelings of men in Christendom as to Jewish disciples. But here is nothing that goes beyond the word of the beginning of Christ, nothing that supposes the work of redemption accomplished, or the Holy Spirit given to the believer. Yet the presence of the Lord brought in no little change.

> Ye heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father that is in [the] heavens; for he maketh his sun to rise on evil and good, and sendeth rain on just and unjust (vv. 43-45).

In vain some essay to impress those words of Christ on men in general, on such as are not born of God. Now the language assumes that those addressed did believe in Christ, and had a new life of the Spirit as being born anew. But this is not so in our country or any other, even if as favored in the possession of an open Bible. Yet the divine speaker takes for granted, what was true then and is still, that the mass of men, the nations (and the Jews are at least as bad), seek after what pertains to this life, eating, drinking, clothing, money, ease, honor: baptism, or the profession of Christ, in no way delivers from or lessens it. Therefore He warns that wide is the gate and broad the way that leads unto destruction, and many are they that enter through it; that narrow is the gate and straitened the way that leads unto life, and few are they that find it. It is therefore a total and dangerous misconception thus to overlook man's existing state of ruin.

But others, who seem aware of human inability to obey the law of God, and are accustomed to regard even believers still, as like Israel of old, doomed to failure under law, naturally conclude, that such requirements as the Lord urged on the mount are to man impossible and more condemnatory than the Ten Words of Sinai. They therefore settle down, like the believer in Rom. 7, overwhelmed as he sees himself struggling against the evils of his old nature, and ignorant of emancipating grace in the power of a dead and risen Christ, who can only cry, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death? Hence the tendency to tone down our Lord's words in these three chapters, or even to deny that they have a living claim on the saint now. Others again contend that they are Jewish and had only to do with the disciples when the Lord was here in the days of His sojourn. They are really His words to men taught of God, and with a new life which desires and delights to walk according to His revealed will.

To love our enemies, to pray for those that persecute, is wholly above the law or the duty of a people in the flesh. An Edomite or an Egyptian was not to be abhorred, and their children might enter into the congregation of Jehovah in the third generation; an Ammonite or a Moabite only in the tenth generation, like a bastard. But Christ brought in grace and truth. In the light of the Son of man all were lost, even the sheep of Israel. As He was come to seek and to save that which was lost, those that were His were to love their enemies and to pray for their persecutors. It was the mind of heaven for His saints on earth, applicable to them and to none but them. They receive life, His life, in receiving Him, and are called to show it thus. It is as incumbent now as when the Lord thus spoke; and His resurrection made it clearer and stronger, as the Holy Spirit when given made it of power. Thus were the disciples to be sons of their Father in the heavens.

What renegades, if not from Christ, at least from His words and will, if any bearing His name seek to fritter away so plain a call! This they cannot avoid, if they justify the ways of Christendom, where the world rules and the language is of Ashdod, where men fail to show their Father's name, and boast of their comprehending all the mixed multitude. For it is now a question of a far higher than Israel and of a separation deeper and nearer to God. It is a true and present calling of grace, inalienable from the Christian if loyal to the Lord. For we are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26). If we have the relationship and title, we cannot be absolved from the responsibility. Yea, it would be violence done to our new and divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

Let us therefore be in earnest to keep up the family character. Does not our Father that is in the heavens make His sun to rise on evil and good? does He not send rain on just and unjust? If His sons, it is not presumption to cherish feelings above human nature; it is our new status, and should be our delight. Grace alone can make it good. But Christ has procured all that is needful and efficacious to this end; and the Holy Spirit is here to see to it and guide us to Christ's glory.

Be not deceived, brethren beloved in the Lord. The enemy is sleeplessly active, and only too successful. This is My beloved Son, says the Father: hear ye Him. What is the chaff to the wheat? It is not enough to have life in Him, and our sins forgiven through His blood. We are called to hear His voice and to follow Him, separate from the world that crucified the Lord of glory.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:355.)

Perfect as Your Heavenly Father is Perfect

Matt. 5:46-48

It is God, not man, whom the Lord makes the criterion; the heavenly Father, not the dread moral governor as made known to Israel, but our Father. What are His affections, what His will about us? Nothing is more foreign here than the delusion of our being freed now from the indwelling evil of our nature.

> For if ye love those that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the tax-gatherers the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye much more? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Herein was manifested the love of God in our case, because God hath sent His only-begotten Son, that we might live through Him. For we were dead Godward, and in Him only was the life that could serve God, which we wholly lacked. The love of God has met this, otherwise insuperable lack, and this by sending His only-begotten Son who is that life to impart it to those that believe. They have life eternal for their souls now, as they await it for their bodies when He comes again for us. But even this possession of life in Him suffices not to satisfy His love, any more than it fits us to enjoy, serve, and worship Him. There is a burden which nothing on our part could remove. Therefore it follows, Herein is love, not because we loved God, but because He loved us, and sent His Son as propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:9, 10). But there is also, flowing hence, the Spirit, His Spirit, dwelling in us, as of love no less than of power and sobriety, so that we love one another after a divine sort.

This, no doubt, is Christianity in its full privileges, going far beyond the state of the disciples before redemption and the gift of the Spirit. But the divine nature was already there, which would be active when all obstacles were gone through the work of Christ. Hence, even in the time that preceded the cross, the Lord insisted on a love wholly above mere human nature with its likes and its dislikes. The detested tax-gatherers had natural affection, and loved those that loved them. The Gentiles saluted tenderly those hound up with themselves in mere ties of flesh and blood. The disciples were enjoined to love far beyond Jew or Greek. The family were to love as their heavenly Father did. Though this could not be in degree, it was the kind of love, which must be in God's children by divine grace, rising above all question of desert or ulterior aim.

"Ye therefore shall be perfect," says the Lord, "as your heavenly Father is perfect." His is love, because He is love; it is the energy of His nature going out in goodness where there is need, and above all reference to merit, or congruity with what He loves and is. And this in all its perfection He was then showing in the Lord Jesus, image of the invisible God. What did He ever seek for Himself, as He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people; lunatics, demon-possessed, paralytics, dead men or women? It was love irrespective of self, in compassion to the most wretched of men; it was love rising above all the unworthiness, ingratitude, or hostility on the part of its objects. He was doing not His own will in any case, but the will of God, and for His Father's glory. What is the altruism of men's talk, or of any man's performance, in comparison?

This love we too share as His children. So the Lord taught then; so the Holy Spirit confirmed afterward. Be ye therefore imitators of God, as children beloved; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. The blessings of Christianity and of the church of God ought only to accentuate the duty and increase its spring and power.

As the heavenly Father's love is shown in absolute superiority to good or evil, right or wrong, whom He blesses from grace in Himself, so is the Christian now called to walk as made partaker of a divine nature (not merely of Adam's), and in the place of sons. If noblesse oblige, as men say, how much more divine grace and such a relationship?

But, my fellow-sinner, what ignorance, and madness for you, ungodly, enemy, and spiritually powerless as you are, to imagine you can so walk, or so win your way to God Not so: as lost ones cast yourselves in repentance and faith on the Savior and His redemption. If you look away to Him from your guilty selves, He will give you life everlasting in Him, and the remission of sins through His blood. Then, and thus only, can you follow Him in the path, His path, which He points out to His own.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:371.)

Alms

Matt. 6:1-4

The Lord takes for granted that His disciples would walk righteously before God in alms, prayer, and fasting. He is not satisfied with bidding such give to him that asks, as in the preceding chapter (Matt. 5:42), and from him that would borrow not to turn away. It is by the grace of Christ in contrast with legal narrowness. Here we have the single motive of pleasing our Father that is in the heavens. Thus would their light shine in Christ as believed and confessed by them, not their righteousness be done before men to be seen of them, which is the object expressly forbidden. As in alms we have the needy and distressed of mankind directly brought before us, we have this followed up by prayer to our Father in the closet, fasting subjoined to set aside self-indulgence for the body and leave room for humiliation before Him: thus dealing with man, apostles, self and God, in ways suited to the Father revealed by the Son.

> When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Verily I say to you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; so that thine alms may be secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay thee.

It is not the habit of giving or lending in liberality of heart, unstintedly and unselfishly, but that merciful consideration of the wretched and suffering, which becomes those who serve God in a fallen world (James 1:27). Each duty has its place. Both adorn the teaching that is of our Savior God, as we are called to do in all things. Prudence may question, common sense hesitate; but faith acts on His word, and without faith it is impossible to please Him. It is no question of doing another's will, but of Christ's will.

In all cues the snare is ostentatious, doing our righteousness before men to be seen of them. Otherwise, says our Lord, ye have no reward of your Father that is in the heavens. He lays the utmost stress on the manner and the motive with which the act is done. Display in the doing of alms He compares to sounding a trumpet before the doer, and denounces it as what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, within and without where people meet and pass. Can anything be conceived baser than a son of God playing a part to win the notice and approbation of men? How solemnly He adds, Verily I say to you, They have got their reward!

How elevating it is for the soul, in having to do with the relief of distress among men, to act in secret, and in the sight of the Father that seeth in secret as the One to repay! It is not enough to exclude other men. To bring Him in and in secret is essential to the purity of the case. It is He who is above all, and through all, and in us all; and the least of His gifts to us is what enables us to help the suffering and the needy. To leave Him out is the essence of unbelief. To bring Him in is what we as His children owe Him in love and honor, the witness of our dependence, of our gratitude, and of our loyal service.

We have only to look at the ways of men in Christendom, in order to learn where neglect of the Savior's teaching leads His disciples, and the influence of self, not only on the world but on the godly swayed by the spirit of the age. What notoriety! What emulation! What boasting or pride, and even ambition! What a contrast with Him who being rich for our sake became poor, that we by His poverty might be enriched! And how striking that not in rich Corinth but in the poor churches of Macedonia, scripture tells us of the grace of God bestowed in this way; how in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their free-hearted liberality It was not even according as the apostle hoped, but beyond; and the secret of it was, that they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us by God's will. Thus is genuineness of love proved.

But there is another invaluable word of the Lord as to this which calls for our heed.

> But thou when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; so that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay thee.

It is not only from others but from ourselves that such doings should be hidden. Self is a subtler evil than men. The action of grace is defiled and becomes a poison to me and a dishonor to God when I think of it with complacency. If rightly done, it was passed to our Father for His remembrance, not ours.

Here lay Job's failure, which no inflictions of Satan, nor unsympathy, nor yet suspicion, of friends even touched. He was a most gracious man, but he thought of it, and not of God only who wrought in Him. To this he must be and was brought: to boast only in God, judge himself, and submit with all his heart. Part of the lesson was that his left hand should not know what his right hand did. This on the contrary, up to the end of his appeal (Job 31), he knew only too well. But all was changed when, instead of looking at fruits of grace in himself, he saw God in very faithfulness withering up all self-satisfaction.

> I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:6).

Thus we hear that even in alms the Father in secret must be the motive in order to make it acceptable to Him. The Lord insists on inward truth. O my fellow-sinner, how can this be while you are dead in trespasses and sins? "Ye must be born anew"; and life, this new life, is in Christ only. But He is the object of faith set for this purpose by God. "He that believeth hath life eternal"; and as Christ is the source, so is He the strength of that life. "I live; no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:22).

Thy Father in Secret

Matt. 6:1-18

Here is a Christian principle, which our Lord puts in contrast with acting so as to be seen. What so suited to exercise and strengthen faith day by day, or to guard from that hypocrisy to which man is prone.

He first lays down the general principle, it would seem, in v. 1, and then applies it to alms in vv. 2-4; to prayer in vv. 5-15; and lastly to fasting in vv. 16-18. Some ancients and moderns have been disposed to regard "righteousness" in v. 1 under which fall the three duties that follow. For if applied there to "alms," it is hard to conceive why the proper term for "alms" should be given in vv. 2, 3, and 4.The different word in v. 1 points to the more comprehensive sense of "righteousness" or consistency in practice with our relationship. This is then shown to embrace three varied forms in which the disciple is called to do the Father's will in the pious course of life here below. Dan. 4:27 distinguishes mercy to the poor from righteousness; and I am not aware of any confusion of the two in scripture.

Verse 1 calls the disciple to righteousness surpassing that of the scribes and Pharisees, without which none can enter into the Kingdom of the heavens.

> Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward with your Father that is in the heavens.

Here is the large principle for Christian practice. Knowing Him as Christ has revealed Him to us, all acceptable service refers to Him. He is a living and true God whom we serve, and He refuses to share His glory with others. We walk by faith, not by sight. Can anything be more opposite to the ways of Christendom?

1.

> When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be glorified by men: Verily I say to you, They do get their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right doeth, that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay to thee (Matt. 6:2-4).

If men walk in a vain show religiously quite as much as in the world, the Lord calls His own to shun publicity, and not merely this, but in His vigorous figure, that our own left hand may not know what the right does. The simple and essential aim is to do what we do to Him and His glory.

2. So it is with the prayer here enjoined.

> And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they should appear to men. Verily I say to you, They do get their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father that is in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay to thee. But when ye pray, use no vain repetition as those of the nations; for they think that they shall be heard through much speaking. Be not ye therefore like them; for your Father knoweth of what things ye have need before ye beg of him. . . . For if ye forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father also will forgive you [yours]; but if ye forgive not men their offences, neither will your Father forgive your offences (Matt. 6:5-15).

Here the same show before men in prayer is reprehended; nor this only, but the heathen folly of vain repetitions, and of much speaking. Lastly the Lord warns that an unforgiving spirit cannot hope to have its own offences forgiven.

3.

> And when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, downcast in countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear fasting to men. Verily I say to you, They do get their reward. But thou, when fasting, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou mayest not appear fasting to men, but to thy Father that is in secret; and thy Father that seeth in secret shall repay thee (Matt. 6:16-18).

In fasting there is even more sedulous care to guard from any display of that self-humiliation before God which forms so great a part of it. The Lord would form in His own a spirit of living faith in having to do with their Father. Fasting is for His eyes, just like their prayer and their alms. Faith in Him that is in secret is thus in each way exercised. What a contrast with all that hitherto characterized a Jew!

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:89.)

Prayer

Matt. 6:5-6

It is the same principle with prayer as with alms. The disciple of Christ has nothing in common with the hypocrites, whatever: they say or do, or do not. The Son has made known the Father's name to us, and made it known still more intimately and deeply, in association with Himself, on and since He rose from the dead. It was not only the wondrous message through Mary of Magdala,

> I ascend unto my Father aid your Father, and my God and your God;

but that resurrection day at evening the Lord came and stood in the midst, and said to the disciples, Peace to you, showing them His hands and His side. Again He said "Peace to you: as the Father sent me forth, I also send you," and having said this He says to them, Receive [the] Holy Spirit; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Such is the added Christian privilege, even before the Pentecostal gift was conferred, and the special gift the apostles had as such, like prophets, teachers, &a. in their place. O what responsibility, not only to rejoice but to pray unceasingly, flows from such a relationship I and how apt are We to relax or forget! But if we are thus blessed and have in our measure and way such a mission, we have no place to covet; for we have Christ's. And we as His epistles know that we are called to walk in the faith of His grace that we may not shame Him before men. Having received His Word, it is our constant call to pray, that, living in the Spirit, we may walk in the Spirit. And the Lord, alone perfect here and everywhere, impresses His principles on His own followers. He is their life in order that there might be an inward living relationship.

> But when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may appear to men. Verily I say to you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door pray to thy Father that is in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will recompense thee.

This secrecy is still easier, and no less essential in prayer, the most constant of all relative duties. Many saints find a great incentive with others in supplication; and this has its suited and weighty place, as the Lord elsewhere urges. But here as the habitual privilege and claim of relationship to our Father, how careful He is in bidding saints like us to

> enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door pray to thy Father that is in secret, and-thy Father that seeth in secret will requite thee.

How delightfully simple, yet how deep and wise I It is just between the soul and God, and now His Father and our Father, as Christ knew Him and declared Him to us. Solemn and holy it is to meet our Father alone and expressly, as to every thing of need, sorrow, or joy.

What a contrast with the arrangements that have prevailed in Christendom, which press formal prayers in a public building once, twice, or oftener in the day! When the Lord enjoined the united petitions as giving ground for answer from above, it was a specific need as the context in Matt. 18 makes plain. But nothing superseded the normal habit of individual secrecy in prayer to our Father. And it will be the comforting resource of the godly remnant in days to come, as we may trust, when things arrive at such a pass that joint public prayer is impracticable. But now, when the world's feeling is too indifferent to punish or hinder open prayer, can anything give more weight when we come together in assembly than the cherishing of individual prayer in the shut chamber to our Father that sees in secret, as He will surely requite?

Now what can you say to this, dear friend as yet not born of God, but only God's offspring like the heathen Athenians or men of the world generally? Will you not own frankly that it sounds the most irksome bondage to you, and that you in no way pretend thus to live to God? Till yonuare sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, knowing your sins blotted out by His blood, and yourselves brought nigh to God, you cannot freely cry, Abba, Father. For mere profession, however requisite in the renewed soul, is offensive to God in those dead in sins, as we all were till we found life in Christ by faith. Then such prayer as this suits both our need and our blessing. For, though redeemed in soul, we as to our bodies await redemption at His coming, and meanwhile have to do with an evil world and a subtle foe on the watch to ensnare and defile us. Therefore do we need so to pray without ceasing.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:39.)

Vain Repetitions in Prayer

Matt. 6:7-8

Having laid on the individual secrecy in prayer to the Father, the Lord widens here His injunction, and warns His disciples against a habit unworthy of Him, and of them too in so blessed a relationship, though it had to be still more deepened and elevated on His resurrection day, and in view of His ascension to heaven. It might be, as it was, a natural feeling which thus wrought even in heathen. The Lord looks for and inculcates what is supernatural.

> But when praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles; for they think that they shall be heard by their much speaking. Be not therefore likened to them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye beg of him.

It is not a warning against a hypocritical spirit. Of this He spoke first, as they were Jews, a people responsible to observe God's law, but faithless for the most part, and the orthodox among them prone to high pretensions, moral as well as ceremonial, with a heart far from Him. Therefore He inculcated the value and duty of prayer to the Father in secret, as the contrast with the hollowness of prayer to be seen of men.

Notwithstanding His words, the evil grew till in the fifth century it reached its height of folly in Simeon a Syrian who at the last erected a pillar on which he might stand, elevated at first six cubits and at last forty. On the top was a space three feet in diameter, surrounded with a balustrade, and here he stood day and night in all weathers. During the night and till 9 a.m. he was supposed to be constantly in prayer, after stretching out his hands, and bowing so low as to touch his toes with his forehead. Someone who attempted to reckon these prostrations counted up no less than 1244. At nine he began to address the superstitious crowd below; for, strange to say, this religious mountebank not only heard and answered to such as were present, and wrote to the absent, but took on him the care of the churches and corresponded with the highest dignities in both church and state. As evening approached, he dropped these activities and resumed his repeated prayers as before. It is recorded that he partook of food but once a week, and never slept, thus spending with a coat and cap of sheepskin some seven and thirty years, and dying in the attitude of prayer in his sixty-ninth year. His scholar and chronicler Antony tells us that be went up after three days and that his dead body gave forth a sweet odor. So naturally allied is deceit to these quasi-spiritual shows.

But here our Lord reprehends a far more prevalent snare.

> When praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles.

The words occur no where else in the New Testament, nor did the Seventy employ them in the Greek version of the OT. Nor is *βατ.* found in any writing independently of v. 7 till 500 years after Christ. There is therefore divergence of views as to its precise meaning. This is not the occasion for such a discussion; and though it has been sought to derive what is peculiar from the Hebrew for "unadvisedly" or "rashly babbling," the context tends to support the Authorised Version {KJV}.

It is quite unworthy of the Father, and even of His children thus to trifle in prayer. There are no doubt occasions for long persistence, as well as earnest repetition, in prayer. Our Lord Himself is the example of thus spending the night through, and of praying over and over again the same words. Neither of these special supplications could be reprehended in others where they are seasonable and requisite. But there is scarce any habit more common, even among believers, than lengthy utterances which are not prayers at all. For they express the individual's views sometimes of the discourse preceding, his own or some other's, sometimes of all he can muster of the varied circumstances of the church, or at least his own party, and of all the world outside. Occasionally if not often the one in the attitude and form of prayer forgets that he is speaking to his Father, and slips unwittingly into what sounds like teaching Him the doctrines which delight himself.

These things ought surely not to be. What reverence becomes one by grace entitled to say, Abba, Father! What deep sense of His majesty and holiness who has shown infinite mercy to such as deserved everlasting judgment! How often do we not fail, however favored we may be, in judging self and grieving the Holy Spirit! The royal preacher could say of old,

> Be not rash with thy mouth, and set not thy heart to utter anything before God; for God is in the heavens, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through a multitude of business, and a fool's voice through a multitude of words.

How much deeper should be our humility whom, notwithstanding a far fuller sense of our evil and of His grace, He calls His children! How sad the inconsistency, if kept from Pharisaic hypocrisy, to drop into the inconsiderate foolish verbiage of Gentiles!

We are brought to God at an infinite cost. We are taught our utter vileness as well as our shameful sins. When we draw near to pray, ought we not to have the hallowing solemnizing effect in weighing our words, whatever the love that invites us into His presence? Then we may be without anxiety as to anything, but in everything make our requests known to Him by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. He loves that we should confide in dependence on Him. Let us never forget that "our Father knoweth what things we have need of, before we beg of Him." To think that we shall gain a hearing by our much speaking is a dishonor to Him and even to us.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:55.)

The Prayer for Disciples

Matt. 6:9-13

Are you a disciple of the Lord Jesus Are you born of the Spirit? Are you it child of God entitled to say Abba, Father? Such were they, and no others, whom the Lord taught to pray thus:

> Our Father that art in the heavens, Sanctified be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done as in heaven also on the earth, Give us today our sufficient bread, and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors, and bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

If you are a disciple as they were, you too can pray thus, even if like them you could not say that you have in Christ redemption, the forgiveness of your trespasses (Eph. 1.7). Such too was necessarily their state then, for Christ had not yet suffered for sins. But it ought not to be yours now; for the atoning work is done. If then you believe on the Lord Jesus, be it known to you, that through Him is (not promised, but) proclaimed to you remission of sins, and in Him is every believer justified from all things (Acts 13:38, 39). You have not appreciated the alphabet of the gospel, if you know not that once purged you have no more conscience of sins.

While in this unformed condition, born of the Spirit but not resting on redemption known as yours (and therefore not yet having the Spirit of adoption, Gal. 4:4-6, Eph. 1:13 {; Rom. 8:15}), you do well to pray as the Lord taught His disciples waiting for the Spirit (Luke 11:1-3). When the Paraclete was given, they entered into peace and liberty, far beyond their then state (Rom. 5:1-11, 2 Cor. {sic} 17, 18); and so may you prove when thus subject and obedient to God (Acts 5:32). Nevertheless, though the standing of a Christian will lead you to pray in the Spirit according to the new relationships, how blessed ever is that which the Lord here taught! Do you really know what He meant? Many fail in this. Let us weigh His words.

It is in the first Gospel we hear of the Father who is in the heavens. The aim was to raise the eyes on high of Jews who were used to wait for God to display His glorious power on earth (Isa. 25:9, 31:4, 35:4, &c.), as He did in measure since the day of redemption from the old house of bondage. Now He is made known as the One who makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust, yet with special favor to His sons.

The petitions are seven, and divide into two classes; the first three are of righteousness, as the last four are of grace. This is an order intrinsically due to God, and proper for saints. If lost sinners as such were contemplated, all must begin with sovereign grace. But of this we hear not in the so-called sermon on the Mount, but such grace shines appropriately elsewhere.

1. And how right, even our hearts feel, is the opening petition, Sanctified be thy name It is the foremost desire of the renewed, however young in faith. Without this made good, there can be nothing good.

2. Thy (not My) Kingdom come, the Father's Kingdom (Matt. 13:43) where the heavenly saints shine forth as the sun in risen glory, the dearest object of His love here as Father, Who will have them there with and as Christ, through Whom alone it could be.

3. Thy will be done as in heaven also on the earth. This is at the same time the Son of man's Kingdom, Who will send His angels to gather out of it all offences and all that work lawlessness (Matt. 13:41). It is the earthly things of God's Kingdom, as the other the heavenly (John 3:12), Christ being Head of the church and over all things (Eph. 1:10, 22). Then come the petitions of grace.

4. Give us today our sufficient (or, necessary) bread. Thus are they taught to begin with confessing dependence for ordinary wants, as the apostle called us to be content with food and raiment.

5. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. For indeed all saints are bound to judge self and confess sins, as an antecedent spirit of forgiveness is imperative. See Matt. 18, Luke 17:3, 4.

6. And bring us not into temptation. So the Lord impresses on the disciples; for He ever knew their weakness as none else did yet (Luke 22:46). To "endure" temptation is as blessed, as "entering into" it is full of danger.

7. But deliver us from evil in general, if not from the evil one in particular. This was not the sifting, or temptation, deprecated in the clause before, which grace may put us through for good, as we see in Peter; but the power of the enemy in drawing into sin against God. The proper desire was to be kept from the evil, or, if one fell, to be restored from it. Grace in no case fails, if a disciple alas! did. Deliver us from evil.

The doxology is an ecclesiastical accretion and therefore uninspired. Luke was led by the Holy Spirit to omit the special title (2), the earthly Kingdom (3), and the final clause (7), as not so much called for in the case of Gentiles.

Reader, can your state admit of your adopting the prayer for a disciple of Jesus? How sad to use it lightly and untruly?

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:20.)

A Forgiving Spirit

Matt. 6:14-15

The Lord was not content with this impressive call for practical grace in the prayer prescribed to His disciples:

> Forgive us our debts, as we also forgave our debtors.

He immediately after follows it up with emphasis.

> For if ye forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you [yours]; but if ye forgive not men their offences, neither will your Father forgive your offences.

There is such confusion in Christendom as to the forgiveness of sins that the true force of the Lord's solemn words is lost for the most part. The vast majority have so hazy a view of eternal redemption that they fear to believe in the full and abiding efficacy of Christ's work. The glad news, or the gospel, of God is thus for them shorn of its power. They are no better off than a Jew who brought his offering, confessed his sin, and went away with the comfort that it was forgiven. As he had to offer often, so the ill-taught Christian talks of his need to be resprinkled again and again with that blood, though expressly said to be shed once for all.

What blindness, if we adduce nothing else, to the testimony of Heb. 10! The perfect sacrifice has caused the imperfect to cease. The worshipers once purged have no more conscience of sins; in plain contrast with the Levitical sacrifices, wherein is made year by year remembrance, as the Christian is entitled to remission of sins. Christ came to take away the temporary, and to establish the everlasting. Therefore, when He offered one sacrifice for sins, He for ever [in continuity] sat down on God's right hand. He had done all perfectly to blot out the guilt of His friends (once His foes); and took His seat as its triumphant proof, from henceforth waiting till enemies who reject Him and His work be set as footstool of His feet. Then He will come forth and tread them down in their open rebellion at the consummation of the age. But to the Christian the Holy Spirit testifies that their sins and their lawlessnesses God remembers no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no longer an offering for sin: every thing of the kind is superseded and more than fulfilled in that of Christ.

But here faith fails, because God's word is not received in its own divine and conclusive authority; and thus are souls defrauded of peace and joy in believing; and entire devotedness to God is curtailed, bought as we are with a price so incalculable. This unbelief is helped on by confounding things that differ, like our text with that complete redemption which rests solely on Christ's cross. Still more when such blessed institutions of Christianity as baptism and the Lord's supper were made saving ordinances, not figuratively but intrinsically; and a clerical class was made necessary and of divine right to apply them with due effect to the laity: a figment which outdid the highest claims of Jewish priesthood, and in principle denies the gospel.

But while the Lord does not, here or in any part of His teaching on the Mount, refer to that redemption which He was to accomplish, He has a weighty lesson to enforce on His disciples in cultivating a spirit of grace. If the Jew in general could not rise above the law in its distance from God, the fear which made the very mediator full of trembling, and the readiness to denounce and curse which it engendered, grace is the atmosphere in which the Christian lives and flourishes. No doubt it is through righteousness; but withal it is grace reigning.

What was it that drew to the Lord Jesus even from John the Baptist? What was it that in spite of a legal environment at length blossomed and bore fruit so sweet in Peter and John and James and a noble army of martyrs and confessors? What was it that melted Paul's heart of steel and made him the must ardent and suffering witness to the world of Jesus Christ and Him crucified? What else could begin with the proudest, moat self-satisfied, stiffnecked, and rebellious race, and transform them into the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness, yea the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, persecuted for righteousness' sake, and even for His sake, for whom the nation and its high priest judged crucifixion only His due, and so fulfilled the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets?

As it was the grace and truth which gave the disciples life, and would give it abundantly in the power of Christ's resurrection, so would follow that full and abiding remission which only His blood secures, and this uninterruptedly. But sin indulged does interrupt communion with our God and Father, and needs the advocacy of Christ to cleanse the feet thus defiled, by the washing of water by word. His blood retains intact its atoning virtue; but the word is applied by the Spirit in answer to Christ on high, and he that sinned repents in dust and ashes. For this is He that came through water and blood. We need and have both, and cannot do without the water from first to last, as we have had the blood once for all. Whoever ignores, or (still worse) denies, the twofold provision of grace, undermines redemption and muddles the truth of God.

Now the Lord specifies an unforgiving spirit as intolerable to our Father in His daily government of His sons. And no wonder. It is to go back from grace to law, from Christ to wretched self. Hence, as in the prayer, He urges grace toward those who may offend us ever so painfully, and love which He commends to our loyal and tender warning of its lack practically as hateful in His eyes.

> For if ye forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your offences.

O you who keep up your resentment, and brood over the offences (often exaggerated if not imaginary) of others, beware. You, a Christian, if so, are in utter default of this characteristic duty, as unlike Christ as you can be. Need one say that you are as unhappy as you are hard? Is it nothing to your high spirit, degrading as this is to a Christian, that "your heavenly Father will not forgive you your offences"? Trifle not with so bad and proud a state, and no longer grieve the Holy Spirit of God who sealed you.

Let not the sun set upon your wrath, nor give room for the devil.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:100.)

Fasting

Matt. 6:16-18

It remains for us to weigh our Lord's words on fasting, as the third part of His teaching on "righteousness" (not "alms") in the first verse of the chapter. Prayer holds the intermediate place between alms and fasting, the pious and holy basis to guard the other two, binding them up with faith against formality.

> And when ye fast, be not gloomy-faced as the hypocrites; for they disguise their faces, so that they may appear to men fasting. Verily, I say to you, They have their reward. But thou while fasting anoint thy head, and wash thy face, so that thou mayest not appear to men fasting, but to thy Father that [is] in secret; and thy Father that seeth in secret will recompense thee.

The Lord does not so much enjoin fasting as bring it like prayer under the Christian principle of having to do with our Father in secret. It falls under the individual life of faith. Yet He undoubtedly sanctions and approves of it when so practiced; and this independently of the more open and united aim, such as we find in Acts 2, 3, 14:23. He also intimates its value for spiritual power. Pious men have ever felt and must feel its appropriateness in chastening the soul before God, where public or private need called for humiliation. But even in Mark 9:29 it is well to note that the two most ancient copies ignore "and fasting," as they with other authorities also the entire v. 21 of Matt. 17, nor is there a word corresponding in Luke 9. The apostle however who more than others was given to stand for liberty in Christ speaks (in 2 Cor. 6:5, 9:27) simply and piously of "fastings" and "fastings often" in his service, to the rebuke of that levity which the Corinthian assembly betrayed, and which characterizes modern Christianity, save where superstition and self-righteousness give it an artificial moment in very different eyes.

In Matt. 9:14, etc. the Lord shows its true place and time in answer to the disciples of John saying,

> Why do we and the Pharisees often fast, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said to them, Can the sons of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them; but days shall come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast.

Neither those who were only disciples of John had any real appreciation of the Bridegroom's presence, nor still less the Pharisees filled with forms and self-righteousness. It was joy to the believing disciples of Jesus. Feeble as they were, they had left their all for Him, and they tasted a divine bliss in Him wholly unknown to the others, who were wholly unprepared for the awful purport to them and the Jews of His being taken away, little as the true disciples as yet comprehended that solemn approaching fact with its immense consequence. The joy of Messiah's presence made fasting altogether inappropriate. Those who tasted none of it were blind to Him whom God's grace had given and sent. Greater still would be their darkness, when the Bridegroom should be taken away. Then would those that believed and loved Him fast, both spiritually and literally.

It might not be like Jews accompanied by rending of garments or with sackcloth and ashes, but deeper communion with God's mind than could be known before the Holy Spirit came to make it good. And fasting among Christians is all the more striking because of the peace, joy, and boundless delight they have in the love of Christ, and fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Still if loyal to Christ we cannot but have the constant sense of His rejection, and of the judgment ever impending and certain to fall on the guilty world, and all the more because it pays Him the hollowest of lip homage. Yes, days are come when the Bridegroom thus ignominiously taken away is still absent, and fasting lends itself to mourners, whatever their even enhanced joy in being united to Him as members of His body, a privilege never dreamt of before, and the joy of grace in the revelation and active working of a Savior God to lost sinners, Gentile no less than Jew.

But Christendom perverted fasting, through vain philosophy, into a reflection on the creative glory of God. And abstinence from meats, which He created for thanksgiving, was early turned into human merit, and the lie of inherent evil in matter. Grace and truth through Jesus Christ were thus denied; and days of fasting were imposed, as ecclesiastical history records, first by custom, and afterward by legal sanction. In the second century, if not in the first, the fatal error also drawn from philosophy was in full swing not for their life and complete cleansing by His blood, but of a twofold rule, the one for the despised flock of God, the other for the spiritual superior; the one the Precepts for all sorts, the other the Counsels of Perfection for those who aspired to a higher life, which issued in asceticism and grew into monasticism. Who can wonder that God poured contempt on these unbelieving efforts to improve the first man, by letting the flesh with all this inflation break out into the grossest immorality on one side, and legendary falsehood against God on the other? But this too was just what was found with older Platonists and Pythagoreans, who taught that it was not only lawful but commendable to deceive and lie, for the sake of truth and piety. Hence, even in those early days the large harvest of forgeries which are coming to light in our days, the witness of the rapid departure from the Christianity taught by the inspired apostles, long before the papal system systematized it and enforced it on pain of death.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:70.)

Treasures on the Earth, or in Heaven?

Matt. 6:19-21

Christ beyond all others knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He Himself knew what was in man. He seeks treasures on the earth. It may not be gold or property. It may be pleasure or power or position. Some set their heart on fame in letters or learning, in science or art. Some court poetry, oratory, or philosophy. The bar and the bench, the army or the navy, civil government or politics, philanthropy or even the pulpit ordinarily, fire the ambition of others. These objects and all akin which attract the heart of man are treasures on the earth, and beneath the faith to which the Christian is called -- faith in God unseen and eternal. "Love not the world," wrote His inspired servant,

> nor the things that are in the world. If any one loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world, And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Listen to the Savior's words on the more prevailing snare.

> Lay not up for you treasures on the earth where moth and rust consume, and where thieves dig through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust corrupteth, and where thieves dig not through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there will be thy heart also.

The treasures in heaven are the things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. On these things we are to set our mind, not on things that are on the earth. For we died with Christ from its best things, the rudiments of the world which Israel had as their religion; and our life is hid with Christ in God. His cross closed all such shadows and ordinances; and therefore is the world crucified to the Christian, and he to the world. If he is truly Christ's, he is heavenly as united to Christ, though he is still on earth, and bears the image of Adam the earthy till He comes.

Be not moved by the unbelieving sneers of those who try to lower as other-worldliness your true objects. These are far above the world, or the habitable earth to come, blessed as it will be when Christ and His saints reign over it. Our proper portion is in heaven and with Christ there. Be not cheated out of that which is revealed to you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven, on which the Epistles enlarge beyond what the disciples could bear when their Master was here, as He Himself tells us (John 16:12).

The wisest of mankind is no judge of what God wills for His children now. The New Testament is as clear as possible that He would have His own not of the world; indeed our Lord declares that they are not, even as He is not. And as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatever things God prepared for those that love Him: them God revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. These are treasures which the Lord calls us to lay up for us in heaven. And nothing can harm them, like earthly treasures by corruption or violence.

Do not say that such an aim is beyond the believer. It would be assuredly, if there were not the grace of God to enable. But we have Christ as Head above, from Whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God. His grace suffices one in the most crushing circumstances. And if we have such an Advocate on high, we have One no less divine to work in us here below that we may be strengthened in the inner man. Thus could one of old boast of weaknesses, never of sins, that the power of Christ might tabernacle upon him.

If you urge that you have doubts about your soul, how can you pass this day without settling that question before God? He sent His Son for you, that you might live through Him, and that He, the Lord Jesus, might die for you -- yea, for your sins. Let it be your need, your guilt, your ruin, looking to God in the name of the crucified Savior. Jesus never said nay to one that, feeling his sins, appealed to Him. God the Father would have you thus honor the Son, who declares solemnly:

> Verily, Verily, I say to you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but is passed out of death into life. Verily, verily, I say to you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live {John 5:24, 25}.

Be not faithless then, but believing; trust His grace that all else you lack, as you surely do, will be given in the like love. It is His joy to bless the believer.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:53.)

The Treasure and the Heart

Matt. 6:21

The moral principle here laid down by our Lord calls for our deep and constant heed; and the more, because the flesh ever deceives, and struggles against it, to indulge itself under fair disguise and for reasons seemingly strong and excellent. But we walk by faith, not by sight, and only so rightly.

> For where thy treasure is, there thy heart will also be.

Where faith is not, a present object engages the heart, and becomes the treasure. It is self in one shape or another, whereby Satan is the master, and not God: what then must be the end for eternity? The most prevalent is what our Lord calls "filthy lucre"; for money is the readiest means of gain for gratifying carnal lusts. It may be the heart abandoned to the pleasures of sin for a season. Power again is the ambition of some, as fame is of others. Also it may take a religious direction as readily and more dangerously than a literary one, or for worldly honor. In such ways men perish, even where no grossness appears, but the nicest refinement.

Christ alone delivers and preserves from all such snares. He is given and sent by God to win and save the vilest from his evil, to reconcile unto God, to be life as well as righteousness to him who had neither, to associate with heaven, and thus separate from the world not only in all that is evidently bad but in all that claims to be good or its best, that we should no longer live to ourselves, but to Him who for our sakes died and rose again. And as this is for the Father's glory, so is it by the Spirit's power who is here, sent forth now from heaven on and since Pentecost, to glorify Him who never sought His own will but at all cost that of God.

Christ is therefore the true treasure, and in and by Him the riches of God's grace, yea and far beyond all question of need, to the praise of the glory of His grace which will make us like Himself before Him, not only in nature but in relationship as far as this can be. But we have this treasure meanwhile in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.

> Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our momentary light affliction worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal {2 Cor. 4:16}.

Hence our Lord urges our not laying up for ourselves treasures upon the earth where moth and rust spoil, and where thieves dig through and steal; but to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust spoils, and where thieves do not dig through nor steal. "For where thy treasure is, there thy heart also will be"! The heart follows necessarily the object of its affection; and Christ, the treasure of the Christian, was not of the earth but comes from above, from heaven, and above all.

> What He hath seen and heard, this He testifleth; and none receiveth His testimony. He that received His testimony set to his seal that God is true. For He whom God sent speaketh the words of God; for He giveth not the Spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things [to be] in His hand. He that believeth on the Son hath life eternal, but he that obeyeth not (or, is not subject to) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:32-36).

It is not only then what the treasure is, but *where* that the Lord presses on our heed. And this truth of the treasure in heaven derives great accession and force from our Lord's ascending where He was before (John 6:62), no longer Son of God only as He came down, but Son of man as He is now also in heavenly glory. For this is the proper and full way in which the Christian knows Him. Wherefore we henceforth know no one according to flesh; but if even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know [Him] no longer So if any one [be] in Christ, [it is] a new creation.

To Christ glorified is the Christian united by the Spirit, now that he rests on redemption accomplished. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Only then and there could it be. Hence having died with Christ and being raised together with Him, we are exhorted to seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, to set our mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For we died, and our life is hid with Christ in God. And we wait that, when Christ our life shall be manifested, we too shall then be manifested with Him in glory.

We may notice that in Luke 12 the connection of this truth expressed more broadly ("For where your treasure is, there your heart also will be"), is not only with the warning of the precariousness of all save a treasure in the heavens, but with the Lord's coming as a proximate hope.

> Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and ye like men waiting for their own lord whenever he may leave the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open to him immediately {Luke 12:35}.

It would be scarce possible to conceive words more clearly indicating the call to be constantly looking out for Him.

Altogether the aim is unmistakable if we are walking in the Spirit. We are now "heavenly" in title (1 Cor. 15:48, 49), [81] and we expect on the surest authority to realize it even for our bodies at His coming. Let us see to it meanwhile to live, serve, walk, and worship, consistently with our faith and our hope. Nothing short of this is the Christianity of the N.T. when the many things were known which the disciples could not bear till they had redemption through His blood and the gift of the Spirit. When the Spirit was come from Him on high, He did not fail to guide them into all the truth . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:132.)

---

81. {Surely we *are* heavenly *as is the heavenly One*; only we wait for it to be applied to our bodies.}

The Lamp of the Body is the Eye

Matt. 6:22-23

That Christ is the Light, and the True Light, is a truth dear to every Christian. His coming into the world manifests every man. Rich or poor, simple or sage, false or faithful, not one escapes His all-searching light. Nor is there the least circumstance in the course of every day, any more than in what pertains to God, and truth, and morals, not for this life only but for eternity, that He does not set in the light of God. Only through Him do we see fully what God is, Satan, man, the sinner, the saint, heaven, hell, everything.

The disciples, as the Lord told them in Matt. 5:14, are the light of the world, as they are also the salt of the earth (v. 13). They could be neither apart from Christ. It is He who thus assimilates them to Himself; the latter in His character of righteousness, the former in the quality of His grace, as already explained in Series 11:4. In receiving Him by faith they receive a new nature, being born of God; hence there is both righteousness and love in their ways.

But here there is a further though connected truth of great value.

> The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light; but if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark. If therefore the light that is in thee is darkness, how great the darkness!

It is a question not of the light, which is perfect but of "the eye." Spiritual condition has an immense deal to do with the disciples seeing aright. Our recipiency and discernment, our actual judgment and our practice, depend on the state of our affections. The Lord presents the ready and effectual test. "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light; but if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark."

Christ truly the object before one gives singleness of eye; and where He is simply and exclusively the "one thing" before the soul, the whole body is light. Difficulties vanish. The will of God becomes quite clear. I am surprised and ashamed to have had doubts here and uncertainty there. I recognize to my humiliation that I had been asleep in my ways and had to rise up from among the dead, and then only have Christ shining upon me.

Prayer alone does not ensure singleness of eye, nor yet suffices searching the word accompanied by prayer. There may be a fleshly film that dims the eye. We are too apt to think ourselves of importance for God when it is all of grace that He uses us in this way or that. We fail to appreciate our Lord's waiting on His Father, without taking a single step till He gets the word. Yet it is to His obedience that we are sanctified by the Spirit.

We are not like Jews with every point great or small religiously and in ordinary life, in peace or in war, personal, domestic, or social, all ruled by the statutes and ordinances, prohibitions and injunctions of law. Christ brought in the fuller and deeper obedience of a Son, and makes it by grace the believer's by the gift of life eternal and eternal redemption, with the Holy Spirit indwelling as power and personally also in us. But though thus blessed, there are still the three great enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil, in the face of which we are responsible to please God as His children. We need therefore to pray, as the apostle did for the Colossians, to be filled with the right knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the right knowledge of God (Col. 1:9, 10).

For this we need the eye single and the whole body light. How is this to be? The Lord tells us in John 15:7:

> If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what-ye will, and it shall be done to you.

Habitual dependence on Him with confidence in His love is to abide in Him: without this all else is vain. But where we abide by grace, His words are needed to direct: for who is sufficient otherwise? and His Spirit is given to guide us thus. Only thus are we sure that we have His mind; for thus the eye is single and the whole body light. Then when we ask, we have our petition. O that so it may be! and that we may be content with nothing less!

What is the issue, where other objects are allowed? The alternative is, "If thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark." How solemn the sentence, and how true! "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness!" O look to God that it be not so with you, a disciple of the Lord!

See too the impossibility of the Light yours, of the eye single, save by genuine repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus. Doubt yourself, not God; and receive Him who in His grace came to receive you by faith, if you have not already done so.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:102.)

The Eye Wicked

Matt. 6:23

How beyond measure sad is the state which our Lord here describes! How solemn the contrast with the eye being single, and the whole body full of light!

> But if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness!

We perceive that the Lord, as throughout all His words on the Mount, is not here occupied in any way with redemption, but with the need of a new nature and its proper internal effect on the one hand, or on the other with the moral evil, where one is not born of God. There is no possible apprehension of God's mind or will; where there is only the natural man. Such a one does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But the spiritual one discerns all things, and he is discerned by no one. Mental capacity and learning avail nothing save to conceal the awful void from oneself or from others who are carnal.

The "eye" is the index of the nature, not outwardly alone but inwardly. "But if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark." This is man's condition unless renewed by grace. In this all important respect the Jew, judged by the light in our Lord Jesus, was no better off than the Gentile. They loved not the disciples whom they saw, still less the God whom they saw not. Had they really loved Him that begot, they had also loved him that was begotten by Him. The Lord made this certain and manifest; for in Him was no sin, yet they reviled Him. Grace and truth came through Him, yet they cast Him out as an eater and wine-bibber, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners, instead of recognizing the Son of man come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Hence said He to His disciples when nearing the end of His earthly course,

> If the world hate you, ye know that it hath hated me before you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, and I chose you out of the world, on this account the world hath hated you. Remember the word that I said to you, A bondman is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep your's also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the -works which no other did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. But that the word written in their law might be glorified. They hated me without a cause (John 15:18-25).

What comment could be more direct and simple on the wicked eye, and the whole body dark? It is the awful and unremoved evil of the natural man; the mind of the flesh, which is not only death morally, but enmity against God, whose grace is unintelligible to it, no less than His righteousness by virtue of Christ's atoning death to justify the ungodly, if he believe on Him. The natural man's faith, if faith it is to be called, is to believe in himself, utterly blind to his iniquity and lawlessness and his total ruin before God.

The very fact that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offences, adds, as the words of the Lord Himself prove, immeasurably to man's guilt.

Who so pitiful to failure, who so ready to forgive sins, if they be felt and confessed to Him? But the demonstration of the world's irremediable evil lies in the undeniable truth that, when God was in Christ reconciling it, it refused all reconciliation; when God rose above all offences, it scorned the boon, buffeted the one who proffered and pressed it on their acceptance, spit in His face and crucified Him.

It was no use to make overtures to man. Who could conceive any so great as God had made in Christ. Man was irretrievably ruined. If the Jew boasted that he only was a light of those in darkness, could he deny that he was leader of the blind against the true light, and did his utmost to extinguish what condemned himself no less than the despised Gentile? If therefore the light that was in Israel was thus proved to be darkness, "how great the darkness"!

The only hope for lost man lay in the rejected and crucified Christ; and such was the unfailing grace of God, that His best came out when man did his worst. For Him who knew no sin He made sin for us (who believe), that we might become God's righteousness in Him. It is solely a question of the second man, the last Adam, who once for all -- it was enough -- suffered for sins, just for unjust, that He might bring us to God, cleansed from every sin by the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. It is God that justifies the believer, as He made Christ sin for us, that we might become His righteousness. What grace! what a salvation!

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:148.)

Two Masters

Matt. 6:25

When man fell, he abandoned God as Master; he gained by sin another master, even Satan, the great rebel against the true God. The race followed the fallen parents.

> Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned (Rom. 5:12).

Such is the moral history of man, recorded in Genesis, there summarized, here reasoned on by the apostle. So vain, so blind, is every man, that he is apt to go no higher than himself in accounting for sin. But it is not so: neither Jew nor Gentile originated sin. It began with the head of the race, long before those distinctions. It was an innocent man too, though Adam was not deceived, but the woman being quite deceived was involved in transgression (1 Tim. 2:14). Sin became the state of all, while each added his own sins also. Satan thus became master in fact of the race; and from the first the guilty pair hid away from God's presence, before "He drove out the man."

Henceforth all for good turned on another, the Second man, the Last Adam. Sinful man can neither atone for sins nor get rid of sin. And from the fall Jehovah Elohim clearly intimated the great truth that deliverance can come only from the woman's Seed, who, Himself bruised, should bruise the Serpent's head, that is, destroy the mysterious enemy. Jesus, the Son of God, born of the virgin, alone answers to this earliest oracle, and to every other in scripture. How many besides His incarnation converge in Him and can apply to no other, in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension! Above all He was to suffer once for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us who believe to God. For no external rite could adequately meet the dire need. It was not purifying only, but atonement there must be by One who, being God and man in one person, suited and alone could suit God and man, the Holy One whom God made sin for us, that we might become His righteousness in Christ. Hence repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, must be in man.

There is thus faith-obedience, the root of all other obedience in practice. It is not mere outward separateness by circumcision or any thing akin. The sanctification of the Spirit is thereby secured in a new life imparted to the believer for Christ's obedience as well as His blood-sprinkling. We thenceforth obey as He did, not as slaves under law like Israel with the solemn sanction of the victim's blood on them and on the book of the law, threatening death on disobedience; we obey as sons, on whom grace rests, and as we are begotten of God, so have we Christ's blood that cleanseth from every sin. As we were in baptism buried with Christ unto His death (for nothing short could suffice even as a starting-point), so we also, as He was raised from the dead, should walk in newness of life. What then? Shall we sin because, even if once Jews, we are no longer under law but under grace? Away with it. Know we not that to whom we yield ourselves bondmen for obedience, we are bondmen to him whom we obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? Through Christ and His work set free from sin, and become bondmen to God, we have our fruit unto holiness and the end life eternal.

Thus it is that sin shall not have dominion over us. Not law but grace gives power; and grace and truth came through Jesus, as John 1 expressly declares in contrast with law, which however good in itself could only slay one in whom sin was and worked. For sinful man salvation hangs on Him. Without His blood is no remission; in virtue of it He washed us from our sins, and in newness of life (His life as risen from among the dead), we are fitted to walk worthily and please God.

But Satan ever seeks to mislead. And no one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. "Ye cannot," said our Lord, "serve God and mammon." This tests those who bear His name. Never was mammon more widely sought in Christendom than now. How is it with your own soul? Are you, a professing Christian, a slave to mammon? A divided heart is a disloyal one. No one can serve two masters. Think of the young ruler who in sorrow turned away from following Christ, because he loved his possessions. Think of the apostle who for a paltry sum sold his Master. How true it is that, hating the one, we love the other, or holding to the one, we despise the other! Mammon commands the world; and if we love the world, or the things in the world, we serve mammon. But what does a man profit if he should gain the whole world, and lose his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Ye cannot serve two masters, God and mammon.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:329.)

Be Not Anxious

Matt. 6:25-32

As the Lord charges His own to lay up for themselves treasures, not on earth, but in heaven, so does He forbid anxiety about their life here below, as His servant did about anything. He lifts our eyes above the seen present to the things unseen and eternal, whence He came and whither He was going, as He is coming to take us shortly. Here He deals with the believer's heart, and the snare of seeking to serve God and mammon which He pronounces morally impossible.

> For this reason I say to you. Be not anxious for your life what ye should eat and what ye should drink, nor yet for your body what ye should put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the raiment? Look at the birds of the heavens, that they sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father nourisheth them. Are ye not more excellent than they? And which of you by anxiety can add to his stature one cubit? And why are ye anxious about raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they toil not, nor yet spin; yet I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory put on like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, being to-day and tomorrow cast into the oven, how much more you, 0 ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or what shall we put on? For all these things the Gentiles seek after; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things (Matt. 6:25-32).

Anxiety as to the things which the present life needs is natural. All these things the nations of the earth seek after. In God they have no faith, as the Jews professed loudly, but in works denied. But the disciples had the heavenly Father's name now set before them as the One who is perfect in grace, making His sun shine on evil and good, and sending rain on just and unjust. How true this is Yet who had affirmed it as a living principle but the Lord on earth, who also set it forth as a model for His own practically, that they might be sons indeed: an astonishing doctrine, especially for those, as they were, trained up in the legal ideas of the Jews. So their righteousness was to be, whether alms, prayer, and fasting, not before men but to their Father that sees in secret.

The name of their Father made anxiety about earthly and bodily wants a painful incongruity, and in particular about what kind the supply should be. From Himself the birds read them one lesson, and the lilies another. He nourishes each fleeting creature, He gives the passing flower its beauty. How much more did He care for His children? It was a touching appeal and carrying with it to every believer the conviction of irresistible truth. They were, they are, called to believe in His sustaining goodness. He never fails in His love: they ought not to fail in resting and counting on it day by day. If tried as to it, let them not doubt that it is for their good. It is impossible for God to lie. Are they to doubt His love Whom the Lord reveals as their Father? He who embraces the least objects of His care will act worthily of His love to the nearest.

Nor does the Lord spare them the humbling proof how little the anxiety of man avails.

> Which of you by anxiety can add to his stature one cubit?

It was a very small thing if some would count it a very great addition. Yet even for this how powerless is man! Why then be anxious about a garment? The herbage of the field rebukes the vanity of a child of God; for as the Lord called their attention to the lilies, he pointed the moral by the plain fact that God clothed even these transient creatures, lower in the scale than the birds, with a beauty far beyond Solomon's array in all his glory.

Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or what shall we put on? Here the Lord urges two considerations which we do well to heed. One is to guard us against sharing the unbelief of those who do not even know God, How compromising to share the thoughts and feelings of the Gentiles! "For all these things the nations seek after." The other is to assure the doubting heart. "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Not one sparrow falls to the ground without Him: but of you even the hairs of the head are all numbered (Matt. 10:29, 30).

Now are you, who read these words, a child of God by grace? Believe not such as say that all mankind are so. They deny the fall; they ignore sin; they oppose the solemn testimony of scripture, that, however favored by privileges, we are by nature children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:3). Believe not others who say that baptism quickens those dead in trespasses and sins. Christ quickens by faith of His word and the working of the Spirit. He is the Life, as He is the Way and the Truth. You have His words, not merely to instruct His own, but to show how the dead may live, yea have eternal life; for this it is He gives to those who believe. "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). Why wonder? Is He not the Son, the *I am*? "He that believeth on the Son hath life eternal (or, everlasting): and he that is unsubject to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). O sinner, beware lest this be your portion.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:121).

The Birds of the Sky

Matt. 6:26, 27

The Lord appeals to the disciples, in view of the creature subjected to man, against personal anxiety. It is humbling but wholesome for them to draw lessons of dependence thence. And first, He points to the winged class, familiar everywhere to human eyes, as objects of divine care and dependent on His beneficent provision. How much more are not His own in their incomparably higher and nearer relationship to Him! and how powerless too is their anxiety to effect relief!

> Look at the birds of the heavens, that they sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature?(Matt. 6:26, 27).

The birds are of a large class and of immense variety; so much so that the famous Cuvier had to confess his dissent from all the scientific systems he had seen. Can any competent naturalist since deny that an adequately true arrangement still awaits its discoverer? He in his "Règne Animal" proposed six orders with far more numerous genera; Temminck, sixteen orders; Latreille, seven, with 252 genera. Though some few excellent observers as Willoughby and Ray preceded and have followed since these distinguished French writers, there is no end as yet to that controversy.

But our Lord drew His invaluable lessons, not from the recondite secrets, still less from the uncertainties of the science, but from the patent and undeniable facts of God's creation and providence, which none but the perverse can cavil at even in this age when the whole creation groans together, but not without hope that deliverance shall come from on high. All disciples can therefore understand and feel what He meant, and they need. The birds neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your (not their) heavenly Father feeds them. They may share the consequences of a fallen world, as other animals, and man more than any, as being their head, a moral creature, and deeply to blame directly and indirectly. Nevertheless without means and without the least carking care, our heavenly Father feeds the birds, as the plain and beautiful and instructive rule.

Hence of old the Psalmist (104) celebrated Him that sent forth springs into the valleys, that run among the mountains, and not for man only, or for every beast of the field, and the wildest of them, but for the birds that utter their voices among the branches where a dead silence prevails, broken now and then by loud shrieks of anguish so different from their cheerful strains. The stately spreading cedars were planted not for man's use only, not for taste or pride, but for the birds also to make their nests, unless the taller firs suit some better still. Nor are the creatures of the sea great and wide overlooked. These all look unto Thee, that Thou mayest give them their food in its season: that Thou givest they gather. Thou openest Thy hand: they are filled with good. Thou hidest Thy face: they are troubled. Thou takest away their breath: they expire and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit: they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth.

But here the Lord guards His own from anxious thoughts in their daily life. Sparrows, as He taught later, are cheap enough; yet as not one of them shall fall to the ground without our Father, so He preserves them and other birds great or small without foresight of their own.

If such creatures, the unclean as surely as the clean, are the habitual recipients of His beneficence, how much must His sons be? It is an argument from the comparatively mean and distant to those whom grace deigns to bring into the nearest relationship with Himself. And the Lord's aim is to impress on His disciples, so favored, the obligation of confiding in the love of their Father without a doubt or a fear. Why should they not, instead of yielding to the anxiety natural to such as either know not God at all like Gentiles, or own Him in an altogether lower way like the Jews?

It seems almost needless to say that the words afford not the least ground for those who alleged a discrepancy with Prov. 6:6-8. For the latter impresses the common duty of industry, and therefore reproves the sluggard from the text of the laborious ant. The former calls the believer to cherish faith's reliance on the Father's care, without an anxious thought. The one is as true as the other; but the latter goes deeper and rises higher because of the revelation of the Father's name to those who believe on the Son.

Then again a strange set of fanatics, both in rather early and in later days of Christendom, made abstinence from labor a counsel of perfection. They claimed to be in a peculiar degree men of prayer, and were called Euchites by those who condemned them. Their boast was neither to sow nor reap; but they could not escape the reproach that they liked the barn and to have it well filled. The germ of this selfishness showed itself among the Thessalonian saints. But it did not fail to receive immediate discouragement and a heavy blow from the apostle, who could appeal to his own work with his hands where it made for the Lord's glory. But he also ruled such a claim as unworthy of Him, and a dishonor to such as were ensnared in cheat.

> Now we enjoin you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw from every brother [not rising to superior spirituality but) walking disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For yourselves know that ye ought to imitate us, because we were not disorderly among you, nor did we eat bread of any one for naught, but with labour and toil working night and day, that we might not burden any of you. Not because we have not authority, but that. we might give ourselves an example to you, that ye should imitate us. For even when we were with you, this we enjoined you that, if any one will not work,

> neither let him eat. For we hear of some walking among you disorderly, working not at all, but busy-bodies. Now such as those we enjoin and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ that Working quietly they eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:6-12).

The question in v. 27 exposes impressively the impotence of anxiety to add to our stature the familiar, unit of measure. Yet many moderns incline to length of life, instead of "stature." But this is hardly the place to discuss such a question. The general sense at all events is clear to the simplest.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:165.)

The Lilies of the Field

Matt. 6:28-30

From the birds of the sky in vv. 26, 27, the Lord turns to the lilies of the field in vv. 28-30: a lesson against anxiety, the former in eating and drinking; the latter in raiment. Notoriously they comprise the two branches of ordinary living which so test the masses, not of mankind only, but of disciples, to whom He addressed Himself throughout His teaching on the mount. His disciples ought not to forget or distrust their heavenly Father by such doubts of His loving care over their daily wants.

> And why be anxious about a garment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they toil not nor spin; but I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. But if God so clothe. the herbage of the field, that is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into an oven, [shall he] not much more [clothe] you, O little of faith?

Here as He points, not to birds but to the flowers, He does not speak of sowing or reaping or storage, but of toiling and spinning: God cares for the birds without the one, and for the lilies without the other. Were not His children far more to their heavenly Father than either? Not only were they God's offspring as mankind universally are, but His children by grace through faith. It is not that sowing or reaping, toiling or spinning, might not be a duty, if they had to provide for themselves and their household, and could earn their supplies by these labors more readily than otherwise. Even in an unfallen world, Jehovah put Adam whom He had formed into the garden of Eden to till it and to guard it, when there was none to hire for the needful work, and he himself might happily employ his own hands.

Sin brought in sad change, not only for man's soul and body, but for the very ground on which he trod, as scripture plainly tells us. It was no longer easy and delightful work, but in toil or sorrow he must eat of it all the days of his life. And no wonder; since thorns also and thistles it should yield to him, only to be overcome by the sweat of his face in order to eat bread. If self will kick against the goad, it only aggravates the case; if the yoke (and it is not here grievous) be accepted, it is all the better for murmuring men. There is no deliverance from guilt and sin but through faith in Christ, to whom the Holy Spirit bears witness, and by whom He gives power to the believer. But for children as yet unconverted as well as adults in the same state, occupation is a merciful help, against the dangers of idleness and indulgence of lust and passion. Even for the faithful it is good, as declining to work where the person is without means is had: so much so, that the apostle curtly lays it down, that if a man likes not to work, neither let him eat. This prescription, if duly administered, would in general prove a salutary medicine, and without fail:

Such idlers apt to be busy-bodies too, are comparatively rare; but not so those who trouble themselves about their clothes. What after being born of God, and now having redemption as well as life everlasting, and the Holy Spirit to take up our every need and difficulty, not only the Lord interceding for us, but the Father blessing who sent His only begotten Son to die for us when we had nothing but sins? And do souls so favored distress themselves perhaps about clothes, and possibly fine clothes, beyond what becomes a Christian man, woman, or child?

What a rebuke from the herbage of the field, as our Lord interprets it! Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these lilies which, the more they are inspected and by the most powerful means, only the more eclipse the splendor of Israel's richest king. Yet that lavish beauty of form and color was but a carpet spread for the feet of the poorest Israelite on one day, and on another was fuel for an oven. And this end of its glory was far from being an offence to the Lord. He, who was above all jealous for His Father's honor in His work uses the double fact. to judge nature's anxiety about earthly, things (were they as the lilies ever so beautiful to the eye, yet utterly evanescent too), to banish doubts and wishes and unworthy desires, and to establish: the heart in confidence of His Father's present, perfect, and loving care.

It was not the least in His mind to occupy the disciple with the birds of the sky or the lilies of the field as objects of their care, though not a few may abuse His allusions. Nor did He mean by His calling their attention to; them, that they should treat cynically what evinces His. interest in all the works of God's hand. and the creatures of His will. His aim is that the disciples, under His holy notice of the incomparable goodness of God: toward that which is so little in His eyes, should rise up to the Father above them all and be assured of the considerate and constant care He bears to His own. Are they not peculiar objects of His counsels. before. a world was founded, now of infinite grace in Himself who for them died and rose, and at His crowning of glory, above not only the mightiest potentates of earth but also the highest principalities in the heavens? Are we to share the anxiety of those who know not God? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He

not also with Him freely give us all things? No one was such a sufferer as Christ here below; yet who ever heard a complaint? and who can forget that, when rejected more and more where His mighty works of goodness and His words of grace and truth still more wondrous were alike despised, and even He had to say, Woe, woe, at that season our Lord Jesus answering said, "I thank thee, Father," . . . and "even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight"? So the prophetic Psa. 16 attributes to Him the confession, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea I have a goodly heritage." And so the apostle, who had the fellowship of His sufferings, and knew afflictions, persecutions, and want of all things beyond any other, is the very one who rises superior to all circumstances, and declares that God affords us all things richly for enjoyment. May we follow, though alas how distantly, in like faith!

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:181.)

Your Heavenly Father Knoweth

Matt. 6:31, 32

How wholesome, direct, and complete is the Lord's rebuke of earthly care!

> Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat, or What shall we drink, or With what should we be clad? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things (Matt. 6:31, 32).

As the Lord began, so He closed, His charge to the saints against anxiety in the earthly life. He purposely presents the homely commonplace of daily fare and clothing. The birds of the sky He adduces as the witness of bounteous provision without solicitude, and the unequaled splendor of the lilies of the field, as a rebuke to troubled efforts after vain show. The sentiment and the phrase of vv. 25 and 31 are substantially alike; but in the latter He exchanges "ye" and "your" into the more tender and family expression "we." Each is as it should be, and both make His word only the more touching as well as complete.

The poor as to the world are habitually burdened and distressed on both accounts in their daily and domestic life. But the noblest and the richest spend much time and thought on their food and attire; and the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, have their mortifications among the highest. And if, as things are, the majority of Christians are too much like others, it only confirms the wisdom and goodness of the Lord in deigning to say so much to elevate the motives and form the ways of His own according to the mind of God.

Yet there are a few here and there all over the earth who hear His words in this discourse as elsewhere, and seek to do them from the heart. Nor do they fail to find their blessed account in pleasing Him, apart from the world and its things, with happy deliverance from all its anxieties and selfishness. Is not this what the Lord here enjoins on all that bear His name? Do these lay His will to heart when temptation arises to settle down in earthly comfort if not luxury and show? Is this consistent with being pilgrims and strangers on the earth awaiting glory on high with Him?

No doubt it is what men of the world do, who mock at faithful stewardship as fanaticism, and ignore being not their own but bought with a price to glorify Him with their bodies. If not their lips, their life says, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die; yet their constant study is to spin out their mortal life, with no real heart for the resurrection, no habitual joy nor practical value for Christ as their life. Is it not to "mind earthly things," and to forget day by day that

> our commonwealth is in the heavens, whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory according to the working of power which He hath even to subdue all things to Himself?

"For" as He says, "after all these things the Gentiles seek": the contrast He seeks in His disciples. O let us too seek it in our ways for the little while, and thus help to impress it on such as wish to make the best of both worlds, a shameless motive and character for those who are Christ's.

Are we then left without consolation or resource? Far from it. The Lord winds up with blessed cheer to such as seek to be faithful; "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." And is it not the Father's pleasure to consider every need of every child? Who can pretend that He does not abound in all good things? Or that He would not have us to confide in Him, not in ourselves? Be it yours to abjure self, and "cast all your care upon Him, for He careth about you."

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:198.)

The Kingdom of God

Matt. 6:33, 34

The kingdom of the heavens is an expression derived apparently from Dan. 4:26. Its inauguration also is foreshown in Dan. 7:13, 14; in 22 not only the Heir of all but the heavenly joint-heirs, and in v. 27 the "people" under the whole heaven to whom the chief dominion is given. Such will be the manifested kingdom when the Son of man comes with power and glory; and there will be earthly things and heavenly (John 3:12). But He came first as the great moral test in humiliation; and His rejection and cross brought out higher than earth through redemption therein accomplished. This too, refused by the unbelieving people, left the door open for the mystery of that kingdom and its mysteries while the rejected King is on high, and the gospel of indiscriminate grace, till the church is complete. Then all Israel shall be saved on their repentance, and the blessing of all the nations as such shall fully come.

Plainly, "the kingdom of the heavens" is a dispensational phrase peculiar to the first Gospel, as in contrast with the incredulity of the Jews who looked only for an earthly one. Mark and Luke use "the kingdom of God" for it, and in a general sense; John exclusively for what is real. But Matthew, for that very reason, when he does say "the kingdom of God," does not mean the dispensational view, either in future manifestation or in present mystery, but the power of God ruling in Christ when here, or now in the Spirit's action morally in those that are His. Hence the same term which is so comprehensive elsewhere has here this force all the more marked because of Matthew's general employment of the dispensational phrase.

Here occurs the first instance; the others are Matt. 12:28, 19:24, 21:31, 43, of which this is not the place to speak more particularly.

> But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Be not careful (or, anxious) for the morrow for the morrow will be careful about itself: sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

Throughout the discourses on the Mount the Lord is not preaching the glad tidings to the lost but instructing His disciples who already believed. Earthly care is a great bane and unworthy of faith. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Where could they find that kingdom and righteousness most truly, plainly, and fully set out before their souls? Surely nowhere as in Himself. It was even more wondrously by God's Spirit in His moral power than by His casting out demons. "Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God," was far beyond all the miracles together that ever had been wrought. Who but He was the "man that lived by every word of God" unswervingly?

Nor is it too much to ask of such as were born of God. Indeed the principle was always true. Jehovah's people were to be holy because He is holy. And this applies all the more strongly now that we have the relationship of sons, with redemption through Christ's blood, and the gift of the Spirit. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking; nor yet abstinence from flesh or wine; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Making God's kingdom and righteousness our first concern, we are entitled to expect that all the things needful and good will be added to us. For our God and Father never overlooks our wants. If faithful in the greatest and deepest things, He loves that we should confide in Him as to our least things. Do we believe the Lord, that "all these things [about which unbelief worries] shall be added unto us?" Let us not forget the condition: "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." What can be more due to God, or more comely for us as His sons? The Lord's yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

It is unbelief, accompanied by loving the world or the things in the world, which produces anxiety, darkness, and doubt, as in the Gentiles who knew not God. If we know Him, and the blessedness of His kingdom, and the perfection of His righteousness, why be careful for the morrow? For the morrow, says the Lord, shall be careful for itself. Has He failed us today, or in the past? What evil has He ever done us, what good thing withheld from us? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Even if the hardest trials come, do we not know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those called according to purpose?

Do you, my reader, say that you love Him not, but dread Him because of your sins? Then why do you not flee for refuge to Him that stretches out to you His strong and gracious arms? Come unto Me, He cries, all ye that labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." He is full of grace and truth. Is not this the only Savior for a sinner? What does "grace" [82] mean but unmerited favor? You are justly condemned if you refuse to come at God's word.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:135.)

82. (A. C. Brown said that "grace is God for us in all that He is in spite of what we are in ourselves."}

The Morrow

Matt. 6:34

There is another fear that is apt to cause trouble, forecasting the trials of the morrow. How fertile is the heart, in creating difficulties, and forgetting our Father as a real and constant resource!

> Be not anxious therefore for the morrow; for the morrow will be anxious about itself: sufficient for the day [is] its evil.

The morrow is in God's hands, not in ours. And He gives us the place of sons, as well as of children, on a firmer ground than could be even when the Lord here addressed His disciples. As He said to the Father before His suffering,

> I made known to them thy name and will make it known;

so too He did in the fullest way in His message through the Magdalene,

> Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God!

The relationship rested now on the definite ground of His death and resurrection, wherein their sins were blotted out, and themselves in the same nearness to His Father and God, as well as to Himself, the Firstborn of many brethren.

The one awful difficulty, sin, was not only removed by His cross for the believer, but made in His death the occasion of glorifying God as He never was before and never needs to be again. His love and man's hatred met there for the triumph of good over evil to faith, as it shall be to sight when Christ takes His great power and reigns before every eye. There Satan was vanquished to faith, where he seemed to the natural eye absolute victor. There not only the outward, but yet more the religious, world disclosed to faith its hateful unrighteousness and its utter infamy. There the very disciples prove their worse than nothingness. There the righteous One suffered to the utmost that God might be just and justify all that believe, and that grace might send out the glad tidings even to all that do not believe. For God thereby clothes with the best robe the guilty, bankrupt, ragged prodigal who turns to Him in the faith of the Name, the name of Jesus.

Thus the work of Christ, and the present indwelling of the Holy Spirit consequent on it, set the new relationship in the clearest light and on the most solid footing which even God in Christ could give it. O what dependence on Him becomes such as know themselves thus blessed! What confidence in His love to us to-day and for ever! Why then allow the least worry about to-morrow?

That men of the world should be troubled is natural. They know not God. Still less do they cry, Abba, Father. Their satisfaction is in their substance, their position, their pleasure. Their uneasiness is because all in this life hangs on a trembling balance, between their fellows whom they cannot trust, a life as uncertain as the wind, and a God whom they dread as their Judge, and with too good reason as they are.

But the child of God, why should he give way to anxiety about the morrow? He is entitled to happy boldness on his own part and assured love on His Father's to do His will today, whatever the trial. God is equally above to-morrow's anxiety, which he can cast on Him, if it come. Sufficient for the day is its evil. Christ is our burden-bearer. Through Him we more than conquer. If God be for us, who against us?

Some who read these words may be still in their sins, and not reconciled to God. If you cannot be contemplated in a warning to believers, you have an especial danger in putting off to the morrow the call of the gospel which God makes to you today. "Behold, now is an acceptable season, behold, now is a day of salvation." Delay will only increase your sins, and harden your heart to resist the Spirit to your imminent danger. Be not like the naughty and foolish child, so quick to say, I will never do it again; I will be good tomorrow. Be honest with God to-day, and own the sin, and yourself a life-long sinner, and confess the Lord Jesus the only Savior, counting on God's grace to save you in His name. How many have put off to a morrow that never came! So perilous is it not to own the sins today to Him who waits to be gracious, and can keep as truly as He forgives.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:213.)

Judge Not That Ye Be Not Judged

Matt. 7:1-6

There ought to be no question of the Lord's meaning here. No fault was more prevalent then or now. Censoriousness is not only the habitual bane of religious professors, but the snare to which true disciples are too prone. Gracious men who set their face in general against detraction are often bitter against what they themselves dislike, and thus slip into judging motives wrongly like others. He who is Judge of quick and dead discerns every heart, and enjoins what is comely and just on His followers. For this sin tends to hypocrisy; and what saint would regard such a thing lightly?

> Judge not that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye measure, it shall be measured to you. And why lookest thou on the mote that [is] in the eye of thy brother, but observest not the beam in thine eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote front thine eye; and, behold, the beam [is] in thine eye? Hypocrite, pull out first the

> beam out of thine eye, and then wilt thou see clearly to pull out the mote out of the eye of thy brother.

The indulgence in a hasty, severe, and suspicious spirit provokes reprisals, and such as wantonly impute evil to others in ignorance or unkindness do not fail to bring on themselves unsparing imputation. For here the Lord turns from the lack of confiding in our Father's care and love, and warns of our danger from many an unkind impression and expression. To surmise wrong motives is itself a wrong. It is natural for such as live in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another; and such once were we ourselves. But since the kindness and love to man of our Savior God appeared (no premium for our deserts), but according to His own mercy He saved us through washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He poured on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, are we not bound by the family character, the new life relationship as children of God, sons of such a Father? Since redemption and the gift of the Spirit, more can be added now to what the Lord uttered then.

But He reminds us of what we easily forget. If others are a trial to us, are not we a trial to them? Are we not, unless walking according to the light, as dull to see our own faults as we are sharp to notice, and even imagine, wrongs in our brethren? How pungently the Lord puts the case that we may loathe ourselves!

> And why lookest thou on the mote in the eye of thy brother, but observest not the beam in thine eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote from thine eye, and, behold, the beam is in thine eye?

The Shepherd and Bishop of our souls thus holily strips us of the mask which failure in self-judgment puts on. For if before God we discern not our own grievous shortcomings and sins, we do not know our brethren with anything like the same certainty and clearness. Love therefore and the fear of God call us each to deem others better than ourselves, judging ourselves for what we do know instead of others for what we know not and ought not to think. "Hypocrite," says the Lord with severe reproof, "pull out first the beam out of thine eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Yet it is well to beware of the too common misuse of our Lord's warning. How often pious persons thereby depreciate any censure of their own position and any care against false doctrine, or evil associations, or responsibility for such discipline as scripture requires! But this is to fail in godliness; which assuredly covers not only personal conduct, but also public walk as members of Christ. The Corinthians were careless in this way and others, which grace has turned to the profit, not only of them, but of

> all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours {1 Cor. 1:2}.

The apostle allows no excuse for carelessness congregationally any more than individually. There is no call to exercise discipline on the evildoers of the world; but Christians have the obligation of dealing with offenders in God's assembly. Paul, though absent, could not but judge that the wicked person should be excluded. It was due to Christ and His sacrifice. God must be vindicated Whose is the assembly. The saints were bound to clear themselves in the matter, taking up the offender's sin as their own; yet even here his ultimate good was sought, "that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

> Do not ye judge those that are within? But those without God judgeth. Put away the wicked [man] from among yourselves (1 Cor. 5:3-13).

Here we are commanded to judge.

The selfsame principle expressly applies to sins far less gross. Our thoughts and reasonings are to be discarded on the one hand; and on the other God's authority to be recognized and conclusive. Scripture too is plain that, important as is right judgment of moral evil, the truth is yet more momentous; and this both because to slight and oppose it offends against the Giver, and it ruins those who thus err, while they have a fair appearance, instead of shocking men like immorality or unrighteousness.

Express injunction is also laid down, when the evil is of a more general and public character, as in 2 Tim. 2:19-21:

> Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth those that are his; and, Let everyone that nameth the Lord's name depart from unrighteousness. Now in a great house are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some for honour and some for dishonour. If one therefore purge himself out from these, he shall be a vessel for honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work.

There is thus no licence to join in what God disapproves and demands us to judge. Conscience, a purged conscience, is exercised, and the heart all the more free to love fervently according to God,

But how is it with you, dear reader? If you are of the world and only bear the outward badge of Christianity, take the place of truth for your soul in God's sight. Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior of sinners, and He, the Lord of all, is rich and near to all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call on the Lord's name shall be saved. Righteousness and salvation are the portion assured by God to each that believes and confesses Him. If you received Christ, say not that you cannot tell who are His. How then can you love God's children, as Christ charged you to do? Even the unconverted know in a general way who are His, and who are not; how much more does every sober believer? He owns that, till born anew and brought to God by Christ's work, he was as evil as anyone; and, without pretending to judge the heart, he accepts those who confess the Lord and follow Him, as he himself does. Such is the judgment of true charity, not the indifference of unbelief which is of Satan. The verse that follows itself shows whom we ought to judge. For we are to prove all things, holding fast the right. "Dogs" and "Swine" we are bound to discern and disown.

> Give not the holy thing to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine lest they trample them with

> their feet, and turn and rend you.

Nabal's family is not extinct, sons of Belial with whom a disciple cannot speak with impunity. Shamelessness and filth plainly tell what they are, and the folly of treating them as sheep of God's pasture. No doubt the grace of God can save such: but in all this discourse is not a word about redemption or saving sinners. All throughout consists of the characters which suit God, and must really be for His Kingdom. This is its design: and it is worthy of Christ, as the gospel is where this was the question.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:149.)

Confidence in Our Father's Giving

Matt. 7:7-12

Our Lord here encourages His disciples to count on the goodness of their Father for every want consistent with His will.

> Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask of him for a loaf, will give him a stone; and if he ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If therefore ye, being wicked, know to give good gifts to your children, how much rather shall your Father that is in the heavens give good things to those that ask him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye desire that men should do to you, thus do ye also to them; for this is the law and the prophets (Matt. 7:7-12).

It is not a sinner needing life and forgiveness of his sins, but saints directed to appeal to God and assured of their Father's answer of love, whatever their wants be. The Lord had already taught them to pray in Matt. 6 as with alms and fasting, parts of saintly righteousness and due to His name and glory. Here He enforces it as the way in which all they need from above is to be given them. Hence perseverance and earnestness are incumbent. Asking will ensure receiving, yea to every one that asks; seeking will not be fruitless but shall find; and to the still more importunate the door will be opened, which is but shut to exercise faith.

For there may be a matter of importance for the applicant to learn before the request can be granted, as with the Syrophenician woman, so earnest in supplicating the Lord to have pity on her, whose daughter was grievously possessed by a demon. Yet at first the Lord answered her not a word. She pleaded like a lost sheep of Israel's house; whereas she was a Greek, and had no right of promise with the Messiah; indeed she was a Canaanite, and thus under the curse. But when she drops His title as Son of David, and gathered from His answer to the disciples wherein her mistake lay, she did Him homage, saying, Lord, help me. On this He speaks out, It is not good to take the bread of the children, and cast it to the whelps. This did help her soul, for it led her to the secret of sovereign grace on which she at once threw herself, saying, Yea, Lord; for even the whelps eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus answering said to her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt. The door opened to her knock: She was deepened and cleared in her faith, as her daughter was healed from that hour.

The Lord also encourages His disciples through the affection which is implanted in a parent's heart. If their Father makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust, how does He feel toward His sons? His love surely goes out to them in every request that is for their good, and withholds only what their foolishness asked that must do them harm. Hence He says, Or what man of you, whom his son shall ask for a loaf, will he give him a stone? and if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? Who would not repudiate such mockery of a son's hunger? Thence He draws the conclusive words for their hearts, If ye then, being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father that is in the heavens give good things to those that ask Him?

The last verse goes into that which becomes the disciple with men, and lays down the simple but evidently sound principle, to do to others as we would have others do to us; and this too on no ground of human rights or natural benevolence, but of consistency with God's revealed will.

> All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, thus also do ye to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Now let me ask you, dear reader, if you have not by faith the Son of God as your Savior, are you not conscious that these words are altogether beyond you What is your state then now, and what must the end be? I call on you in the Lord's name that you perish not in your sins. The same Lord, who thus cheers His disciples and bids them ask freely, warns you that he who disbelieves (who is unsubject to) the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him. Go to God as you are, a poor sinner, in the Savior's name, and own your ruin and His grace, that you may be saved, and know it to your exceeding and everlasting joy; and then serve Him as your Lord, awaiting Him from heaven, for He is coming.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:164.)

The Narrow and the Wide Ways

Matt. 7:13, 14

The Lord sets before those who heard Him the energy requisite for entering the kingdom.

When man was unfallen, he had only to abide where Jehovah Elohim set him. A single restriction was laid on him as a test of the obedience that was due. He might freely eat of every other tree in paradise, pleasant to the sight and good for food; but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was forbidden on pain of death. The divine Creator was also the moral Governor; and man, to abide blessed, must bow to His word in grateful subjection, assured that His will was good no less than wise. That He forbade was enough. To disobey Him was sin and death. And so man learned to his sorrow, shame, and ruin, when following the woman deceived by the serpent, he violated the plain commandment and fell.

Since then the race broke more and more into sin. Lawlessness prevailed; till at length Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The end of all flesh came before God; for it was not only that all flesh had corrupted its way here below, but that the earth was filled with violence. Nor was it only Noah finding grace in Jehovah's eyes through faith, but a deliverance from the deluge was granted to him and his house, and a preservation of enough of the creatures in the ark to renew the post-diluvian earth. There the dispensed ways of God were to be displayed, man fully convicted after the most patient trial, and Himself revealed in His Son, but first on the ground of responsibility, till sovereign grace displace all evil, and righteousness reign to His glory; finally, when the kingdom closes, dwelling in holy power and peace and goodness when God is all in all.

Meanwhile, as the course of the world has ever been and is now more than ever man doing his own will and pleasing himself, the path of faith is ever in separation to God and His word. Christ is the One revealed by God and revealing Him in order to make this knowledge good in all who believe. All saints since sin came into the world looked to Him, and were lightened, and their faces shall never be confounded.'

Since the Word became flesh and wrought redemption, grace abounds more exceedingly. Nor is it grace only, but this reigning through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord. Remission of sins, yea, peace made through the blood of His cross, is preached to every creature; that whosoever believes may know himself made nigh in virtue of Christ's blood, God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God before prepared that we should walk in them.

Still there are difficulties, dangers, and enemies which each soul that heeds the call of God must face. He who is quickened is sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:2). The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be {Rom. 8:7}: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Such is man's moral bent in his very nature fallen as it is. Nor is this by any means all; for the friendship of the world (and what man has not sought it?) is enmity with God; and this so surely that whosoever would be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Then the power of Satan, the liar and murderer, is the most directly destructive of all. Who is sufficient for these things? It is, and must only be, of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ.

But every natural influence here below is in Satan's hands, and as hostile to man as to God. Therefore the Lord says,

> Come in through the narrow gate; because wide [is] the gate and broad the way that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that come in through it; because narrow [is] the gate and straitened the way, that leadeth to life, and few are they that find it (Matt. 7:13, 14).

Follow the multitude, as it follows the wise according to the flesh, the mighty, and the noble, and you are lost. Public opinion may be well enough for things of this life; but it is never founded on God's word. This sets forth Christ and Him crucified, which to the perishing is foolishness, but to those that are saved the power of God, and His wisdom. So faith receives, and enjoys now, and is blessed for ever. It hears Christ's word and believes God that sent Him. It distrusts and turns away from the world which cast Him out and crucified Him. It seeks not ease or pleasure for the flesh, but follows Him who was despised by the vain, find abhorred by the self-righteous, and loathed by such as sought their carnal desires. Hence it is and must be the narrow gate and the straitened way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it.

Those who trust self and the world naturally prefer the wide gate and the broad way. But beware, poor soul! Such is the way that leads to destruction. It may look fair now, yet what solace will it be then that many come in through that wide but fatal gate? The proud and the mean, the haughty and the servile, the highest and the lowest, the dissolute and the violent, the superstitious and the skeptical, the self-satisfied and the hypocritical enter through it into the broad road whose end is perdition. O my fellow-sinners, hear Him who is Himself the way, and the sole and sure way to the Father. Never did He refuse one that east himself as a lost one on His grace and truth; never does He fail to guide aright each that calls on His name. He is the Savior of all that believe. His sheep hear His voice, and as He knows them, they follow Him; and He gives them life eternal, and they shall never perish, nor shall any one seize them out of His hand (John 10:27, 28).

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:357.)

The Narrow Gate

Matt. 7:13, 14

The Lord here gives a warning of great practical value. Public opinion weighs much with the natural mind. It may be and often is right in material things: there men judge fairly well, and are awake to their interests. For the spirit of man that is in him knows the things of man. But it is not so in the things of God, where the carnal mind does not fail to display its inveterate enmity against Him to man's certain ruin if it sway. Therefore is it elsewhere written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God. All turned aside, together they become unprofitable, there is none doing good, no, not one (Rom. 3:10-12).

Hence the Lord says here,

> Enter ye through the narrow gate; because wide [is] the gate, and broad the way that leadeth off unto destruction, and many are they that enter through it. Because narrow [is] the gate, and straitened the way that leadeth off unto life, and few are they that find it (Matt. 7:13, 14).

Reader, how is it with you? Have you entered through the narrow gate of conversion to God? Have you repented toward God and believed on our Lord Jesus Christ? Baptism is the divine and admirable sign of salvation; yet it never gave life, but rather represented remission of sins and death to sin for such as had life: if they had not life in Christ, its true meaning, as far as they were concerned, was their guilty and wretched inconsistency, to their utter condemnation far worse than if they had not been baptized to that excellent Name. Deceive not your own soul; be not deceived by others. The great apostle warned that in the last days grievous times should come, and evil men and impostors wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But this trust in an ordinance is one of the oldest of errors, and revived of late with fresh audacity and large success, though the same apostle expressly denounced its vanity and danger in early days (1 Cor. 10:1-11). For "our fathers," said he,

> were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink . . . Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness . . . Now all these things happened to them as types, and were written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages are come.

O unbeliever, will it assuage the horrors of everlasting fire that you followed the multitude in despising the word of the Lord and neglecting His great salvation? You cannot deny that what He says here is very plain; your conscience must own that it is true. It is of no avail to talk about the fate of Thibet sealed up against the light of the gospel, or to enquire what is to become of the heathen millions in darkest Africa, or in haughtier India and China, or anywhere else. You at any rate have the Bible, and may outwardly profess the Lord's name. You have often heard and perhaps read these words of Him who will surely judge living and dead; and the time hastens for it. When you stand and are manifested before Him, will you not be speechless, like him who might be christened but had no wedding garment? The numberless crowds of the lost will verify His words, but yield not a drop of water to cool your tongue in the torments of that day without an end, or even when you die impenitent now before it come. Masses and classes alike perish in their unbelief of Him and His word.

In fact it will only add unspeakably to your bitter self-reproach that the Lord gave you so distinct a signal of danger for time and eternity. You refused the narrow gate, because it admitted neither self-will, nor fleshly lust. You loved the wide gate and the broad way, because you set your heart on what you called liberty, seeking and doing what you liked in defiance of God's will. You stifled the conviction of your moral folly and incredulous madness by the abundance of your company high and low. The narrow gate was repulsive to you, because it compelled you to stoop to God, which your pride and your passions alike resented. You had in entering through it to meet God singly, and to face Him alone about your sins. Had you been in earnest, you would have seen that He is our Savior God, who desires that all men should be saved and come to acknowledgment of truth. And this is solely in Christ Who is the one Mediator of God and men, and gave Himself a ransom for all.

Therefore are you without excuse. And you are lost and must be condemned for ever, above all your sins for this crowning sin that you reject Christ Who died for you, losing the ransom so precious to God and efficacious for man. O bethink yourself: believe the words of Him Who cannot lie, and in love uttered this warning that you might hear and live. For both gates are clearly set before you, and both ways, one unto life and the other unto perdition. Many are they that enter through the wide gate and tread the broad way. O beware; for I too was once your fellow-sinner, as infatuated as any other. But the Shepherd's voice reached my ear, my soul. May it pierce yours, that you may turn off from the broad way, as from a serpent, yea the old Serpent the Devil, and enter the narrow gate of Christ, the straitened way that leads off unto life. Few are they that find it. May you know this happiness now and evermore in the Savior.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:180).

Bare Profession Worthless

Matt. 7:21-23

The Lord here delivers a most salutary warning, to which the new things of the kingdom gave occasion. For while the truth which came through Him is as precious as it is characteristic, it of necessity left the door open for mental activity and spurious profession in ways which could not under the law be addressed to Israel. "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it speaketh to those in (or, under) the law." The truth, Christ, on His coming into the world which knew Him not, casts His light upon every man, and places all that have it under deep and direct responsibility. But it is also capable of being abused widely and variously by a false pretension more or less willing, yet ever inexcusable.

This the Lord meets in these verses with emphatic clearness and solemnity.

> Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he that doeth the will of my Father that is in the heavens. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many works of power? And then will I avow to them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work lawlessness (Matt. 7:21-23).

The sense of entering into the kingdom of the heavens here is fixed to its glorious estate, not only by "in that day" in the following verse, but by the Lord's application of it in Matt. 8:11, where its citizens sit in it with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It is the more important to note; because His rejection (which soon began to appear) brought in its "mysteries" as in Matt. 13, during which He sits on high upon the Father's throne {Rev. 3:21}, and the kingdom applies to the anomalous state, as in the field or world wherein He sowed wheat and the devil darnel! to ruin as a whole. This is the present mixture of Christendom while the Lord is absent above, during which any one can say "Lord" in vain, and wheat and darnel grow together till the harvest time, and the glory come by judgment.

The essential thing is doing the will of His Father which Christ was revealing. As He said in John 5:24, where life eternal was in question, "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life eternal." These are the persons who, having done the good things as possessed of life now, rise for the resurrection of life (v. 28). Equally peremptory is the Lord's word here. No profession without corresponding course of life can avail; nothing less or other than doing His heavenly Father's will. And who so competent to reveal as the Son, who left (as He tells us in John 16:12, 13) many things, beyond hearing then, for the Holy Spirit to announce when He came?

It is clear that, as in the entire discourse, not a word is said about the new birth, still less redemption. The Lord is not here preaching to sinners how they were to be saved; He is teaching His disciples how to walk before the Father that is in the heavens. How does He view that vague and multitudinous profession, which is a burlesque of Christianity, though now so popular, on the one hand through histrionic ceremonies and gaudy shows and religious fables, and on the other through appeals to the intellect and to the imagination by oratory or reasoning. There may be seeming devoutness and profuse earnestness; but without living faith in Christ, neither is God known nor is self judged. The Lord insists on true obedience.

O my fellow-sinner, how can you obey a far fuller standard than the law, as long as you are dead in your offences and sins? Are you not by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2? For we are saved (nobody else), as the apostle adds, by grace through faith. A rite is wholly unavailing. And faith is God's gift; it is not of works, as rash men pretend: else man could and would boast. Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). O then repent and believe the gospel.

How overwhelming is the Lord's warning "Many shall say to Me in that day (and it is at hand), Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many works of power? And I will say (not even you once knew Me, but) "I never knew you." Compare Heb, 6:4-8. No gift of power is a sign of life eternal, not even the edifying gift of prophesying. A man might be an apostle of Christ, but not a child of God. "Ye must be born anew," begotten by the word of truth {James 1:18}; which Judas never was. Outwardly near, he was really far off, not only a stranger in heart but an enemy. And so we read here of crowds not like Judas, deceived as well as deceivers, "Then will I avow to them, I never knew you."

So indeed it is and must he, where men enjoy the greatest outward privileges, and remain without faith working through love. But it is faith, not founded on evidence, nor on tradition, nor dependent on a dying priest or a dead ordinance or a self-asserting church, but given of God's grace that you may become God's son and Christ's bondman, though just as surely a member of His body. Thus only can you walk in obedience of the Father's word and will, till Christ comes or you depart to be with Him, waiting with Him as well as for Him till then.

And those who do not so believe, whatever their claims now, whatever their pretension to order, office, power or authority, must assuredly hear in that day the just and irrevocable sentence, "Depart from Me, ye that work lawlessness." May grace work and win now, giving an ear to hear the voice of Jesus to the saving of the soul, and delivering from the delusion that christening quickens souls, or exempts them from the condition of being lost and the. need of being born anew. (*The Bible Treasury* NS 4:213.)

The Prudent Builder, and the Foolish

Matt. 7:24-27

"Other foundation can no one lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ," says the apostle (1 Cor. 3:11). Have you Him as your foundation, dear reader? If it be of faith, you will not doubt of His sufficiency. "He is the Rock; His work is perfect; for all His ways are righteousness." So an Israelite could say of Jehovah; and Jesus is Jehovah. But He is more, and now more is revealed, especially since He the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth. Nor this only: "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

He is the One for your soul, for your guilt, for your sins. If the Son of God became the Lamb of God, and you believe on Him, surely you need not, you cannot rightly, question that He avails perfectly for you. Yea, you are bound, if you believe Who He is, to receive without hesitation what God's word declares He undertook and has done. The atoning work is done; it is not future for you; nor is it a-doing either, but is done; and its efficacy is perfect for every soul that believes God about Jesus, His Son. His blood cleanseth from all sin. You who say that you believe do God wrong, if you receive not His word and rest not with confidence on the foundation that is laid. There is none other: Jesus is the one foundation for lost sinners.

God commends His love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ died for us. Do we ask more? We being still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. We had nothing but sins: He gives all the good we want, having suffered for all the bad that was in us. Such is the Savior of sinners. None that is pretended even resembles Him. The Virgin mother needed Him for her soul, as did every other saint. All men need grace to save them through faith; for all are sinners. Neither angels nor the archangel can avail in any degree; they are but upheld by the word of His power. Nor will God save a sinner but through faith in His Son Who humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross, to glorify God and to suffer for sins, Just for unjust. Whoever denieth the Son hath not the Father either; he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also (1 John 2).

But in our text, which closes the sermon on the Mount, it is another truth: not redemption (which was not there the object) but the absolute necessity of obedience in all who call Jesus Lord. To say Lord, Lord, without doing His Father's will, is worthless. Many shall say in the future day of account, Have we not prophesied through Thy name, and through Thy name cast out demons, and through Thy name done many works of power? But He will answer, I never knew you: depart from Me, workers of lawlessness. It was hollow profession, whatever the works of power, which only aggravated the guilt and will add to the endless remorse. There was no life possessed in Christ, and consequently no obedience, to which every believer is sanctified (1 Pet. 1:2). Without holiness none shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). The point is here that obedience is indispensable from each one that bears His name.

Hence the Lord concludes,

> Whoever therefore heareth these my words and doeth them, I will liken him to a prudent man which built his house upon the rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and fell upon that house, and it fell not; for it had been founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these my words, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and fell upon that house, and it fell, and its fall was great (Matt. 7:24-27).

It is not redemption only that sinful man needs, but life eternal. In Jesus only are both found, and the believer receives both. Many there are who profess His name, and boast of redemption in Him, the forgiveness of offences, but never think of present life in Him. Alas! they deceive themselves. To the defiled and unbelieving, whatever they profess, nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works deny Him. They say, Lord, Lord; but they are false to His name. Had they believed, they would have had life in His name, and brought forth fruit of righteousness. But not having Christ as their life, they had no fruit unto holiness, and never grew because they had no true knowledge of God. Life, life eternal, as a present ground for serving God in obedience, is as essential as redemption. Woe is to such as have neither. Still more bitter is the woe of such as deny either: they are enemies of the truth.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:343.)

As Having Authority

Matt. 7:28, 29

From first to last of the word of righteousness on the mountain, the Lord had spoken as none but a divine person was entitled to do.

> And it came to pass, when Jesus concluded these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his doctrine, for he was teaching them as having authority, and not as their scribes.

The Lord, alone on earth, was qualified to speak with authority peculiar to Himself. Beyond all others He knew what was in man (John 2:25): He alone here below knew what was in God (John 3:11). On one side He is the Man whom God raised from out of dead men, marked out by God as judge of living and dead, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts. On the other hand no one hath seen God at any time, the Only-begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father -- He declared Him. He is thus in every way qualified to speak with authority; yet who so lowly?

But the Jews were used, now that the Prophets of Jehovah for four centuries had ceased, to lean on their rabbis. Indeed they had shown the same unbelief in the days of prophets of the highest character; as Isaiah bears witness (Isa. 29:13). It was with them in Israel, as afterwards in Christendom, a sea of uncertainty, and a conflict of learned or rash opinions. How could it be otherwise when they were thus cheated to give up God's word for man's ideas? So our Lord cites this very oracle in His day, "In vain they do worship me, teaching as doctrines men's precepts."

But not so the Lord Himself as He sat on the mount, and taught the disciples, within the hearing of the crowds. This Matthew was inspired to present continuously and in orderly relation for permanent use. He began with the characters, the blessed characters, of such as enter the kingdom of the heavens. Four are righteous, three gracious, each class with its consequent persecution, as being in the age where evil still runs on (Matt. 5:3-12). Their position follows, righteous and gracious, toward those outside (vv. 13-16).

Then from v. 17 to the end of the chapter He proceeds to show that far from coming to make void the law or the prophets, He was here to give the fulness of God's mind therein, the light of the kingdom before it is established in any for those who bow to Him. The unbelieving and unsubject shall not enter on the new privileges. Not a tittle should in any way pass from the law till all come to pass. To enter the kingdom a real and inward righteousness, of which Christ is the perfection, must be, far exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Next He goes farther, not merely "for verily I say to you" (v. 18) and "for I say to you" (v. 20) but with all the emphasis of superior divine light, worthy of God's Son, "Ye heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not kill . . . But I say to you" (vv. 21-26), and "ye heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you" (vv. 27-30); and incomparably more searching commandments are applied to the law's prohibition of violence and corruption only in their extreme forms.

After that the Lord deals with divorce, and oath in ordinary converse (not judicial), putting all in the same highest place of God's light, with no allowance of human weakness (vv. 31-37). These were matters of righteousness.

In what follows He looks at the higher and deeper claims of grace. Instead of retaliation as in the law of "eye for eye and tooth for tooth," we hear "But I say to you, not to resist evil, &c. (vv. 38-42); and instead of "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy," He urges "But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father that is in the heavens," to the point of your being perfect (i.e. in grace), as your heavenly Father is to evil and good, just and unjust (vv. 43-48).

In Matt. 6 He points out the true spirit of the life in alms, prayer, and fasting toward God (their Father that is seen in secret before them) (vv. 1-10); again in calm confidence above the world's anxiety in ordinary things (vv. 19-34): righteousness and grace are here also.

Lastly, in Matt. 7 He guards against evil thoughts of brethren, and communion with the unclean world; and He counsels confiding dependence on their Father, acting toward others as they desired from them, and holding to the narrow gate and the straitened way (vv. 1-14). He solemnly warns against false prophets, whose fruits betray them notwithstanding their fair speech (vv. 15-20). The vanity of profession without vital reality is pressed even where service and gift are pleaded. It is finally compared to the folly of building on the sand, instead of on the rock of genuine obedience to Christ's words (vv. 21-27).

To any anxious soul let me say, Do not mistake. The Lord is not here showing how the sinner is to get pardon and peace. He is teaching His disciples how they are to walk and please their Father. Confusion here denies salvation by grace, is itself mere error, and can only endanger and ruin souls.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 5:228.)

Appendix 7 for Matthew:
The Dealings of God with Peter
Matt. 17:1-8, 24-27; John 13:1-12; Luke 22:50-62; Acts 10

No man, after such a blessing as the Lord had just pronounced upon Peter, ever received a sterner rebuke. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," so soon to be followed by, "Get thee behind me, Satan." So serious the place of a Christian -- of a believer at least! so true the One who watches over us in love! While there is the fullest value even for that which nothing but His own grace had given, and the deepest encouragement, yet how stern and unsparing is the Lord in letting Peter see what his thoughts, what his feelings, were; what Peter's heart was thinking about! And what was it that had drawn it out? Peter had owned the glory of His person. It was of God, God's teaching, without question, and the Savior owned it at once; but that very Peter would turn Him away from the cross! Should that be? "Get thee behind me, Satan." The Lord Jesus came to die, and to die, too, in all the depths of it. For as to all the externals of the cross, they were indeed -- deep as they were -- but the outward form of that which only God could estimate. They greatly err who look only to what man was the instrument of in the cross of Christ -- most true, most real as it was. But here the Lord was particularly looking at the cross as rejection; yet the path of that rejection led straight into the glory in which He was coming by and by. And the Lord accordingly, in the beginning of the seventeenth chapter, would give a view of the glory, and amongst others, to the very disciple that would have stopped His way into, as Peter thought, a suffering that was unworthy, but in truth that which was the foundation of His glory. For we are not here to look at His glory as Son of God; there was no foundation for that, it was its own foundation. That was truly divine, essentially divine. But here it was conferred glory. It is the kingdom; it is what God has given. As it is said in another place, "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him," so, by and by, He will be exalted in the kingdom; and the Lord would give a view of it that it might be not only a prophetical testimony, but, as the apostle Peter says, and he is the one that does say it, "We have the prophetic word more confirmed," that is, we have what was said by the prophets shown out in a reality. It might be only one that passed away; but still to have the sight of all the great elements of the kingdom brought before them in this life was an immense support to faith, an immense cheer, especially to one who must have felt deeply the rebuke that His Master passed upon him.

So

> after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter {Matt. 17:1- 3}.

And this you know is the particular object that I have before me now -- the dealings of the Lord with His servant, as manifesting His own grace and truth (no doubt bringing out the need of it on our part, bringing out weakness, wretchedness, pettiness, vanity, pride -- the carnal mind in so many forms, but) the grace and truth of One that had unfeignedly met every failure of His servant; One therefore that would encourage our hearts and instruct us and strengthen us against the very same things in which he had broken down. Do we think we need it not? We are upon the very verge of similar failures. There is nothing that so surely brings a fall as the unbelief that does not believe it possible.

> Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here.

And was not this then, a pious thought and sentiment?

> If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

It was a disciple's way of magnifying his Master, but there is only one that is trustworthy -- God's way. It is not enough to have God's end; we must learn God's way. Now there was exactly where Peter's haste betrayed his weakness, and where we are apt to fall precisely in the same way. "Let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He evidently thought it was no small honor for his Master -- a man -- though the Son of God. But he thought it no small honor for his Master to be on common ground with Moses and Elias, the head of the law, and, we may say, the chief of the prophets. Doubtless He was the Messiah. But were they not glorified? At once,

> while he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud.

For this was no ordinary cloud -- not a dark one, which is an ordinary one -- but a bright one: it was the cloud of Jehovah's presence.

> A voice out of the cloud said, This is my beloved Son {Matt. 17:5}.

It is not merely a question of the kingdom. The kingdom alone would always leave the soul, as the law would, with thoughts altogether short of what is due to Christ. If I look at the law, I think of duty, and I see the Lord merely a fulfiller of duty. If I think of the kingdom, I see glory, but a glory that others share along with Him. But the Father would not permit it. He breaks the silence from above, and says,

> This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

Now, it is not merely that the Father was thus maintaining the glory of the Lord Jesus at the very time when one who ought, most of all, to be exalting Him was really depreciating Him -- most unintentionally, because there is no putting of the Lord with any other that would give Him His just place. The very thought of placing any, however excellent, on a level with the Lord Jesus is reprehensible. Certainly Moses and Elijah were most incomparable among (I will not say the sons of men, but) the children of God. Elijah that had gone up to heaven in a chariot of fire! Moses whom Jehovah had buried, about whose body even the archangel had fought with the devil! Certainly, the man that had been with God without food for forty days and nights, and the man that had closed his career on earth thus to be in heaven, these were men to speak of, if of any. But this very thing brings out the supreme glory of the Son; and this I will say, beloved friends, that a more instructive principle there cannot be. You will find, if you search, that almost all failure, both in doctrine and in conduct, is attributable to this -- low thoughts of Christ. I do not mean now thoughts that are evil, thoughts that are untrue, but I mean that the power of faith is always the taking in and subjecting our souls to the glory of the Son of God. This is the faith that overcomes the world. It is not merely that He is the Christ, that He is the King of the coming kingdom. Perfectly true; but He is the Son, and if the kingdom brings in the heirs of the kingdom, and those that enjoy the kingdom, the Son brings in God, and God as He, the Son, knows Him, and as the Father knows the Son; and there is none that comprehends the Son but the Father. And it is remarkable He does not say, "To whomsoever the Father will reveal," but,

> Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal.

The Father does not reveal all He sees in the Son. And I am persuaded that the reason is this -- that there is a depth in the very fact of the Son of God having taken manhood that transcends all possible knowledge, except of God the Father; that there is therefore a depth in it, and a secret, too, that He will not have broken. And there is where the prying mind of man loses itself. He desires to know that secret, and, consequently, unable to loose the knot, he cuts it in some violent method of his own mind -- the source of all heresy. But I was not speaking of it merely in reference to heresy, but also as to the appreciation of Him day by day; for what a strength it is where His glory is before our eyes, and where each question that arises just exercises our hearts in answer to the Lord -- Himself the answer to all difficulties -- the Son of God!

Well now, that was where Peter failed. He thought to exalt and enhance the glory of Christ, but he was altogether beneath God's thoughts.

This is my beloved Son"; and how did He show it? He says, "In whom I am well pleased." It is not merely He. Peter was thinking of his being so pleased with the Son that he would like Him to be with such wondrous men as Moses and Elias. It is, "In whom 1 am well pleased"; and why so? Why so? Just because He is His beloved Son; that is, it has not any connection with Peter at all, but with God Himself in this relationship out of all time, that is, infinite as God Himself is. "Hear ye him."

And there comes in another point, beloved brethren, that I wish to trace, and that is that this is really what was about to be unfolded in the New Testament. What is the New Testament? The New Testament is the evolution -- if I may say so -- of this little word, "Hear ye him." It is God unfolding the glory of the Son to us. All that He was, as revealed in the Gospels, the Epistles, or whatever part of the New Testament it may be, is precisely this very thing that was summed up in these few words, "Hear ye him." That is, whatever might be the blessedness of Moses and Elias, of the law and the prophets, they have their place, but their best place was to bear witness of Him. And now it was not merely a witness of Him. It was Himself; He was come. And one, therefore, who had an adequate sense of the glory of the Son of God would not care to be listening to the servants about Him, now that he had an opportunity of hearing Himself. "Hear ye him." Accordingly,

> when the disciples heard it they fell on their faces and were sore afraid; and Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man, save Jesus only.

There it is, that the Father leaves, as it were, the disciples in the presence of Jesus only; and the greatest possible honor, and also the proof of the value of Moses and Elias was this, that they bring out the superior glory of the Son of God; they make way for it. They are finger-posts to direct to Him, but then there is no greater mistake than to be occupied with what merely directed to Him; it is Himself. The New Testament, then, is the revelation of that which the Father has to tell us of the Son -- not all that He knows, but all that which is for His own glory in making known His Son to us.

The foot of the mountain showed a very different thing. There was the power of Satan, and such a power of Satan that baffled the disciples. We have this accordingly brought out very clearly in the man that they presented to the Lord. "I brought him to thy disciples," said the poor father, "and they could not cure him." And the Lord utters words of unusual severity. "O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I suffer you?"

My object is not to dwell upon any of these intervening portions. I just touch them as I pass along, but still it is most serious to observe this as we pass -- the inability, and I do not know anything more characteristic of our weakness, and that more shows its character at this present moment than the same thing -- the inability, not of Christ, but of the disciples, to avail themselves of Christ for what came before them. And why was it? What was connected with them then? Unjudged power of nature, confidence in self. "This kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting." "Prayer and fasting" is evidently used as expressive of the nothingness of man, but the nothingness of man that expects God and counts upon God. "How long," said the Lord, "shall I suffer you, or be with you? How long shall I be with you?" Unbelief, and particularly in the disciples, is of all things the greatest pain to

Christ. We often think of the unbelief of the world. There is another question nearer home. What do we think of our own faith? What have we to say about it; our power of bringing in Christ to solve every difficulty? I do not know a more distressing thing at the present moment than the mass of unsolved difficulties everywhere; and the very persons that make the difficulties most are the Lord's own disciples. It is not merely evil. There is always power superior to evil, but when the disciples themselves fail to look to Christ, and have objects of their own that complicate the bringing in of Christ to meet the difficulty -- oh, how sorrowful! The Lord gives it as a reason for leaving the world. There is but one comfort that I know, and that is that this is to us, or may be to us, so much the greater token that the Lord must soon undertake all Himself, because there is so little power to bring Him in. And if that be comfort in the thought of Christ, what a condemnation of our little self-judgment, and consequently of our oftener making difficulties than solving them!

Well the Lord is now seen in another point of view, but also Peter is seen too; and indeed, it is Peter who gives occasion for the Lord to show Himself in a new way, and in a new dealing with His servant.

> And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute-money came to Peter and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute? {Matt. 17:24}.

Now here again he was jealous for his Master. He was jealous for his Master when he thought it would be an excellent thing, and a most suitable, to make three tabernacles -- tabernacles for Moses and Elias as well as for Him -- a tabernacle for Him along with them. And so now he, as it were, said to the collector of tribute that his Master was much too good a Jew not to pay tribute. He said "Yes." What does the Lord do? Before he says a word about it, the Lord lets Peter know that it was all known to Him. How little he had thought of that. How little the Godhead of Jesus had penetrated the soul even of the man that said, "Son of the living God." How little he knew of his own confession! That is often the case. It is humbling if we think of ourselves, but at the same time it is a ground of encouragement and patience with other people. You must not expect people to know, though it is often a very startling thing how little we enter into the patience of our Master, and we are surprised that persons should so little understand, for instance, the very place where they are, the very worship into which they are brought, the very truth that they are supposed to live for. But here I find the same thing. Here I find that it is all full of it; but the fact is that we are not conscious ourselves that it is precisely in the same way that we break down, not perhaps in the same particular, but in the same principle. And you will observe that it is a very different thing to judge another's trial where we are not ourselves tried at the same time. Wait till we are. We shall see how far we know how to bring Christ in ourselves. I do not say it to make light of such a thing. It is a very grievous thing, but it really is the grand secret: that is, the readiness to answer from self instead of from Christ, instead of from God's side of Christ. We look at our side. Peter was jealous lest his Master should be thought not to pay the tribute. The Lord shows him He knew it all; He was God.

"Jesus prevented," or "anticipated him" -- that is the meaning, for of course this is in old English --

> saying, What thinkest thou, Simon: of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers.

What an answer! Was the Lord a stranger? -- for this is the temple tribute. Who was the Master of the temple? Was Jesus a stranger to him? "Of strangers" the kings of the earth take tribute. Of whom therefore does Jehovah take it?

> Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

Not the Son. No, He does not say the Son. He says what is infinitely better, at the very time when there had just been this overwhelming conviction on the mount. Peter in his zeal for his Master was after all depriving Him of His just title, forgetting His divine glory. How slowly we learn the lesson! "Then are the children free." For this, beloved friends, is really what Christianity means, and what the Lord was to bring out still more clearly before long -- that the grace that sent down the Son of God did not merely send down one to be a propitiation, or even to be life, but that we too might acquire a new relationship according to His -- that we might know the place of the children of God. "Then are the children free." He does not merely, therefore, claim it for Himself. He did not need. But He asserts it for those that are His. How astonishing to Peter! He had forgotten it; he had no thought of it. Yet was he born of God, and he was slowly learning what it meant; about to learn it far more blessedly soon when the hindrance should he taken away by the grace of Christ, and the place of deliverance was about to dawn upon his heart.

"Notwithstanding," said He,

> lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money {Matt. 17:27}.

The last place in the world to find, except for God! And that is the very thing He showed -- that it was One who had the power of God as well as the knowledge of God; that it was One who was very God, although He was here a man upon the earth. Let Peter's soul be filled with this. How his heart would turn back to it another day! know it far better when he looked back upon it, when he read it as the word of God, than when it was merely passing then before his eyes! There is no greater mistake than to suppose that if we had been living in the time of our Lord we should have understood our Lord's words better than now. The very reverse. The written word in this, as in other respects, has a higher place than the spoken word. Just as the written word has a mightier testimony, so also the written word has a permanent place of correcting our thoughts, of deepening even what is true as well as correcting what is mistaken, and the Spirit of God is pre-eminently with it. Hence, therefore, I do not hesitate to say that, far from being worse off, we are better. Peter himself was better off when Peter was not merely regarding the words he had listened to, but when he read them as inspired of God for his use and ours.

Well here, then, I say, we have just the very same thing: that is, we have human thoughts of Christ corrected by divine, and at the same time in the doing of this a marvelous outburst of the divine glory that shone upon Peter's soul more fully than had ever been the case before. We have had, then, the kingdom. Here we have what much more belongs to Christian relationship -- the children.

The chapter that follows, as the one before, shows us the church, the one founded and the other in its practical operation. I do not say the body, but I do say Christ's church. He says,

> On this rock I will build my church {Matt. 16:18}.

But I only refer to it to show how all these three things are brought here together, and are quite distinct. The church is as distinct from the kingdom as both are from Christianity and salvation. Christian relationship is involved in this very scene. "Then are the children free" -- the place of association with Christ in a common relationship before God; always remembering that, while He has brought us by grace into it, He has that relationship in His own eternal right, and that He is not merely one that is born of God, and He is never said to be so. We are. He consequently is never called a child of God. He is called Son. We are called sons, too, but we are called children of God in a sense in which it is never said of Christ. John's great point, I may observe, is that we are children of God. Properly speaking John never calls us sons of God. There are one or two places in the epistles or in the gospels where our version makes us out to be the sons of God in John's writing, but it is a mistake. Our translators did not understand the difference. They thought one word as good as another. They were mistaken; there was a very great difference. A man might be adopted as a son without being a child in the family. We are not only adopted sons, we are children of the family. We are born of God; and here you see, as connected with this, the Lord Jesus shows us this place of sharing His own exemption. But then look at the grace in it. He that had this divine power said, "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend." And there is one great point of our weakness. We do not know how to carry our privileges. We learn, for instance, about a church, we learn about grace, we learn to talk about both; but I would ask this -- have we, and do we, carry with us, especially in the time of trial and grave action, the spirit that becomes those that are brought into such a place?

And more particularly now, when it is not only the church unfolded, but the church recovered, when we had basely forgotten it, when we had shared the sin of Christendom in going after all the institutions that they were pleased to make out here below -- things fashioned according to the will of man for man's own purposes, if not for man's own glory. God has graciously recovered it, but have we not used it to adorn ourselves; and have we not used it oftentimes with a hard spirit towards those that have not had one hundredth part of the advantages that we possess? Is that grace? I do not believe it, and I am persuaded, therefore, that there ought to be a lowlier tone while holding fast the depth of grace that the Lord has shown to us, but a deeper sense of our own shortcomings, for the Lord surely judges us according to what, we know, and not according to the ignorance of others. And do not we feel, beloved brethren, that there are many children of God at this moment that walk more faithfully and more humbly, according to their little light, than we do according to our much greater light? And ought we not to be humble? I am sure we ought.

Well, here now was one in whom there was no question of failure at all, but there was failure in Peter, and he would show Peter, too that the very fullest consciousness of glory, the very fullest consciousness of nearness to God, goes along with a consideration of others, and of other's ignorance, too. They did not know the glory of the Son. They saw that He was a man; that He was a Jew. Well, the Lord did not stop to argue it, or to prove it with them. It is grace giving the knowledge of it to those that have faith; and now Peter was in the secret of it, and Peter was given to know that he, too, had a little of it, for the Lord was not making it known for His own glory. He had it from everlasting to everlasting; but now He was letting Peter know a little of it, and at once He shows the grace in which this glory acts here below in the midst of an unbelieving world. "Lest we should offend them, give them all they claim." The Lord did not come to assert His glory, or to claim the obeisance of those that had not faith, but to teach those that had faith to walk in the power of His own grace as those who behold His glory. This then will suffice for the seventeenth chapter.

On the eighteenth I need not dwell, though there is just one point of importance that may claim a moment.

> Then came Peter to him and said, How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Seven times? (Matt. 18:21).

He thought a great deal of that, but Jesus enlarges the sphere infinitely. "Jesus said to him, I say not seven times, but seventy times seven." Here you see it was not merely grace with unbelievers who do not see his glory, but with a failing brother -- the very thing in which we are apt ourselves to fail, because how often one hears, "Well, if he were not a brother one could understand better." But this is a brother, and a very offending one too. What is the measure? What is the limit of grace? "Till seven times? "Until seventy times seven. It has no limit.

In the nineteenth and twentieth -- the connection of the two -- the Lord throughout is vindicating the relationship of nature. By "nature" I mean the relationship which God has established here below. The Lord had suffered men to derange it somewhat. It was not true, as they said, that Moses commanded a bill of divorce. It was constantly used when a poor unhappy Jew wanted to be rid of his wife. "Moses suffered this," He said, "because of the hardness of your hearts." That is, the law was a state of things where man was on sufferance. It was not perfection; it was not the image of the mind of God at all. Christ is. Man was made after it, and soon failed. Christ really is the image of the invisible God, and Christ alone. And Christ, accordingly, brings out God's glory in these things, and He shows how it was at the beginning. God did not make a man and two women, but

"male and female created he them." It was evident, therefore, from the very formation of woman what God's mind was. And so another thing. He takes up the case of little children, slighted constantly by rabbis. They did not like the trouble of them, but the Lord paid special attention to them. I do not know anything that brings out the tender grace of the Lord more than this. He laid His hands upon them, and rebuked the disciples because of their spirit about them. And, further, He appreciated a fine character -- the young man -- even the man that did not follow Him, but liked his possessions too well. Yet the Lord looked upon him, as we are told in Mark, and loved him.

Well now, I say there we find nature in various forms, and the Lord's feelings about it; but the whole point of the chapter is something superior to. nature. It is not, therefore, that a Christian ought to speak slightingly of anything that is of God even in the creation. There is no reason for it -- no ground whatever. You constantly find that when men are on a ground of rivalry they abuse one another; but if you are brought into an entirely different and higher ground altogether it is no question of finding fault -- you are completely out of the scene. Well, that is the place into which the Christian is brought now. It is not lowering the relationships of nature, or speaking unbecomingly of anything of the kind; but you are brought into a new place altogether. So the Lord shows at the close of the chapter. He said, therefore, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven, which astonished these disciples who had regarded riches as a great sign of God's favor.

> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God {Matt. 19:24}.

But then, He explains, when they ask, "Who can then be saved?" because they thought that a rich man had far less temptation than a poor one. A poor man might be covetous, a poor one might forget God in the extremity of need. They thought a rich man would not have such temptations. No doubt it was a very poor and low view.

> Who then can be saved? But Jesus said unto them, With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

This then is the real truth of salvation, as it is, I may say, of everything Christian; for if it is not of God it is not Christian. The whole thing is founded upon what is not of nature -- what is divine, what is heavenly; and that comes out far more in the epistles than even here. But the Lord brings it out as far as they could bear it themselves.

> Then answered Peter, and said unto them, Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee; and what shall we have? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye that have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne {Matt. 19:28}:

that is, it is not following in the regeneration, but it is

> in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel {Matt. 19:28}.

The regeneration means that new state of things that shall he brought in at the coming of Christ {i.e., the millennial state}. The washing of regeneration now is in view of that state; that is, it is really a new condition, only not now brought in. It is only testimony; it is the washing; it is the word of God, and that which belongs to the word of God connected with it that supposes a new state of things; but it will be only displayed then. Well, when that new state shall come -- "When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." That is, you have the Lord fully acknowledging all fidelity. No man has ever done anything for the Lord for which the Lord will not -- if I may say so -- pay him back the capital with the best interest. "Surely every one that hath forsaken house, or lands, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake." He does not here say, "For the gospel's sake"; but it is so in Mark where it is wanted. There He brings the most comforting thing. He says that, instead of the gospel being a lower thing, it really is bound up with Himself. Here He says, "For my name's sake," and there He says, "For the gospel's sake." It is of all importance to bring in what Mark does -- the word; but here it is the Christ, it is Himself. It is the Son of man, the rejected Christ; for that is the point of it. Those that follow Him in the day of His rejection will be with Him the sharers of His glory in the day of His power; "in the regeneration when he shall sit on the throne of his glory." They shall receive a hundred-fold and shall inherit everlasting life.

Do we believe it, beloved brethren? I do not say that when our souls are fairly brought in contact with it we do not bow; but what I mean by believing is this: have we it as a living truth before our souls every day? No man, then, that has lost for Christ's name sake but shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life.

> But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall he first {Matt. 20:16}.

There is a solemn word. "But many that are first shall be last"; and I will tell you who particularly: those who think much of their losses and talk much about them. They are the very men that get weary of this trial, and the reason is plain. If they were filled with Christ they would not be talking about what they have done, and what they have lost; and I say that such persons, though they may not have been first, shall be last. But, thank God, He will always fill up. "The last shall be first." A serious thing for both sides -- blessed in one, but very humbling in the other. [83]

But then the Lord adds another, because that would not give the full truth, and there is nothing more remarkable, beloved friends, than this in the word of God -- the care to keep us from being one-sided. There is hardly a more common, or a more serious, danger, and I shall be so if I am

83. {This means also those who, in serving Christ, use means not approved by Scripture -- in order to have success in their ministry. Cheating in running a race is observed by the Lord. It will not stand (1 Cor. 9:24-27).}

occupied with that which clearly Peter was. "Behold," he says,

> we have forsaken all and followed thee. What shall we have therefore? {Matt. 19:27}.

It was clear that Christ was not all to him at that moment. He was thinking about himself. But the Lord brings in another word.

> For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers in his vineyard {Matt. 20:1}.

And then we find him hiring at different hours of the day, on which we need not particularly dwell now. "And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour they received every man a penny," or what we should call a shilling, if I may so say. That is, it was at that time a sort of day's wages. That is, what was supposed to be necessary, and what was given for a day's work of this kind.

> When the first came they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? {Matt. 20:10-15}.

There is the secret. It is not merely a question, therefore, of righteousness in God. God is righteous, and He is not unrighteous to forget the work of faith and labor of love, but He always reserves the sovereignty of grace. He claims to be good, for He is good, and He knows therefore where to show this goodness; and further He will ask no man's leave to show it. He will show it because He is God. If He is God He is good, and so He condemns these men. They were found out -- the covetousness of their hearts. They were thankful to get their day's wages for their day's work, but the covetousness was stirred by men that had only labored for an hour. And why so? Because they could not enter into God's title to be good -- not merely to be righteous. The Lord stands to His righteousness as a question with them, but the Lord stands to His goodness as a question of whom He pleases. So He says, "Is thine eye evil, because I am good." "So the last shall be first." You see its reference now. It is not the first last. There was man's breaking down, and man's breaking down because he was a little presuming; but here is grace triumphant.

> So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called but few chosen {Matt. 20:16}.

Thus it is that the Lord meets what was in Peter's heart, first bringing out the righteous ways of God, the full remembrance of everything, let it be soever small, that has been done for His name's sake, even to a hundredfold repayment. But God never renounces His own title to sovereign grace. We have these two things -- the one as a reward for labor; the other sovereign grace that will show the goodness of God where He pleases, when He pleases, and how He pleases. And may our hearts delight that so it should be, for He that delights in goodness will have his own heart formed accordingly. He that rises not above the reward will find that he has made but a losing bargain for his own soul. I do not speak merely of the future, but I do say that it is to take the very least and lowest way of God in His dealings. No doubt God acts always worthily of Himself, only our wisdom is to enter into the deepening views that the Lord, and the Lord alone, could give at that time. Afterwards God forms others according to Christ, -- and we have it wonderfully in His blessed apostle Paul, and in Peter too, but I do not enlarge now.

May the Lord bless these lessons of His own grace, and His own truth, for Christ's sake.

John 13:1-11

What I hope to present to you tonight I may characterize in two or three words, the instruction and the warning. Here we have the instruction -- the most weighty, practically, that the Lord had as yet set before Simon Peter. Undoubtedly there was that which was needed previously. His personal glory had been dawning more and more upon his heart. Correction, too, there had been before now, but here it is more the positive instruction that a saint wants as such upon the earth, and Simon Peter gave occasion for the Lord's bringing it out just because he was so ready to give his opinion. Now, our opinions are always wrong. We never rightly can give an opinion, especially when we think to Whom, as in this case, we are giving it. Giving an opinion to Christ! Yet it was really that. No doubt it flowed out of a human sense of what seemed to him the incongruity of the Lord's stooping down to wash his feet; but the truth is that it was always a question of the Lord's stooping down. That was no new thing. That was just what characterized all His work here below. His appearance in the world, His coming here, His presence, His whole action -- what was it? It was the service of love. No doubt it was here being brought out in a very distinct and evident manner. The service of love is always in action. It is not always so manifest; and it was the manifesting of it to Peter. Little did he know that he needed it, but the Lord brought this all out -- the depth of the need, and also the character of the need, for there is exceeding instruction in these few words of our Lord Jesus. But then we must have it settled in our souls as the first great lesson that comes out in this instruction of the Lord, and that is, that all our blessing flows from distrusting our thoughts, our words, our notions of what is suitable to Christ. All our blessing, I may say, is in appropriating Christ's words. There is spirit, and there life; and what we are just learning now is to value them principally, to have perfect confidence in them, and to judge, therefore, all that rises from ourselves, all that comes from another, by this only standard.

Well, it is introduced in a way that is exceedingly striking. We see at once that it shows that it is the character of what belonged to the whole ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world.

> Before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his

> hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper {John 13:1, 2)

-- not "being ended," for it was not begun. We must remember that this is not the thought. I daresay some of you are familiar already with it, but it is well to state it now, for no doubt there are a great many here that have never thought about it or its importance. It is really, "Supper time being come." That is the true force of the word. Their feet were not washed after supper, but before it. Any one can sec that upon the very face of it. It was always the custom, and the Lord did not depart from that. The only thing that was so singular on our Lord's part was not that the feet were washed, but that He was the washer. That, indeed, was singular -- that it should be He. If He had been only the master and they the disciples, it would have been different; but we learn who He was:

> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God --

Himself the Holy One, as holy when He went back from a world of sin as when He came into it from God.

And this was just exactly what filled His heart -- the last resort of the devil, the last depth into which man's heart could be drawn by sin, being before His eyes.

> The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him {John 13:2}.

There was what Satan was goading on the hapless man to do. But here was what filled Christ at that very time.

> Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end.

He was going, but He was going in the same unspotted holiness that belonged to His nature as divine, and which was suitable to the One to whom the Father gave all things; for we have both His intrinsic glory and His conferred.

> He riseth from supper and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin {John 13:4}.

For you must remember that what is referred to here is the washing of water by the word, and only this. Washing by blood is a most important truth, but it is not here. It is supposed at the end of the chapter -- at least the work is supposed on which the washing with blood is founded. But in the early part of the chapter there is no allusion to any washing whatever but the washing of water.

Now I dare say that it may, perhaps, have not occurred to all, because we have been too apt to think that there is just a distinction between being washed with blood at the beginning and being washed with water afterwards, but that is only part of the truth, for the fact is we are born of water just as much as we are washed with water. When we are first brought to God we are born of water and of the Spirit, and this is alluded to as the groundwork of what the Lord was doing now. Of course, it was not a question for the disciples to be born of water. They were already clean, as the Lord tells them, but not all. There was one that was not born of water; the very one of whom Satan, therefore, took advantage, and the more so because he was so near Christ. For there is nothing that so precipitates man's destruction, who has not got life from God, as being near Christ; for when one ventures into the presence of Christ not to receive life, but to prosecute one's own will, one's own plans, one only becomes the prey of Satan, and in the form too of direct antagonism to the Son of God. That was the case with Judas Iscariot. He had no such intention, but the truth is -- man is never master. The very time that man seeks to be his own master is when he is most of all a slave of Satan. It is simply a question of whether God is master of me, or Satan is, but I am never master, never, nor intended to be. Contrary this is, of course, to all truth before a man is converted. but still more that which one's soul abhors when one is converted; because, if I am converted, what is it to do? It is to serve the living and true God. It is to be a servant, no doubt, to be a child, to be a son, but only the better to serve. There is no such service as the service of the child. Here we have it in all its perfection in our Lord Jesus Christ; and so now, out of this intimacy of love and this height of glory, He takes the basin and begins to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.

Well, Simon Peter was astonished, but why? Simon Peter, will you never learn? Will you never learn to be quiet? Will you never learn to distrust yourself? Now is not that one of the great things, beloved friends, that we have got to learn? Is it not a thing in which we have constantly to challenge ourselves, because this is the very thing in which we have been so often wrong? Yes, just because we so little know what it is to walk in the consciousness of the presence of God. We are in the presence of God; we are brought there; we are walking in the light; but it does not follow that we are consciously there. And there is just the very difference, and there is where spiritual power depends upon it, because levity in the thought of our being brought into the presence of God to me is much worse than the case of the poor Christian who does not know that he is brought into the presence of God. For a man to take up the idea that to be brought into God's presence and to be walking in the light is just a mere sound, a mere privilege, a mere thing about which to say, "How near I am, and how blest I am" -- what a wretched state! No, it is meant to exercise the soul before God. It is meant to be a thing to recall us to what we are doing, what we are saying, nay, what we think, what we feel, because God necessarily notices all, and God will have us to take notice of all. It is the effect of the light of God consciously felt that we take up for the Lord, in desire for His glory what passes within us.

Was this so with Peter? He had no thought of it. No doubt he is much more excusable than we, because he had no such knowledge, and, as yet, no one had. The fact is that it is redemption that brings to God in the way of which I have been speaking, and it is the Holy Ghost given since redemption that gives us the consciousness of it. "At that time ye shall know," as the Lord says, "that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." And so it is as to this consciously walking in the

light of which I have been speaking.

So Peter, then, turns to the Lord with this word, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" It did seem such an inversion of all that Peter thought natural. To be sure it is. It is super-natural, and we should get that settled, beloved friends, in our souls; that we are brought into what is supernatural every day, that it is not merely for a little moment on the Lord's day morning, if even then it is realized, but that we are brought into this atmosphere habitually, and that we are intended to be acting upon it when others, perhaps, only know that it is a Christian man acting righteously. But it is not that. A Christian man will not act righteously by merely intending to act righteously. A Christian man only acts according to God when he is acting upon His holy principles. Now it is not merely a question, therefore, of righteousness; it is a question of Christ. A Jew was bound to act righteously, but we -- we have Christ, and, more than that, we have the Holy Ghost, now that Christ has died and risen, to give us the consciousness of this association with Him. But Peter did not know this, only it was certainly a forgetfulness. I am bound always to assume that whatever the Lord does, whatever the Lord says, is the only right thing, the only thing that is worthy of Himself, and there was where Peter was wrong. It was not a mere question of intelligence, but surely there ought to have been this, just as in ourselves who are still more inexcusable if we fail. But even Peter ought to have started with this. I do not say it proudly, and God forbid that we should speak disrespectfully of Peter, because you must remember that we are just as much called upon to have respectful feelings and language about the dead as the living. I have not the smallest sympathy with a person, that talk slightingly of those that the Lord has put honor upon, no matter where or who they are.

Well now Peter ought to have said, "If the Lord stoops down to wash my feet, it must be because His love is concerned, His glory is concerned, the will of His God and Father is concerned, and, more than that, it is needful for me"; because all our wants only give occasion to bring out the Lord's grace and to manifest His glory, and who, then, would wish to be without that? It is not, therefore, a question of whether it suits me. I am sure I need it, but it is not a question of whether it suits me, but whether it suits Him.

> Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered, and said to him, What I do, thou knowest not now {John 13:7}.

Peter had not learned his lesson. The Lord was instructing him. "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." But still he is dull, and he is guilty of what is even worse now, for he could not wait. There is where we fail most of all as Christians -- that impatience, that haste, and yet, beloved friends, it is not for want of God's telling us. "He that helieveth shall not make haste." This is not merely a New Testament truth, but an old one that ought to have been very familiar to Peter. It was familiar enough in the scripture, but it was not familiar to his soul. He did not apply it to himself. He forgot it where he ought most to have remembered it; where it was Christ that had him in His presence. He therefore says, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Rash man! Christ -- Christ bend down to wash his feet! And Peter say to Christ, "Thou shalt never wash my feet"! Did not the Lord know better? Why should Peter hinder? Did Peter know? Clearly not. The Lord had just told him, "Thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." As a humble man he surely ought to have bowed.

But that is where we fail too, and I do not believe that we judge sufficiently our failure to take in the light of the word of God. For God constantly speaks to us, speaks to us every day it is to be supposed, and we read His word, and what is that but that He is speaking to us in His word, and are we not brought sometimes to this very thing? No doubt it is so, without our uttering words, for we would not say that we find any fault in the word of God, but still, we constantly show our want of reverence for the word by. turning away from that which we do not enjoy, instead of looking up and remembering that what we do not know now we shall know hereafter. The Lord is teaching, and the very portions too that we turn from sometimes in our stupidity and want of deference to the Lord -- want of confidence and thorough faith in the value of every word He has written -- may be the very thing I most want in conflict with Satan. Certainly, it was what Peter wanted, and wanted very soon, as we shall see. He says, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me." At once he turns round, and from having wished that his feet should not be touched by our Lord, should not be washed by Him, Peter now says, in a kind of despair at what he had said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." But the Lord puts everything in its place in the next few words. "He that is washed" -- and He changes the word. This washing is not exactly the same thing as washing his feet. "He that is bathed" (as it is familiarly known), "He that is bathed" (washed all over -- the whole person). Now that is when we are born of water and the Spirit: that is the mighty work of God. But when we are converted it is not merely that we receive Christ, or rest upon His blood—that is perfectly true -- but the word of God enters our souls and deals with us as altogether unclean before God, and consequently there is a new life that is given that judges the old.

Now that is the bathing that is referred to here. The old man is dead. It is not merely dealing with a particular sin, but it is the whole life of sin; nay, more, it is the whole state of sin. The man is born again. He has got a new life, and this is so true that the old one he is in due time taught to regard not as himself at all. That was himself, but now, "Not I, but Christ." He is born anew, born afresh, and this so completely that he is entitled to treat the other as a thing only to be dealt with, to be mortified, indeed, to treat himself as dead to it; for you see this word that enters is a quickening word. It is Christ Himself, and not merely Christ's blood. It is Christ Himself judging whatever is of Adam, whatever is of man. It is Christ Himself therefore giving a life that is according to God; that can appreciate, that can understand, God; that can feel according to God. Consequently, it is the root of all that is according to God, on which the Holy Ghost acts afterwards in

the Christian; that new nature which is begotten of God.

This then is what the Lord refers to here, "He that is washed." But then He goes farther, "Needeth not save to wash his feet," {John 13:10} and whether it be the bathing of the person, or the washing of the feet, you must remember carefully, and it never was of greater moment than now to remember it, that it is water and not blood. The blood is most true and absolutely necessary, for "this is he that came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and blood" {1 John 5:6}. The two are most true, but here you have only the bathing on first being brought to God, and next the application of water afterwards by the word to deal with whatever impurity there may be acquired in our walking through the world.

Hence this is what our Lord was insisting upon with Peter. Peter took the ground that, because he was of God, he did not need to have his feet washed by Christ. Christ, on the contrary, insisted that unless He washed him -- washed his feet, that is, even as a believer, as a disciple, as one that had new life,

> If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me {John 13:8}.

I refer not to the original washing, but to that which is done day by day in our passage through this world; that is, it is not merely a question of life, but of having a portion with Christ. It is not merely a question of having it by and by, but of having it now. He was going on high, and there is one of the wonders of Christianity: it gives the believer a present part with Christ. No doubt. that is just the token and loving pledge of an eternal part with Christ; but I do not think that it is merely the eternal that is referred to here. Rather it is the letting us in now, and the making good now of what is eternal in its own character and consequence. And that again is another truth that characterizes Christianity very much more largely than this particular part of it -- that is, that we are even now, according to its own nature, associated with Christ before God. He has gone there, but He would not go there till our sins could be forgiven by virtue of His blood.

But more than this, He would secure our having a present enjoyment, a present fellowship and communion with Himself where He is gone into the presence of God. And I do not believe that we ever have the proper measure for our walking, the standard of what we are to cultivate, unless we enter into this, that it is not merely a cleansing for our heart—the Jewish people will have that by and by in the millennium, and will have such a cleansing as will suit them as God's people on the earth; but that is not what characterizes the Christian -- it is the practical cleansing, to have communion with Him where He is gone, suitably to God and His presence while we are here on the earth. That is the meaning of the washing of the feet, and the object of it. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." It is not exactly "a part in me," for that he had. Life is, as far as that goes, a part in Christ; but the Lord will give us more than that. In virtue of our having life, or along with it at any rate, He will also give us this proof of His own perfect love and desire. For there is nothing that shows the perfection of love more than this -- the One that loves us entering the highest and most glorious place that is conceivable, and fitting us for present association with that place where He is gone; and this is what Christ would give us the sense of while we are passing through this world. No wonder Peter could not understand it then. His fault was impatience, not his want of intelligence, but his want of confidence in the Lord and of waiting to learn.

This then is the great instruction that the Lord was giving His servant at this time. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" {John 13:10}, every whit; and that cleanness every whit, I repeat, is not merely the effect of being washed with blood. Washed with blood meets what our sins are; what we want as having sinned before God -- before God. But it does not meet all that we want as giving us communion with God, and there is where the word comes in, and the importance of the word, and of the Holy Ghost's applying the word. Because God will bring us to a common mind with Himself, and a common hatred with Himself of the evil that characterizes ourselves. God will give us a settled sense of it so that we hate it according to His own hatred of it, and that we, too, consequently, have an entrance into the good into which Christ has gone, because that was the effect of it. It is all founded upon the going in there where there is no evil, and we are brought into association—in short, have a part with Him now -- by this very cleansing which deals with every impurity that is contracted every day.

Now this has, as I might almost say, dropped out of Christendom (I dare say there are some here that know a little of what is commonly taught), for I really could not tell, and I have read not a little on these subjects, but I really could not tell of any person, or of any work, that has ever set forward this most important truth. In short, the great mass of God's children at the present day are just where Peter was then; that is, they have not the sense to see, they have not the sense, by the Spirit of God, to see the greatness of the love of Christ in giving them a portion with Himself where He is now. They have no thought of it. Consequently, you find that they are very little fitted for it by and by. This, on the contrary, falls in completely with what we find in the Epistles; that is we are "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." But supposing there comes in something that is inconsistent. Well there is the washing of the feet. There is the dealing with whatever is practically inconsistent with it, and bringing our souls back, restoring us to communion, that is, that there should not be an inconsistency between our standing in Christ and our practical walk here below; nay, nor our thoughts or feelings, because there is power. Quite granted that our hearts naturally are a fountain of all evil; but then there is such a thing as the heart being purified by faith. There is such a thing as the Spirit of God filling the inner man with the thoughts of Christ, and it is in this way. It is not by changing the evil, it is not by removing the evil yet -- that will be at the coming of Christ; but it is by giving power to the good. It is by strengthening the new man, and feeding and filling the new man with God's grace, God's truth, with Christ, in short, practically. It is all this that fills, and, consequently, strengthens the new man.

And so it is that one is divided, as the apostle says, into "spirit, soul, and body" {1 Thess. 5:23} -- constituting the whole man. It is not, I repeat, the extinction of evil, or the disappearance of it, but it is judged. Our old man is crucified with Christ, and a person knows the force of another word of the apostle Paul -- that is, if Christ be in you, what then? Why, he tells us that in that case -- in the eighth of Romans -- there is this treating ourselves as "dead because of sin," and "alive because of righteousness." The Spirit is alive, you see, as he says; that is, the body is dead because of sin, and I am entitled to treat it as a mere instrument. If I allow the body to be active, and to have its way, it is always self, because then it guides me, then it takes possession of me, carries me off with itself, so to speak; and that is just what one is not to do if Christ be in you.

> If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin {Rom. 8:10}.

If I do not act upon my being dead with Christ, but allow it activity as a living thing, then it works its own way and serves sin, because that is not changed. And, on the other hand, if I do treat it thus as dead, the Spirit is life. It is not only that I have got life in Christ, but the Spirit is life. The Holy Ghost acts in practical power, and He is life because of righteousness, and it is only thus that there is this practical working either in the having done with sin or of the righteousness of God below.

Well here, then, we have this great instruction from our Lord Jesus. At the end of the chapter we touch upon what I shall a little unfold from another scripture -- the warning. The Lord introduces it after He has brought out His own death. When Judas is gone, the Lord has the whole scene before Him. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." It is not merely the Father, but God, and God, as such, being glorified always supposes sin judged. It brings, therefore, the death of Christ in the judgment of sin -- the solemn judgment of sin -- before us.

> If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him {John 13:32},

which He did by setting Him at His own right hand directly after His death and resurrection when He ascended to heaven. Instead of waiting for the kingdom and bringing in the Jew, He glorified Him straightway. All this, you see, is essentially connected with what is peculiar to Christianity. And then He tells them,

> Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and, as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another {John 13:34, 35}.

Peter again, too, quick to speak to the Lord, says, "Whither goest thou?" Jesus answers him,

> Whither I go thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

How gracious! How gracious to tell him of his incapacity before His death, and of that following which will be a most sure consequence, brought by the gracious power of God and made true to his soul.

> Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake {John 13:37}.

It was not that he was insincere I doubt whether there ever was a sincerer soul than Simon Peter. And it is not in our insincerity, it is not there that our folly lies, but the very contrary, because we trust self in some shape or another.

> Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice John 13:38}.

I will turn, then, to a further warning -- a truth that the Lord presents to us of very great moment -- that we may have it fully before us. In the 22nd chapter of Luke, and the 31st verse,

> And the Lord said, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee.

You observe the change. "Satan hath desired to have you." It was not merely Simon, although he addresses Simon, but he desired to have them all. "But I have prayed for thee." Why "for thee "? Why not merely "for you"? Because Satan was making a dead set at Simon, and what gave Satan the opportunity was this -- Simon's self-confidence. Confidence in what, beloved friends? In his natural character? Not at all; no, but in his love for the Lord. If his confidence had been in the Lord's love to him it would have been a very different matter. Had that been actively -- been distinctly -- before his soul, he would have weighed the Lord's warning; but he really was so sure that he loved the Lord so much, that, no matter what the trial was, he could go through it. He did not believe the others could. We may be tolerably good judges of others, beloved friends; we are very bad judges of ourselves. Cannot we see that in Simon? Can we see it in ourselves? "I have prayed for thee," said He who had all truth and whose love was going out, and most of all, for the man that was most dishonoring Him. Why so? Was dishonor a light thing? No, but His love was great and most real. And by whom and for whom is love most brought out? Where there is most need -- the deepest need. "I have prayed for thee."

And mark, Simon Peter heard it from His own lips before he went astray. If he had not, we have no right to say that he would have been restored as he was. We know that he was restored, but God uses means, and one of the great means of restorative power for our souls is the love that we knew before we went astray. There is nothing that gives the heart more of rebound back to the Lord, and of horror at ourselves, than the very fact that the Lord told us so fully, so distinctly, before we went astray. "I have prayed for thee." Do you think that Peter forgot that -- "I have prayed for thee"? -- because it would not have done if He had said, "I have prayed for you." That is all true about you generally, but it is "thee" -- "I have prayed for thee." No, he never forgot it. He never forgot it in

the hour of his need. I do not say in the hour of his wanting it; I do not say in the moment of his sin; but I do say that, when the horror of the sin filled his soul with despair, these words would be, and no doubt were, brought up by God's Spirit before his soul. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Neither did it. His faithfulness did, but not his faith. We have no reason to believe, beloved friends, that he wavered as to the Person, or that he wavered about Christ's great love to him, but -- Peter was occupied with man. This we shall see another evening, for I am only going to speak of the warning, tonight.

"That thy faith fail not," then, is the word; "and when, thou art converted" {Luke 22:32}, that is, turned back again to the Lord. It is the very same word that is used about one's first turn, only Scripture does not limit it to that. The word "converted" is very much, in our common language, applied to the first turning to God, but we must remember that in Scripture it has a larger force, and means the turning again, even if one has gone astray, and that is exactly the meaning of it here. This is, therefore, what we commonly term restoration of soul, rather than conversion, but it is the very same word which applies to both. "When thou art turned to me" (if you please, or any word that would express that, just to vary it from our common usage) "strengthen thy brethren."

The very fact of his being an object of such grace, and that power which drew him back again, would give confidence not only to him, but to them. He would be an instrument suited to the Lord, so little is it true that God does not restore a man -- that you are not to trust a man who has once broken down. Why here is the most honored of God. We must not suppose, beloved friends, that saints are like horses. If a horse once falls he breaks his knees, no doubt. But is it possible that I have such a poor conception of divine grace as to think that? I dare say the figure has been very often used just in the opposite way. One would have thought that these words of our blessed Lord would have arrested the lips that said so. Not so; not so. Peter not only broke down then, but he broke down in another sense as seriously, for he failed as completely about the Gentiles after he had had a special commission to open the door to the Gentiles. He failed as completely about that as he failed here about Christ; but, for all that, there was no person -- unless it be the apostle Paul himself -- that was more used of God in strengthening his brethren. I think it a serious thing to weaken the spring of confidence in a soul that has slipped aside. I do not say that in order to weaken the gravity of slipping aside; but I do say that we must be zealous for the grace of God, and we must be faithful to the word of God; and we must take care that we do not, therefore, enfeeble a manifest truth of God that comes out as, for instance, in this very case. "When thou art converted" -- or, restored -- "strengthen thy brethren."

Now that is pre-eminently what we find in the Epistles of Peter -- all through them both, I should say. Of course, they are not confined to that, neither does it refer to what he wrought, but it is a general reference to the character of his ministry. It was not only a confirming ministry; it was not only one that converted souls, but, as far as his brethren were concerned, it was one calculated eminently to strengthen, and this most clearly from the way in which God had taught him the grace of the Lord Jesus. No doubt it is a better thing to be strong in the grace of the Lord Jesus, so as not to slip aside; but the next best thing is that we have so profited by a slip, if we have been careless and unwatchful, that we have drunk more deeply into the grace of God than we ever did before. And surely, out of that, we are able to strengthen one another. So it was here. "He said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter" (for here we resume from where I left off in John)

> the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now he that hath a purse let him take it, and. likewise his scrip {Luke 22:34, 35}.

It was no longer to be miraculous power, or miraculous opening the door of any one for them. There was no longer to be that. There had been that in their previous testimony. I do not believe that sending them in this new form of testimony was lower ground. There was less of wonder about it, but I do not believe, beloved friends, that the walk of faith is less because it is not clothed with miraculous power.

Why, look at the Corinthians. There were plenty of miracles there. Were they spiritual? Far from it. It is, therefore, a complete delusion to suppose that miracles of themselves show spirituality. I should say, on the contrary, it requires a great deal of grace to carry the power of miracle, so to speak -- a great deal of grace -- and that is precisely what I should gather from it, and I have no doubt that it is one of the reasons why the Lord did not continue miracles long -- because the state of the church would not bear it. He, at the same time, did show that even in that state, a bad state in a particular quarter did not hinder miracle; but certainly it in no way implied spiritual power in the use of miracle. It was, therefore, a very good reason why, and I have no doubt there were moral reasons which God, of course, could alone adequately judge of, why He withheld them longer. But, however that may be, now they were to be cast upon God's caring for His people in more ordinary ways. It was to be no longer a going in the name of the great King, and the disciples armed with power in every possible way as the vouchers of the King's presence -- the Messiah's presence. They had had that. "But now," He says, "he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." But to guard against any thought of this being meant in a mere literal way -- to show that it was meant only as the sign of the ordinary safeguards and means of daily life -- this comes out. "And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough."

Now that very thing shows that He did not mean it literally, because two swords would be a very poor provision

for eleven disciples -- that is quite evident. If it had been eleven swords one could understand, but the fact of the Lord saying that two -swords are enough shows at once that it was quite a mistake to interpret it in the mere literal sense; and we see that those who took it literally made a very bad use of it in a little while, and Peter is the very man.

But that is not what I am going to draw your attention to now, but this -- that when the Lord leads them out to the mount of Olives, And the disciples follow Him, when He was at the place He said unto them,

> Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

This is a very serious thing. It is just as true as another word that we might not be able to put along with it, and that is, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." No, it is blessed to fall into temptation, but it is never blessed to enter into temptation. There is all the difference between entering into temptation and enduring temptation. And there was exactly what Peter had to learn most bitterly -- to enter into temptation. Now the man that endures temptation is the man that prays before the temptation comes. He does not enter into it. When it comes he is blest; he endures. Peter did not. Peter entered; that is to say, that the entrance into temptation shows that there is a want of sense of danger -- a want of sense that I need God, that I need God now. No doubt there is. But if the Lord tells me that temptation is at hand, and I do not pray, it is evident that I am not depending upon God; and so, instead of falling into temptation, the temptation, on the contrary, if I may say so, falls upon me, and, more than that, I enter into it instead of enduring it. The endurance of temptation is when the person suffers, and suffers because he does not yield. The entrance into temptation is when he does yield because he does not pray; because he is not in dependence upon God, for there was exactly what was now coming out. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." He did not pray, and he did enter into temptation.

How different was it with the Lord!

> And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

Now there was the Savior -- "And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly" -- the only one that it might have seemed temptation could not affect, temptation could not ensnare. And so it was most true: there was nothing that was assailable by temptation inwardly, nothing whatever; but, for that very reason, He knew what it was to suffer being tempted. Peter did not. Peter, on the contrary, gratified himself, as we shall see, when I come to show his fall; but that must remain for another night. I am only going to speak of the warning, as well as the instruction -- the instruction that was so soon before, the warning that so soon followed. I shall show that the fall just as quickly followed, and the restoration in due time. But in the Lord's case there was the depth of entrance -- not into the temptation. He did not enter into temptation, but the Lord weighed it all, felt it all. The Lord had all the bitterness, all the sense of it, but a thing outside. And how? Because He took the gravity of it. He felt the reality of it in His own spirit before God. He always did, no matter whether it was a question of a temptation that was presented to Him by the adversary. And He had gone through that before. There had been temptation in the pleasant form. There was the temptation to seek that which God had not given, and the Lord refused. But now there was temptation in a totally different form -- the endurance of what was most painful. And what was anything that could befall Peter compared with that which was before the Lord? For it is the greatest mistake to suppose that it was merely death. It was such a death as He alone could know, and the Lord therefore does go through the whole scene in spirit with God.

> And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was at it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow {Luke 22:44}.

But this was not the sorrow of grace: this was really selfish sorrow. They were sorrowing at what they were going to lose; at all this distress that was coming on. It was not the true sorrow of grace that felt the seriousness of the moment, and that took warning from the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

> He found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before.

Now it is not my intention tonight to go farther than that which I have now presented to you; but I believe that we have here the very thing that resulted in the speedy fall of Peter. We shall see the character of that -- the way in which grace met and surmounted it, and restored this beloved one to God, and that will close the discourses that I am about to give upon this subject.

Luke 22:50-62

I have chosen the account that is given in the Gospel of Luke rather than that of Matthew or Mark, because the Spirit of God presents it very particularly in its moral links. In John, on which I shall dwell afterwards, all turns upon the person of the Lord Jesus, and we shall find, I think, this difference, when we come to look at it. But here the human heart is opened more; there the glory of the One who was making Himself known. Now the results of what we have already had before us begin to appear. The temptation has come, and Peter enters into it. We always do enter, where we are not found in prayer before the temptation. Then we are surprised. The Lord, on the contrary, had been in prayer, and He only makes the difficulty and the trial, when it came, an opportunity of manifesting the grace of God. Hence, therefore, when one of the persons that came to take the Lord -- one of the servants of the high priest -- presented himself, he became an object for one of the disciples. This was Peter. His very love for the Lord -- his indignation—broke forth. It is not that the others

were not just as teady to fall as Peter, for that is the solemn thing that appears. Our very love for His person, our very fervour of spirit, instead of being a preservative power, where there is not self-judgment, exposes one to go farther astray. Here it was. first of all, in the shape of violence. "He smote the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear." Thus the Lord's warning fell entirely powerless upon Peter; and in such a state of. mind -- and that is the importance of it -- one perverts the word of God.

I do not doubt myself that Peter thought the sword was in his hand for the purpose. Had not the Lord spoken about taking a sword? And so,you will find, we are as dependent upon God for the use of His word. We cannot do without it. Just as much as we need the word, so do we need the Spirit of God; but this is never given unless there be that dependence upon Him that goes forth in prayer, and, I repeat, in prayer not at the moment. Indeed, the moment was come for action or suffering. To Peter it was a question of action: to the Lord it was suffering. The Lord bows. It was no question now of any action, except, indeed, of repairing the mischief that Peter had done. This the Lord always does; and so He touched the servant's ear and healed him. And this is a statement admirably finding its place in the very Gospel from which I have read, because Luke shows us the heart of man, or even of a saint, that is searched and found wanting where there has not been self-emptiness, where there has been self-confidence; and undoubtedly this was the case. And further, too, I am not in the least denying spiritual feeling and affection. They were sleeping for sorrow, but why? Why sleeping? The sorrow was all well, but why sleeping foi sorrow? They ought to have been praying in sympathy with our Lord. They ought to have been in fellowship with Him. Not so; they found a sort of resource and relief in going to sleep when the Lord was calling them to watch, if it was only for the one hour. But there was no watching at all, any more than prayer: they went to sleep.

Now, when the Lord goes forth, in the calmness of one who had gone through the trial with God before the trial came, He is perfect calmness. Yet we know what was before Him. We know how He had felt it. There was the One that had been in the agony. There was the One that had been sweating, as it were, great drops of blood. Not a trace of it now. He had gone through with God. Satan now was to go through with Peter. Satan had carried completely away in the case of Judas. I do not mean that he was to carry Peter away as he had done Judas, but certainly it was to sift. As the Lord Himself said, Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat; and this was now going on, so that Peter shows out himself. His way of showing his love for Christ was by taking a sword to cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Poor Peter! Not an atom of fellowship with the mind of God at that moment, nor, indeed, at any moment, as far as the Lord Jesus was concerned. It was entirely out of the current of the thoughts of God, and yet we cannot doubt that he might have found a sort of reason for it, as I have said, in a misuse of the very word of the Lord.

And this is a solemn lesson to us that the word of God itself will never guide a person aright until the spring of self is broken; until a person has judged himself before God, and is found, above all, with the loins girt with truth before he takes up the sword. When it is taken up afterward it is the sword of the Spirit, and not a material one to cut off an enemy's ear.

Now here, then, we see the difference, first of all, but there was a far more solemn one afterwards; for they go a little farther. When the elders and captains and the rest take the Lord, and lead and bring Him into the high priest's house, Peter follows. We are told in the Gospel of John that he was not alone. Nay, John tells us; and it is beautiful that it should be so. How lovely are these traces of grace! He had seen the One that was full of grace and truth. What was the effect of it? A spirit of grace in himself. But it is John that tells the story of his own folly, his own selfishness, his own worldliness, for John went there rather in the capacity of a friend of the high priest -- an acquaintance at any rate -- than as a follower of the Lord Jesus. That does not come before us here; indeed, it was reserved to himself to tell it. Now, was not that like the way of God? It had been a long time. Why tell a story that was so old? Perhaps there was not a single person in the whole world that knew it then -- none but John. But John lived long enough to bring this out himself in his own word.

Here, however, we have the story of Peter pursued.

> Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them {Luke 22:54}.

It was a little of that same spirit that we have the Lord warning against -- eating and drinking with the drunkard; that is, it was an association with the men of the world when theywere set upon deepest enmity against the Lord Jesus, and with motives, in some respects, a little like themselves. I do not mean as regards the Lord, but all that was secret in his heart towards the Lord was entirely unknown. And who was the person that concealed it? Peter. He feared the world. He feared the men among whom he found himself. It was the spirit of the world. There is nothing that so destroys confession as fear of the world, and it is evident that this was the case. He had got with the world on its own ground. He wanted, no doubt, to see what was going on. I do not say that there were not deeper and better things at the bottom of his heart, but he did it in concealment. He was off the ground of faith. Here was another fruit of his not watching even one hour -- of his failure in prayer when the Lord called him to pray.

And so the trial came -- a new kind of trial, not now of patience; but here the question was, Would he confess? The occasion soon came.

> A certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him and said, This man was also with him {Luke 22:56}.

Now there was nothing violent; there was no strong language; but it was too much for Peter. It was -- what? beloved friends.

Association with Christ? He was ashamed of his Master. Oh, what a solemn thing! It was not that he did not love his Master, but he feared even this servant-maid. So

mighty is the spirit of the world when we are off the ground of faith, and when we have failed in prayer before the temptation comes.

So he denied, saying, "Woman, I know him not." It was not only a failure in confession: it was a lie! I know there are many Christians who think that a believer never can tell a lie. I pity them! One's feeling always is, You are going to fail in that which you think impossible. You are going to fall into a lie yourself, and just because you do not believe it possible. "Woman, I know him not." Nor was this all.

> And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour --

for God did not permit all to come in a few moments. No, He will have it made most plain. He would have the awful consequence of neglecting the word of the Lord in prayer. He would have a total humiliation of His servant; and so it was, for now it is bitter aggravation that, although, of course, conscience must have been at work, he must have known perfectly the sin against his Master, and the lie, as a mere question of morality.

> And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest {Luke 22:59}.

Oh, beloved friends, what are we apart from Christ? The worth of every Christian is just the measure in which he has Christ, practically, as his life. I am not now speaking of a person being brought to heaven by blood. No doubt the two things go together; but I do say that all that is precious in a saint of God -- all that one can speak of as giving pleasure and satisfaction—is that which gives pleasure and satisfaction to God. And we must remember this. It is no question of character: you cannot trust flesh. Character you may count upon in a man of the world, but never trust it in a Christian. God will not allow character to reap the praise. God will not sustain a person according to his character. Who would have expected this from Peter? Peter may never have been guilty of anything of the kind in his life, even about the common transactions of the world, or about other persons. It is quite evident, from what we see of him in his ordinary ways, that Peter was in no way a man of deceitful character. If one looks at Rebecca, one is not surprised that the sister of Laban should be full of her plans and tricks and ways. And one is not surprised, again, that Jacob should savor of the family character. One sees that there were ways that were unworthy, bearing a most suspicious resemblance to his mother. Well, there, I say, it is his natural character; but not so with Peter; and I think that these two things are of great importance; that is, that natural character has a great deal to do where it is a question of the enemy, but natural character is a very small thing with the Spirit of God.

Now, there is an immense comfort in this, because, supposing I know that my natural character fails in this way or that, there is a ground to take care; there is a ground where I have got peculiarly to watch it. On the other hand, there is the greatest comfort in knowing that, whatever may be one's failure, what Christ has formed is not merely a question of developing one's character, or patching up what is wrong. It is the forming what is entirely new. It is the new man that the Spirit of God is occupied in bringing out, and in exercising according to the will and word of God. And, hence, therefore, whatever might have been one's defects, whatever might be the horrible evil of one's nature -- I am speaking now of that which one may painfully know in one's natural character -- it has nothing at all to do with the Spirit of God. He is above it. He is sovereign. He forms what is utterly wanting, and makes a person remarkable for the very opposite of what he is naturally; so that, you see, one gets a double advantage in this way—all the comfort of what grace can do on the one hand, and all the profit of the humiliation of what we feel ourselves to be, and what exposes us to the enemy.

Well, then, there is another thing, and that is that, when a man is a Christian, one never can tell what Satan will try, where one is unwatchful to drag one down in the last thing that could be expected. There you cannot predict, but this you may safely predict -- that Satan will throw a person down in the very thing in which he thinks it impossible. There never was a man that had greater confidence that day than Peter -- that it was impossible for him to deny his Master. His Master had told him that he was to do it, and solemnly warned him. He did not believe Him; therefore, he fell. And, not believing Him, he did not pray -- *there* was another thing, and the outer failure is always the manifestation of the inward one. Everything that is blessed in the Christian is the fruit of prayer with God in secret. I am speaking now not, of course, of how souls are brought to God: I am speaking of the way in which God manifests the traits of grace in those that are His. Hence the all-importance of the word of God and prayer. In these very particulars Peter had broken down.

But mark, now, the beginning of his restoration. We have seen his fall. I have now a happier task -- to trace the ways of grace in restoring the soul of Peter.

> The Lord turned and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord {Luke 22:61};

for it is always the point of failure that is taken up, and the first part of Peter's failure was that he slighted the word of the Lord. He really did not believe Him about himself and about his danger, although he did believe in Him as to His own glory, and had given various proofs of his faith in Him, but he did not believe in Him practically, that is, as to his own peril at that moment. Now he realized what a fool he had been. Now he realized, in a little measure -- for it was not anything like complete -- how profound the sin and shame that he had put upon the Lord Jesus.

> And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly {Luke 22:61, 62}.

It was repentance, but it was only the beginning of repentance; for repentance, beloved brethren, does not merely mean sorrow, however genuine, for one's sin. Repentance, in a Christian particularly, goes a great deal more deeply into the

matter, and we shall find that the Lord, in his very love to Peter, would have it deep. He meant it to be a work never to be forgotten. He meant the fruit of this to appear by His own grace. He meant other souls to be blest; for what cannot grace do? Out of the eater, as we know, comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness. That is, grace is always sovereign, always free. Hence the Lord delights at just the very last moment when we could expect it. But what you expect is not grace. Grace is always above any inference that can be drawn, except, indeed this -- if I have learned what God is, I have learned, it may be, to infer that God must always act worthily of Himself.

Well, I do not call that, of course, mere reason. Reasoning is the other way. The reasoning of man is from himself -- it may be to God -- and hence it is always wrong. The true way of reasoning is from God to man, and not from man to God. Well, this is just exactly where we fail; but, grace being in God, one ought to start from this, as a believer -- that God will always prove that He is never overcome with evil. Why, He calls us not to be. He says,

> Be ye not overcome with evil, But overcome evil with good.

That is what He does Himself. That is what He is always doing as the God of all grace. And so now the Lord looks out of this spirit of grace. I quite admit that there is nothing which judges sin so severely as grace. There is nothing which produces such deep shame before God. There is nothing which makes the vilest see all his failure -- his denial (for really it was that) -- his denial of the Lord Jesus. What a Lord to deny! What a Savior He was! What love was in that look, but, at the same time, what grief! And grief over whom? For Himself? Over Peter -- Peter. The love of the Lord, as well as the sense, no doubt, of the sin, filled Peter's heart. There was more to be done still, but that will follow.

John 20, 21

Now I turn, then, from this to the Gospel of John, where we have the further dealings of the Lord as to Peter, and the completeness of the work in the soul. We see Peter on the resurrection day -- the resurrection morning.

> The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

What was the effect of this upon Peter?

> Peter, therefore, went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre {John 20:3, 4}.

But he did not first enter in. There was a need in Peter's heart which at that moment carried him farther than even the affection of John; for, although John came first to the sepulchre and stooped down, and, looking, saw the linen clothes lying, he did not go in. But

> Simon Peter cometh, following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw [84] and believed.

Again, our souls may well admire the grace that tells such a story -- not to his own credit, "for as yet," saith he, "they knew not the scripture that he must rise again from the dead." They believed the fact, but they knew not the scripture. It was not a truth to them, bound up with God's character and God's word. It was a fact. They saw that the Lord was risen, but the connection of the resurrection with God's glory and with their own deliverance did not yet cross their minds. "Then the disciples went away again unto their own home." Not so Mary. But I do not pursue her story. My subject is Peter.

Well, now, what I should draw from the story that is brought before us here, more particularly followed up by what is mentioned in the last chapter of the Gospel of Mark, is this. Peter was a true man. He knew that he had dishonored the Lord, but the first impulse of his heart was to see the Lord. But was that all? It was the grace of the Lord's heart to see Peter. The Spirit of God was truly at work in Peter in this desire to see the Lord, even if he were alone to see the Lord. He wished to have it all out with the Lord, but the Lord wished it too, and wished it for Peter's sake; for there is nothing that would more damage a soul than an unsettled question between it and the Lord. Hence, in the Gospel of Mark we are told that the Lord said, when He gave the word to the women—or rather the angel speaking for the Lord --

> Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee.

Why Peter? Why is he the only one that is named? Because he was the one that most needed it. Love always goes out most where there is need most. "Tell his disciples *and Peter*."

What a joy to Peter's heart that it should be so, in spite of his scandalous and his repeated lying -- for indeed it was most shameful. It was not simply a failure to confess; it was a denial of his Master, and this repeatedly; and remember,this was only a very short time afterwards. He experienced how infinitely the ways of the Lord are above ours. Could we have thought such a thing possible? Just conceive it now. Conceive a person guilty of a flagrant act, and a public one, too, and a repeated one. How slow any of us would be to think that such a person could possibly be a believer. And this is an apostle; and did not that make it a great deal worse? Even the law always laid it down as a principle that the sin of the ruler was a more serious thing, and could not be dealt with as the sin of one of the people generally. There was always that which required a deeper purgation before God; and so the very fact of Peter's being so specially honored would to us have been so

84. {The Greek word for "saw" means to see with comprehension."

much the greater shame and evil. But to the Lord it was an opportunity for judging it thoroughly out of fulness of His grace. He was to be a strengthener of others, and this, too, as he had not learned what it was in secret with the Lord. Now he must learn by his own public sin, but where sin abounded grace did much more abound; and, unless it be the apostle Paul, where was there such a preacher of grace as the apostle Peter?

Now turn again from this to the fifteenth of 1 Cor. -- for I must just refer to that for a moment. The proofs must be taken from different parts of scripture. We know that the Lord did appear to Peter. Indeed, we need not leave the Gospels. The 24th of Luke shows the very same thing; for when the two disciples came in from Emmaus, and reported to the assembled disciples in Jerusalem that the Lord had spoken to them by the way, what are they told?

> They found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared *to Simon*. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread {Luke 24:34, 35}.

But He had appeared to Simon; and, you will mark, to Simon alone. Now I do see unspeakable grace in our Lord in that it was not only an angel that gives the comforting word, "Tell his disciples and Simon Peter," but here is the fact that the Lord met Peter alone. I am not aware that He met anybody else alone. He met two disciples. I am not speaking of Mary Magdalene, of course, when He sent the message, but as far as the eleven were concerned I am not aware of His appearing to any one of them alone except Peter. Why so? Because He felt for the heart of the disciple. He felt that there would be a burden, that there would be a cloud, and He would remove it. He had given the certainty that there was nothing between Him and Peter, so that Peter might have nothing between his heart and the Lord. That was His object, and this, too, He accomplished in this very way -- he appeared to Simon.

Well, then, we find a further step in the twenty-first chapter.

> Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

Now, I do not say that the work was very deep. It was real, but there was a want of depth.

> Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee {John 21:3}.

The ways of one who has a pre-eminent place, and his words too, are surely of great moment to us here. How readily saints fall in with the word of any one who takes the lead!

> They went forth and entered into a ship immediately, and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore.

He turns this to his own account.

> But the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord --

always prompt of action --

> he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three; and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken {John 21}.

Now I have no doubt that all this was a typical scene -- that it was in direct connection with the wonderful effects of the work of the Lord in a day that is coming, but not yet come -- that, in short, it is the picture of the millennial scene when there will be no failure whatever as far as the work of God is concerned. There will be failure in man outside, but not as far as the work of God is concerned. It will be one of the peculiar characteristics of that day. And so, you observe, for all the great catch of fish the net is not broken. It is in contrast with the picture of the work now, and with that which had been said to Peter. You may remember that, in the Gospel of Luke, there is the picture of Peter and the rest called to be fishers of men. Well no doubt they catch fish and plenty of them; but the nets are broken, whereas in that day there will be nothing of the kind; there will be no breach. The work of God will be fully accomplished, not merely grace overruling as now, not merely God doing it as far as His own secret purpose is concerned. I am speaking now of the public work in the world. Well, that will be an immense change, but there is another thing that comes before us here of more importance for my present purpose, and that is, the dealings of God still more fully pursued with Peter's soul -- the restoring dealings of the Lord.

> When they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? {John 21:15).

Now that was a very searching question. It told the whole tale.

> Lovest thou me more than these?

That was the root of his falling. Peter did not give the other disciples credit for being willing to go to prison and to death for Jesus' sake; but he believed himself. He was confident that he loved the Lord as nobody else did, and now the Lord turns upon Peter. He had carried the work on in his soul. He had looked upon him and sent him out to weep when he remembered the word. He had seen him alone, but now He would carry on the work at the same time that He would

publicly reinstate His servant; for the very point here was that, while the work was carried on more deeply than in others, it was in presence of others, that they might know the entire restoration of communion between Peter and the Lord -- nay, more than that, that they might know the confidence which the Lord reposed in Peter now. He had never done it before. He had never entrusted his sheep to Peter before. Oh, what grace! The very time when men would have said, "Never trust Peter again! A man that has so denied the Lord -- he may be a saint! I hope he will get to heaven -- but never you trust that man! Why, did any one ever hear of such flagrant, repeated denial?" Well now, you see the Lord does it all before them, and the first question really probed the heart, though He carries it still deeper every time. "Simon, son of Jonas," for that was the point -- he trusted himself

> lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

What does the Lord say?

> He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time {John 21:16}.

Peter had denied Him thrice, and it is in the most pointed reference to this that He puts it the third time; yet Peter did not feel how deeply the Lord was going, for He had not alluded to his denial; but now he understands. He thought it was all settled, but the Lord would have it settled not only publicly, but divinely. And you see here was the thing that was wanting. He had judged his failure, but had he got to the cause of the failure? Had he detected the root of it? I do not believe he had. We may be very, very grieved because of our sin, and feel it deeply before God; but have we really reached what exposed us to sin? What was it in Peter? His confidence in his own loving the Lord -- that he could go where nobody else could -- that he loved the Lord more than any one -- more than these.

Well now, you see he feels that the Lord was alluding to his threefold denial.

> Peter was grieved, because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee {John 21:17}.

How humiliating! Peter is reduced to cast himself upon the Lord's perfect knowledge -- what the Lord Himself knew. Everybody else in the world would have said that Peter could not have loved the Lord to deny Him so, and that unless the Lord knew to the bottom of his heart he could not have given him credit for love.

> Lord, thou knowest all things {John 21:17}.

Oh, beloved friends, what a comfort it is to have to do with One that knows all things, and, in consequence of knowing all, can see a love that nobody else could see -- can give credit to that which all appearances might contradict; so that, instead of the Lord's perfect knowledge of all being a thing that we have need to be afraid of, it is the very thing that is in our favor where there is reality; and there was reality in Peter. It was not that there was any question of love: the failure was not there. It was not that there was not love, but that he considered that his love would preserve him in the hour of danger. It never does -- nothing does but the self-judgment that comes out in prayer to God and in total distrust of self before God. It is not, therefore, the protective power of the love of Christ that keeps people. There must be that, but there is more than that wanted, and the more than that is the very last thing that a man lacks: it is to believe his own badness, to believe that he is such a poor, weak, unworthy creature; and Peter had never got a deep sense of it before. Now it is brought to him. "Lord, I admit that all the rest would say that I do not love you a bit, but you know everything to the bottom of my heart, and you know, after all, that it requires divine knowledge to know that I love Thee." Not a word now of loving more than anybody else. That was furthest from Peter's heart. You may depend that he never said it again, never thought it again. I do not mean that he did not fall in other ways, but he was thoroughly broken, at any rate, in this conceit of himself. "Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

Now you see there is a distinct word of the Lord, for it is not merely that the Lord was thus bringing Peter to judge the root of the evil that had exposed him to fall, but the Lord was now reposing public confidence in Peter -- in His servant -- for the work that He was about to open to him. He was about to have a very special charge, and I suppose that the sheep which are referred to here refer rather to the Jewish ones. It would seem so from the context and from the fact. We know that the circumcision were handed over to Peter, as the uncircumcision to Paul; and it would appear that this is what the Lord refers to here. At the present time you must rememberthe only sheep that were accredited were the sheep that were there. Others no doubt there were, but that does not seem to enter into the special line of this part of the Gospel of John.

However, that may not be of so much importance. The great thing I wish to press is the evidence that scripture gives us here of God, in His wonderful way, restoring our souls fully only when we have got at that which exposed us to sin, and not merely the sin itself. This is of so practical a nature that I must dwell upon it, therefore, at more than usual length. But it is not all, for the Lord, when He restores, always restores what was not taken away -- gives more than was ever possessed.

Now there was one thing in which Peter had expressed his confidence -- that is, to go to death or judgment or prison -- anything for the Lord. Well now, the Lord takes this up.

> Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me {John 21:18, 19}.

Thus then, I think, we have the unspeakable grace of our Lord Jesus Christ meeting the desire of Peter's heart. He had done wonderful things for him already, when He committed what was most precious to the man that had failed so publicly and so repeatedly; but He goes farther. Had not Peter desired to follow the Lord to prison and to death? Certainly. "Well now," says the Lord, "I will give you all the desire of your heart." And look at the Lord's way! Look at the way of grace When he was comparatively young he failed. When there was all the fervor and impetuosity, I must add, of his natural character, he completely broke down. The Lord puts no honor upon that; rather the contrary. He must bring it to nothing. It is what flesh would glory in. "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." And so the Lord gives him good ground for it, for He tells him,

> When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands.

It was not only that he was to die, but,

> This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God.

Peter was to have his wish gratified to the very fullest. Peter was to suffer like his Master. I am not referring now to the tradition. I do not know whether there is any truth in his being crucified with his head downwards. Scripture says nothing of that kind. We are told so. It is a pretty story, and that is all one can say about it. It may be true; it is more likely to be false. You never can trust the stories of men in the things of God. I have never known a true story told by men in what concerns God, and where the spirit of man reigns. There is a fatality of error of the most extraordinary kind in the old ecclesiastical historians that touch upon these matters. Why, they cannot even tell correctly what is in the Bible, still less what is not. I say, therefore, that I do not believe that these stories are to be trusted. But this is to be trusted: he is to die like his Master, at any rate. He is to be crucified, so that the Lord would not only give him then to be led away a prisoner, but to suffer upon the cross. Peter would have what he desired, and more than he desired; but he would have it in pure grace; there was no strength. He would have it given him by the Lord; nay, farther than that, to "glorify God." No longer Peter's love; no longer glorifying Peter in any way. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

I do not know, then, beloved friends, a more touching proof of the way in which grace not only restores, but triumphs. And, remember, that is the measure for us. We are put in this wonderful place of glorifying God. Is that only for Peter? Nay, for all the redeemed. "We are bought with a price"; therefore, he says, "glorify God in your body" {1 Cor. 6}. So it was in Peter's case. It was not the cheap and easy way of thinking that it is a mere matter of feeling. It is all-important that our affections should be right, but God does give opportunities that the feeling shall be a manifested one. God does give opportunities that the heart shall have its desire. Where we have wrong desires, it is the greatest mercy of God that He crosses them, but when we have a holy desire, though it may be taken up in a spirit Of self-confidence, and comes to nought for the time, yet what is divine always survives. This is what we find here. Peter, when he was broken, therefore, in all his own power, finds the power of God strengthening him even beyond what he had thought, for I do not suppose that when Peter spoke about following the Lord to prison and to death he thought of the death of the cross. None of them could say that till the cross came. They never contemplated such a thing as their Master suffering so, although the Lord had intimated it. But it is astonishing how the disciples forgot the word of the Lord, and how little impression it made. Are you surprised at that? You ought to know it from yourselves. I ought to know it from myself, and I do know it too well -- how we slur over the word of God, how we are caught continually in the midst of a chapter that we have read ever so often and never understood before -- expressions, even those that we have cited, it may be, and used; and yet suddenly the light of God shines through them. Well, how is this, beloved friends? Why, it is just because there has been a hindrance in self. There has been something of our own that has been an obstruction to the Spirit of God, but God brings down the self and causes the light and grace of Christ to shine, and all is clear.

And now, beloved friends, I have desired to help you to follow to the end all the dealings of God with Peter in the Gospels. If the Lord will, perhaps there may be another opportunity of tracing him in the Acts of the Apostles, or the Epistles of Peter; but I do not hope for that just now. May the Lord bless what we have said. May He give us more simplicity to read that we may understand; for simplicity, after all, is exactly what the deepest understanding brings us to. If we are growing rightly, we are growing more simple. I am sure, beloved friends, that that is the true lesson for all our souls -- to appreciate the word and to apply it, to learn how to use it, not only for others, but for our own souls.

But mark another thing which is very interesting. Although Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost, although he spoke with this most convincing power, they could see that he was an unlearned man. Inspiration did not give the appearance of learning. Inspiration gave divine power and kept perfectly from error, but it did not hinder the character, the style, of the man who was inspired. This is of immense importance to us, because unbelief builds a great deal upon a certain style. For instance, you find the style of James, you find the style of Peter, you find the style of Paul. To be sure we do, and that is the perfection of inspiration. Inspiration does not mean God speaking to men. Inspiration means God speaking by man to men, and therefore you see that it is not only that you have God speaking, but you have God speaking by the man, and the man gives his own style to the word of God that is spoken. It is never called the word of man; it is the word of God, but still it is the word of God by man, passing through a human mind, a human heart, and a human mouth, it may be, to men.

Well, accordingly, there is a certain style which is impressed upon the word of God, only the Spirit of God takes care that there shall be no error; and so it was upon that day. They saw the boldness of these men, but further, they perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men. It was not that they were ignorant of the truth. They were ignorant

themselves. It was not that they were unlearned in the Scriptures. It was Caiaphas and Annas and these others who were unlearned in the Scriptures; but still, judged by the mere standard of education or letters among men, undoubtedly Peter and John were ignorant and unlearned men; and their being filled with the Holy Ghost, I repeat, did not in the least set this aside. It did what was infinitely better. It showed the power and the grace of God, so to speak, made perfect in weakness. It showed that, although there was this ignorance and want of learning after a human sort, there was what manifested the Holy Ghost; and they were being used with divine power both, for the blessing of the believer and for the conviction of the conscience of the unbeliever. "So they marvelled," it is said, "and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus" {Acts 4:13}.

But then there is another thing. There, was the very man that had been made strong, and they could not get rid of this evidence. They had him before them, but he was there who was the witness of the power of God. "Beholding the man that was healed standing with them they could say nothing against it." You see it is not ignorance which is the terrible and damning thing in men's hearts. It is will that desires to expel the testimony of God, the grace of God, and the power of God, if they could, out of God's own world. That was their case, then. But God made them feel it.

"When they had, therefore, commanded them to go aside, they conferred among themselves." And they let out their conviction of the fact. There was no doubt of the miracle, "but that it spread no farther let us straitly threaten them." So we see the blindness of unbelief following, for how absurd to suppose that God had wrought in this way, and that it should be kept hidden, or that the persons who were the instruments of the power of God should conceal such a thing, or that that power was not to work in other ways similarly.

> Let us straitly threaten them that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach, in the name of Jesus {Acts 4:17}.

But this only brings out the divinely given courage and wisdom of the servants of God, for "Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God." What a position! And these were the servants of God! These men claimed to have God's own authority in the world.

> Whether it he right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God {Acts 4:19}

-- that is what it came to

> judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

All that then remained was to threaten them further, and to let them go. And when they did go we find a new thing. They went to "their own company," and there it is for the first time that anything of that kind is mentioned in Scripture. And it is a very important truth, too, that now Christians had their own company. Before the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, there was nothing of the sort. Their own company would have been the Jews. Now there was their own company separate from the Jews, and the people who were most opposed, most hostile, to their company were the Jews; so it was clear that God had wrought in some entirely new way on the earth. He had given a new relationship, new affections. What was the center of this? Christ; that was what made the difference. Jesus, the rejected Jesus, the exalted Christ.

There, however, they find themselves, and they raise their voices to God with one accord, saying,

> Lord, thou art God which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things {Acts 4:24}.

They applied the 2nd Psalm.

> And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word.

And so they did. After that they had prayed there was an answer given of the most conspicuous kind.

> The place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they spake the word of God with boldness {Acts 4:31}.

You must distinguish, therefore, between the gift of the Holy Ghost and the filling with the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy Ghost, once given, was for ever given. The filling of the Holy Ghost depends upon circumstances, and upon this circumstance above all others -- that nature is denied any place practically. When that is the case the Holy Ghost fills the soul that is emptied enough of self to look to God to fill it. It is our own thoughts, our own will at work, that hinders our being filled with the Holy Ghost. But now here they had learned how completely it was a question of God and of God's grace; for what were they? And yet they could see now what were the high priests, what was all Israel. Enemies of God; enemies of Jesus! They therefore felt how Christ was everything to them, and the consequence is that they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. That was the effect of it.

> And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul {Acts 4:32}.

There seems to be a fresh impetus given to all those spiritual affections that had been found even before. There was a fresh start.

> Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of land sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need {Acts 4:32-35}.

There was a remarkable form that the grace took as an

outward sign. It is in the very thing which a Jew would have been as unlikely a man as any in the world to part with, for the Jew certainly has never been considered remarkable for this kind of readiness to lay down all that he has in the world. But that was exactly what the Spirit of God wrought within them. He had come to give men another being, another relationship, and that was the effect of it. The earth was nothing and the things on the earth were nothing.

And you must remember, along with this having things in common, that all the Christians in the world were there together in that one city. When God extended the testimony to other cities we never find anything of the sort. There never was what was commonly called community of goods when God began to work in the cities of Judaea, and still more among the Gentiles. It is when they were all in Jerusalem. We all understand it. They were a family; they felt that they were one family; but when it came to God's working here and working there it is clear that the day for community of goods was passed, and so there was a modification entirely of this remarkable display of the grace of God when the testimony extended to other places. Otherwise it would have been mere independency.

Now, there is no principle more opposed to the church of God than what is commonly called "independency" and "congregationalism." Nothing. There is no one thing more opposed to it, because the having, in our own little circle, that which is the boundary of our affections and our duties cramps the church of God and hinders our sense of oneness, which is the essential truth of the word of God. There is "one body" all over the earth. We see therefore that, while the members of that one body were all in the one city, a state of things was suitable in the hands of the Spirit of God which was quite unsuited when Christianity became propagated and found in other places also. I make that remark because it chews the great folly of those that think, "Oh, how nice a thing it would be to have community of goods now." The same kind of thing has entered into the heads of people at various times. It is true that they have carried it out in a very imperfect manner. There is another thing, too, that ruins it, and that is, making a law of it. Now there was no law in Jerusalem. Nobody asked them. It was a thing spontaneously done, and it was done, too, only by those who really had faith to do it. And it was there that Satan hindered. He put it into the heart of a man and a woman there to pretend to give up all their goods when they did not do. so. And the story of this is the next thing that comes before us.

We have seen the hostile power of the world, and the world was defeated, but now we have to face another thing. Evil creeps into the church. But is there not power to meet it? There was ample power then, and so it was that the moment it appeared it was met by the superior power of the Holy Ghost. That is what I am going to show you as the great feature of the fifth chapter of the Acts. It is power of every variety meeting the effort of the devil to hurt the church of God. Now the first and most serious thing of all was the corrupting of some that bare the name of the Lord. And what showed the serious character of it was this: it was not merely an impulse, it was an agreement. It was deliberate deceit, and it was deliberate deceit of the very worst kind, because it was deliberate deceit to get the credit of superior grace without reality. This is what comes out, then. A certain man named Ananias -- and this is confronted with what particularly marked a good man just before, Barnabas, that son of consolation -- that man who in word and deed comforted so many desolate hearts -- and a Levite too. No doubt things were only confused, too, because it was a strange thing that a Levite should possess lands and houses. And no doubt he felt it; and accordingly it was such a happy opportunity to lay them down for Him who had died for him; to lay them down for those who were dear to Him. And so he did. He brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

> But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it {Acts 5:1}.

They had time, therefore, to think what they were about. They were perfectly aware. It was no sudden impulse; it was a design. Just as if God were not looking upon it and quite aware! God was there; not now merely God in heaven, and not merely God in a vague way upon the earth, but God come down in special grace in the person of the Holy Ghost, to take His place with His people here below. It was an entirely new thing. It was not merely the vague sense of God delivering earth, but there was the dwelling of God -- the special dwelling of God -- in the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, who had now come and made the church His dwelling-place. So this aggravated the devil.

> Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? {Acts 5:3}.

I will make this remark, which I think to be one of practical moment, that all sin now, properly speaking, is sin against the Holy Ghost. I know there are many people who are dreadfully afraid of that term -- "sin against the Holy Ghost." They very often think and fear that they have sinned against the Holy Ghost. The fact is that every sin which a Christian commits is sin against the Holy Ghost -- every sin. You will tell me, then, what a dreadful case that makes out. It is a very serious thing, but what you probably have got in your own minds is not sin against the Holy Ghost, but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Now the moment that you distinguish between sin and blasphemy it at once delivers you from a great deal of uneasiness which has no foundation whatever. What is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is the sin of a man that not only gives way to utter unbelief, rejects Christ, rejects the gospel, but imputes it all to the devil, imputes it to Beelzebub, that is, denies the Holy Ghost to have His part in that which is all part of that wonderful working of the spirit of grace founded upon redemption in our Lord Jesus Christ. If I impute the word of God -- because it is all a part of the same great system of divine grace which He has now wrought in Christianity -- if I impute the word of God to the devil it is clear that I am given up to the most hateful and abominable rebellion against God, and therefore it is plain that I am destroying all possibility of salvation for my soul. This is what people forget

to be that which is meant by blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and it is plain that persons who are so found are lost. It is plain that they cannot be forgiven.

But this is clearly the last result of unbelief, and never can be found in a Christian person or anything like it. A person may be troubled with bad thoughts; that is another thing altogether. But these people were people that were not troubled at all. They were people that gloried in their wickedness; gloried in it; had no conscience about it whatever. They had got fully hardened and seared by Satan. I repeat that no sin now is what it was to a Jew. A Jew's sin was sin against the law. It was transgression of the law. But that does not define a Christian's sin. A Christian's sin is sin against the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost has taken up His abode in the Christian, and, consequently, whatever sin he does is a disrespect to and a grief to the Holy Ghost. Hence a lie now is not merely a lie. In this case it was a very formal and deliberate one. Peter, therefore, brings out that which made its character to be awful: it was a lie against the Holy Ghost.

> To lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep back part of the price of the land {Acts 5:3}.

And the consequence is that he laid this upon him -- that it was not to man he lied, but to God. God was there, and he had acted as if God was not there. So Ananias, on hearing these words, expires, and great fear came upon all.

What added to it was this: the wife came in not long after. The young men, in fact, had only returned from burying the husband when the woman came in, not knowing what was done, about three hours after; and Peter said to her,

> Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. So she fell down also, and great fear came upon all the church {Acts 5:8-11}.

This is the first time, certainly, when the expression "the church" is applied. At the end of the second of Acts the occurrence of the word is doubtful. It is very probable that it is not correct there. In that place "the Lord added together," is the true reading. I make this remark because it will show the great importance of having as correct a translation of the Scriptures as possibly. I think that those who desire intelligence in the word of God ought to possess such a translation for their own private reading. I do not say that they should have it for use in the meetings, as the less said as to points of this kind, especially at a worship meeting or anything of that kind, the better; but I conceive that here I have the object and purpose of seeking to help the children of God to know the truth as much as possible, and therefore I do not- scruple to speak of this, though I do not like it. If we all had the truth of God presented to us in the correct and best form there would be no need to dwell upon these things, but, unfortunately, we have been accustomed to an imperfect translation, and consequently it is necessary to show, in certain cases, what is really the truth. In the second of Acts, then, the expression is, "The Lord added together such as should be saved." Those persons composed the church, but now He calls them the church. "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." It was not their own company -- those that were destined to salvation, going on in unbelief, and despising the testimony of God; but those that bowed to it, and had repented, and had believed the gospel. Now they were brought together, and by the Holy Ghost they formed this dwelling-place of God. They are called, therefore, the church.

"And upon as many as heard these things." It is evident the power of the testimony affected many outside.

> And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest dared no man join himself to them.

You see God guarded them, kept off those that ought not to be there. "But the people magnified them."

> And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women {Acts 5:14}.

They were not afraid of multitudes, you see; they rejoiced at it, and indeed I often marvel how those that love the saints of God seem to think that there is some peculiar virtue in what they call "twos and threes." Now do not misunderstand me. I think it is an exceeding mercy when God has only two or three, but I cannot sympathize with the feeling that prefers two or three to two or three hundred. I should have thought that love would have desired the best blessing upon the largest number, and that love would have desired that those who are as dear to the Lord as ourselves should not be wandering about like poor sheep without a shepherd in all kinds of sorrow and trouble. Do you think that we are the happier because other people are strangers? Do you think it is a Christian feeling to desire that we should have a little less trial? No, I believe not. I believe that love likes the trial of those that it loves; that love has pleasure in bearing and forbearing. It may be tried at a time, of course, for we are poor and imperfect creatures; but still there is something very sweet in sharing the sorrows of those that God loves and that we love; so that while we are thankful that there are two or three here and there, still I think we ought to rejoice more than all in that He not only saves, but gathers and puts in the true place. Do we think it is the true place, or do we think it is only the true place for ourselves? If so, then you are a sect at once; but if you believe that it is God's place then it is God's place for all God's children. We may not deign to use any improper means, or trouble ourselves because people do not come, for that is the Lord's matter; it is the Lord's great work, not merely ours. We are under Him; we are mere journeymen. He is the One that carries on the work. I say, then, we ought to rejoice the more that there is divine blessing whether in saving or gathering.

And so it was here. This multitude of men and women, I have no doubt, were a great comfort to those that had the feelings, the sympathies, the grace of the Lord, strong in their souls. And what is more, there was mighty power that accompanied it this time, and one remarkable fact which I do

not think is mentioned about any other person is that the shadow of Peter healed. Just think of that! We never heard of that about the Lord. We never heard that the Lord's shadow healed people. Perhaps you think that I am exalting man against the Lord. I am exalting the words of the Lord, who said,

> Ye shall do greater works than these, because I go to the Father {John 14:12}.

Now I say that that does exalt the Lord, and exalts Him particularly because people may have thought that the Lord was only, so to speak, like a great magnet that could affect only what was near it. Not at all. Because He went they did greater works than His. That is to say, it was the power of the Lord showing itself perfectly superior to everything of nature. Distance and time had nothing to do with it. It was Christ. [85]

And this, accordingly, fills the high priest and his party with great indignation. The more that grace and truth wrought, the more they hated; and they laid their hands again on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But as this is not very particularly said to have happened to Peter till the latter part of the chapter, I need not dwell upon it. Still he was one, but it is only in the latter part that he comes out distinctly.

They put them, then, in prison, but the Lord stretches out His hand. The Lord sends His angel, who opens the prison doors and brings them forth, saying,

> Go, stand and speak in the temple all the words of this life.

The effect of that is increasing boldness, for now it was made extremely simple. Before that, the apostles had acted on their confidence in the Lord's will, but now they had got the positive word of the Lord. It was not merely an instinctive consciousness of what He wished, but it was a certain, positive word. The Lord sent His angel and said, "Go and speak in the temple." The very place was given. "Go and speak in the temple all the words of this life" -- unrestricted testimony of what was needed by souls. "And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning." And quite right. "They entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest came and they that were with him." They met too. "But when the officers came, they found them not in the prison." And when they were troubled at hearing the tidings, one comes and tells them that the men whom they were seeking were standing in the temple and teaching the people. So they come and bring them before the council, who put the question,

> Did not we strictly command that ye should not teach in this name? and behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

Thus it was. There was the burden of a wretched and guilty conscience.

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said." Not now, "Judge *ye*." Now he judged. "We ought," says Peter, "to obey God rather than men." Now there is an uncompromising declaration of their obedience to the word of God.

> The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted at his right hand

-- (oh, how blessed) --

> to be a Prince and a Saviour

-- not a Prince and a Judge. That He will be by and by, but, meanwhile,

> a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things {Acts 5:31}.

But there was another witness. "So is also the Holy Ghost." I draw your attention to the manner in which the Holy Ghost is spoken of as a living divine person that was there, not merely in them, but with them. So is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him. So they were exceedingly wounded with this, and they were only stopped from violence -- from the last act, I mean, of violence -- by Gamaliel, the teacher of Paul, a remarkable man who at any rate speaks the words of sobriety.

I would just rehearse in a few words the substance of the chapter. Here you see we have divine power in the church -- the Holy Ghost adequate to all evil. The offenders fell dead on the spot. We have providential power in the angels, superior to the power of the world. And here we have God's indirect working by men in the world to arrest what was contrary to His will. Thus, you see, there need be no fear whatever where the church walks in the fear of what is unseen. God guards, God acts. This is what we have to build upon and go forward with. We need not be in the least afraid. God has His Gamaliels now, as He had then, in the midst of wicked people, surely, and although there he not a putting forth of the same kind of miraculous power as we find in the angel's opening of the prison doors, still God knows how to do a similar kind of thing and to bring about the same result in a way suitable to the present state of His testimony. But, above all, there is the exceeding comfort that the highest and deepest of that power is ours now, as surely as then -- the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church of God.

I need not dwell upon what follows. I shall pass over it, and say only a few words upon another scene. We need not speak of the choice of the seven men. Peter is not particularly mentioned. Still less need we speak of Stephen's discourse. Now a new witness comes forth. I may observe, therefore, that the title of this book is clearly a mistake. It is not the acts of "The Apostles." It is the acts more particularly of two great

85. {It is a grave mistake to think that by greater works the Lord referred to many people being born again. "Works" means works of power, i.e, miracles. The new birth is not reckoned in Scripture as a miracle. Nor is there such thing as continuous miracles. All "saints" are born again, from Adam to the last one in the millennium. The exalted Christ was the source of these miracles, by the power of the Spirit sent down at Pentecost. Mark 16:19, 20 shows that the exalted Christ was still serving, working with the disciples and confirming the Word by signs, i.e., by works of power. Connect Heb. 2:3, 4 with this. Thus, "greater works" than when our Lord was here on earth followed upon His exaltation in glory!}

apostles, and besides that of one of the deacons, as we see -- one of the seven men, quite as much as any of the apostles. Not even James figures as much as Stephen. I mention that, not as a criticism on the word of God. You must remember that the titles of the books are not inspired. Those titles that we read at the beginning -- as, for instance, "the Epistle of John," "the Epistle General of James" -- were not given by the Holy Spirit. That is merely what men have said. I make that remark because we are perfectly free to criticize what men have said, though we must always bow to what God has said. Therefore you see the book takes in more than the apostles, and by no means the acts of all the apostles.

But coming to the eighth chapter, we have a very special scene. I pass by Philip's work. We have a good deal that he did. It is not merely Stephen, but Philip also, who was another of the seven men, and Philip was a true evangelist, and, what is more, too, Philip had not lost his place of evangelist when we find him very late in the book of Acts. That is an important hint that those who begin as evangelists should not lose that place later, and should not grow weary of the work, or give it up for another. Philip is still called an evangelist later on. Indeed, it is then particularly that he gets the name. Well now he is evangelizing, and great was the blessing. Why, whole towns of Samaria were won by the gospel. What had never been done by any of the prophets -- what had never been done by the twelve apostles when they went forth during our Lord's ministry, or by the seventy -- was now done by that one, single-handed, and yet Philip had been set apart by the laying on of hands merely to take care of the tables and to look after the poor in Jerusalem. But God called him to another work, and this was his work. Indeed, it was a great time of evangelizing. The church scattered abroad are preaching, and the Lord was with them.

Philip was peculiarly blest, and he baptized. I observe that he baptized men and women. We do not hear of his baptizing others, but he baptized men and women, and we do not read farther.

We read of another thing, for certain, and that is that the Holy Ghost was not yet given. Now that was very striking -- men converted, men baptized, but not yet having received the Holy Ghost. What a mistake to confound the gift of the Holy Ghost with their being born of the Spirit. I do not know anything of more consequence in its place to note than that fact. There was the very reason why the Holy Ghost was not given them. Samaria had always been a kind of rival of Jerusalem, and if they had got the Holy Ghost apart from the heads of the work in Jerusalem they might have tended to become independent and to say that they were just as good as the church in Jerusalem. We know very well that that is a sufficiently ready tendency, spite of the plain word of God against it. God will make known fully that it is one body and one Spirit; and so when the church at Jerusalem heard of this mighty work at Samaria they sent down Peter and John -- two of the most honored men there -- and when they came, they prayed, and the Holy Ghost was given. There was a reason as we see, therefore, for that peculiar act. In other cases there was nothing of the kind. There was no laying on of hands or praying on the day of Pentecost. There was down at Samaria.

Well, but another thing occurred. There was a man that Philip had baptized, and when he saw the Holy Ghost given he offered money. There was nothing that he valued so much as money, except that it was to gain influence in order to gain more money. So he thought he would give a little to get more, and he considers that, because he valued money, so would Peter. But that very thing detected the state of his soul, and that which Philip had failed to find out, Peter saw at once. But you observe that it was not any special power. You must not confound what is called the discerning of spirits with this. The discerning of spirits has to do with detecting bad doctrine -- what is taught. But Peter waited till the conduct of the man and the language of the man showed that he had no part or lot in Christ; and accordingly here we find him, then, betrayed, and the apostle pronounces the most solemn judgment -- I conceive even more solemn than that which befell Ananias and Sapphira. Ananias and Sapphira were judged in this world; it was "sin unto death" {1 John 5:16}.

Simon Magus was judged for eternity. Simon Magus was judged in terms that left no hope for his soul at that moment. I do not say that God might not interfere afterwards. He, at any rate, asked them to pray for him, but it is quite evident that he had no confidence in God. It is not a question of looking to God about his soul. He looked to them, and you will find, often, that people who have no confidence in God have great confidence in the prayers of God's servants. It is a common thing in unconverted people. They have not confidence in Christ, but they would have a great deal of confidence in your praying for them. That, you see, finds its example in these early days.

I need not, then, do more than just glance at another thing, and that is that Peter has been found in an active testimony at the end of the ninth chapter, where he raises a dead person and heals a sick man, and is most diligent in visiting the saints. But the next opportunity will afford me occasion for bringing out a still more wonderful account that the Holy Ghost has given us of that which was allotted to this blest servant of the Lord.

Acts 10

The occasion that claims our attention first tonight is one of the deepest possible moment. It is not merely that God had abandoned His ancient people as the seat of His power -- that He had done hundreds of years before. There is a further step, and a great one, in the development of God's ways; for the call still remained to this people, but now henceforward the call is going out to the Gentiles. It is not merely power. One can understand power being vested in a people that were altogether unworthy. Power does not necessarily suppose conversion -- does not suppose the communion of the mind of God. Power might be given sovereignly. Power might he employed by one who was wholly alien to the thoughts of God, though God might be making use of him. As we are told, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." We know, therefore, that God

is able to use anything for His purpose; but it was a very different thing when the call of grace was going from the Jews, the favored people of God. And going out to whom? To the dogs of the Gentiles. For so they had ever been regarded; they were "sinners of the Gentiles," even to put it in the mildest possible form. They were those who had, from the beginning, from the earliest days, from the flood, grown old in idolatry of every form; and now to these very Gentiles the call of God was about to go forth. The Lord had prepared Peter on the first great occasion when He distinguished him -- when He said to him, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." He did not say that only. He said, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

We must never confound the kingdom of heaven with the church. They are two totally distinct things. I do not deny that there may be links of connection between them, but they are distinct. The keys of the kingdom were used by Peter, or, at least, one key, if I may so express myself, on the day, of Pentecost, in opening the kingdom to the Jew in a far fuller manner than had ever been true before; and now that. same Peter, albeit the apostle of the circumcision, was the very one that God used in His own holy wisdom to open the door to others, that is to say, to the Gentiles. And God was pleased on this occasion also to make it very marked; for, though there was no question of any fitness on the part of the Gentile, and though it was pre-eminently to be grace, yet the one by whom God brought out the grace in all its fulness was Paul, himself a master of the law trained up under the most distinguished of the legal teachers.

Peter was used of God, first of all, to present the gospel to a very pious man -- a man of godly character and of good report, more particularly in Israel. And I think it was just as wise on God's part to bring in a godly man first -- a man that was evidently known as such by Peter -- as, on the other hand, to present the gospel by Paul to the very vilest and worst, wherever they might be found as, for instance, at Corinth. It was a question of stopping the mouths of the circumcision, and this, therefore, was done, and guarded too, remarkably, in sending Peter first of all to Cornelius. For we are told here that Cornelius, while the centurion of the band which was called the Italian band, was a devout man; and I do not believe that that means merely that he was a devout man after the flesh. Not only so, but he fasted, he feared God, and gave large alms, and prayed, and so on. He was a person that was known for his devotedness in various ways. He was one that had intercourse with God habitually.

Thus, you see, we learn that it was not strictly a question of conversion. The man was converted {i.e, born again} already. He was not a bit more converted after Peter went than before. We must never confound conversion with salvation. The two things may coalesce, but they may not; and in the case of Cornelius they most certainly did not. Cornelius may have been converted for years before, but then he could not say that he was saved. That was what he was brought into. He was brought in so that not only he should know that he was saved, but that all the others, too, should know that he was saved. That is, he was to be put openly and publicly by God's own work, and according to His will, on the same ground of known common salvation which the gospel had brought the believing Jew into, for we must always distinguish these two things.

There is often a haze in the minds of many persons on this very important matter; and I could not think that people are at all clear as to the gospel, and certainly not as compared with the Old Testament dealings with God, who do not see this difference. If one thinks merely of getting to heaven -- of being delivered from judgment -- well, it is evident that all the Old Testament saints were; but that is not what is called the salvation of the soul. "Receiving the end of your faith," says Peter, "the salvation of your souls." That means the soul consciously brought, as a present thing, to know that all is clear between God and it -- the soul knowing that sins are gone and righteousness come. Was that Isaiah could say in Old Testament times? Certainly not. All that you could say of an Old Testament soul was that he was hoping for righteousness: he was waiting for this salvation. But the salvation was not come, and the righteousness was only near, for it was not yet arrived. That was all that Isaiah could say, even in the prophetic spirit.

But there is a different thing now. Now, the Spirit of God is not a Spirit of prophecy, but a Spirit of communion -- not a Spirit of leading you to wait for a blessing which you have not got, but a Spirit of leading you into communion with that which you have -- that which God has now given you and has announced as your portion. That is salvation, and until a soul is brought there it is not scripturally just to say that that soul has got salvation in the true full sense of the term. If you merely mean that the person is quickened -- and that is what people do mean, and a most mischievous confusion it is -- if you merely mean that a soul may be quickened and be still full of anxieties, still tried, still unhappy, that is another question. This is not salvation. The person may be as truly born again as you; and indeed very often you might have more confidence in a person who is full of doubts than in many a person who seems never to know what doubt is. You might be afraid that such a person had never judged self, or learned what sin was, or had any adequate sense of the judgment of God; whereas, although it is a most unhappy state for a person to be in -- full of continual anxieties and questions about acceptance -- still there might he other things that would show a conscience towards God, earnestness of desire to serve Him, though there might be ignorance, no doubt, of His ways -- ignorance of this great deliverance -- of what scripture calls "salvation."

Now that was what Cornelius was brought into that day. It was not only salvation. The Jews on the day of Pentecost had been brought into salvation, for they had known nothing of that at all. Up till the accomplishment of redemption nobody knew salvation as a present thing. It could not be said of any one, and yet at the same time you would have no doubt of their eventual security. What people confound is future security with present salvation. Now they are not at all the same thing, and no amount of confidence about security is the same thing as the enjoyment of known present salvation. That was what Cornelius was brought into that day, and this is what

is characteristic of the gospel today, and therefore it is said, "The word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" {Eph. 1:12, 13}.

Hence, at once you find sealing. There was sealing with the Holy Spirit, because the seal of God comes upon those who enter into present salvation. What we find on this occasion was not merely the Spirit of God working in the soul of Cornelius -- there was much more. Cornelius, I repeat, was not a self-righteous man that was merely going through forms of religion. If Cornelius had died he would have gone where all the other saints had gone before him. There were saints among Jews, and saints among Gentiles, but there were none before Pentecost, even among Jews, that were brought into this salvation. And, on the other hand, there had been none up to this time among the Gentiles at all. Cornelius was the first. And God particularly took care that the man that was first brought should be a man that was of most excellent character -- prayerful. But still, had you asked him, "Are you saved, Cornelius?" he would have said, "Oh, I would not presume -- I would not dare -- to say such a thing." "But do you not know that God is giving salvation to His people? Do you not know the great work that is going on in Jerusalem?" "Oh, yes," he would say, "but that is for the people that have got the promise; that is for the people to whom God bound Himself. Now He has accomplished it; now He has given the Spirit according to prophecy. But then, for me, I am only a Gentile."

In short, he took what people sometimes call the place of the uncovenanted mercy of God. It was not at all that he doubted the mercy of God to his soul, but, as to present clearness, present consciousness of nearness to God, ne had no thought of it, did not know that God was about to bring His people, whether Jews or Gentiles, on to this common ground. He knew it for the Jews. For Peter, in his preaching to him, alludes to the peace that was being preached to the Jews. It was not that he doubted that. But is it for the Gentile? He learns that it was. And God made His new dealing very marked, for, you observe, in the whole matter we have special intimations from God. God was not content to leave Peter to act now merely by any less thing, such as reminding him of the commission of the Lord Jesus. Do you not remember, Peter, that the Lord said, "Preach the gospel to every creature"? Do you not remember that he said, "Make disciples of all the Gentiles"?

None of these things first. There was a present dealing. There was a trance into which Peter fell, and in that trance he learns. There was that great sheet, those creatures of all kinds of which Peter was commanded to kill and eat, he being very hungry. And the voice that accompanied it showed what the meaning of it was, interpreted as it now was by the messengers that came to Cornelius to whom God had sent His angel. That angel had directed him to send for Peter. Thus, you see, there was a most careful, watchful care on God's part. There was a dealing in Caesarea; there was a dealing also in Joppa two different intimations from God, each of them having its own distinct type but to the same point. And now they meet at the house of Simon. Peter commits himself to the guidance of the servant of Cornelius, and they come down to Caesarea. Here was Cornelius waiting, with his kinsmen and near friends.

> And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him {Acts 10:25}.

We see how little he entered into the measure of man in the presence of God which the knowledge of Christ gives. We see the extraordinary veneration, which Peter stops at once. Peter was only a man, after all, though he was come down to declare the salvation of God.

But there are some other particulars to which I shall direct your attention in a moment. In the discourse of Peter, he says,

> Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him {Acts 10:34}.

Now Cornelius was one of these. Cornelius, let me reiterate, was not a man of mere forms -- he was anything but that. He was a man of reality. It was no question of his being born again, but of his being saved; that is, saved in the sense which you will not find generally in Christendom. Christendom has lost the true sense of salvation. It has not lost the idea of the Lord Jesus as a Savior, after a sort. But salvation as a present state, as a present state of soul entered into by faith, unquestionably it has lost. It has lowered it down and confounded salvation with the new birth. This is not at all merely a question of the mere ignorant formalist. You will find it, bad or worse, if possible, among excellent men, and it does not matter what school -- Arminian or Calvinist -- it makes no difference. The Calvinist is just as ignorant about it as the Arminian. There is no difference in this respect among any of them as far as I know. That is, the want of perception of the truth as to this great matter, is universal. And that is my reason for dwelling upon it at considerable length, because it is eminently practical. You know very well how many souls are tried, and full of what they call their anxious experience—their painful experience. Well! no doubt. But the reason is just this: that experience is founded upon Old Testament truth. They have not entered into the fulness of the blessing and deliverance which is now preached in the gospel.

This, then, Peter opens. "He that feared God and worketh righteousness" -- the case with Cornelius --

> he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel {Acts 10:35}

that was what I described at the beginning

> preaching peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all); that word, I say, ye know.

Cornelius was not ignorant of that, but his very humility made him unwilling to appropriate it until God sent it to him -- until he knew that it was presented to him. This will be so the greater your value for the people of God, if you know that you do not belong to them. And there again I am reminded of another thing, and that is, that the phrase "people of God" has lost its sense; for now all that people mean by "the people of God" is the elect. They obliterate by that very fact the distinction between the ancient people of God and the Gentiles

to which they naturally belong; so that you see the fact is that the phraseology of Scripture is completely misleading in modern Christendom, and, indeed, in ancient too; and the phrase, "people of God" has been appropriated by those who are now found here below, to the denial of it to all ancient people. Here it is used in its scriptural sense.

> That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hanged on a tree; him God raised up the third day and shewed him openly, not to all the people {Acts 10:36-39}

-- you see "the people" is constantly used here for the Jewish people only -- "not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen of God, even to us"; for now God was forming a new people altogether,

> who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead {Acts 10:42}.

But was it only to the people? "He commanded us to preach to the people." What does he mean by that? The Jew, of course. Not so.

> To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him {Acts 10:43}.

So we find light beginning to dawn upon this going forth of the gospel to every creature -- to the Gentile as much as to the Jew.

> And, while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

A very notable difference to what we saw on the day of Pentecost, for there they were baptized first. They were baptized every one, and believed on Jesus for the remission of sins, and then they received the gift of the Holy Ghost; but here it was while he spake the word, and these were Gentiles. This was the way of God, as you observe, with the Gentiles. "While Peter spake these words the Holy Ghost fell on them which heard the word." And no doubt there was great wisdom in it, because who would have been bold enough? Perhaps Peter. But then there were these brethren of the circumcision there. What would they have thought? So it is plain that there was the remarkable anticipation of the difficulty of souls, in tender anxiety, on the part of God who would remove their difficulties. There was this fact. How was it attested? God had taken care of that also. It was a new thing -- the gift of the Holy Ghost -- and accordingly, as in the case of all new things ushered in by God into the world, there were outward signs and wonders. It was accompanied by speaking with tongues -- by miracles.

It was not that these signs or miracles that accompanied it were the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but they were the means of manifesting the gift of the Holy Ghost. The signs might drop, but not the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost when given was to abide for ever. So our Lord had declared. Now it was made good. The Spirit of God was come. There never was a promise that the signs were always to be given. It was said in the Gospel of Mark, "These signs shall follow them that believe." It was never said that these signs shall always follow them that believe. That is what people constantly assume who harp upon the importance of miracles, and are constantly yearning for God to restore miracles. They seem to assume that the Lord gave ground in this statement for looking for miracles and signs at any time. Not so. "These signs shall follow them that believe." How long was just a question for God -- for His wisdom. God gave an unmistakable token of that which was still deeper -- that which the world will not and cannot believe -- a divine person coming down and deigning to dwell both in the saint and in the church. That is what is meant by the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Ghost given in a way in which He never was before. And this, accordingly, was given to Cornelius and his house. They

> were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost; for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God {Acts 10:45}.

Accordingly, "Can any man forbid water?" said Peter. It was not a question of keeping them till they learned what baptism meant, but they were brought into the privilege of baptism at once. It was a thing conferred upon them. It was not to lie as a kind of duty, or law, or attainment, or a question of intelligence, or anything of the sort, but it was a privilege conferred upon them. Who could forbid water baptism to those that were baptized with the Holy Ghost? So the thing was settled. The great question was solved, and now grace could have its free way, and the mouths of Pharisaic objectors outside and inside were stopped for ever. At least it ought to have been so.

The Scripture is beautiful in dealing with difficulties -- in showing that, even as we might be startled with objectors now, such objectors were not unknown in Jerusalem -- not only that, but even in the church in Jerusalem -- not only that, but even against an apostle such as Peter was. The apostles, therefore, had to bear the objections of ignorant and unreasonable men, and that among Christians themselves. And so it was upon this very occasion.

> The apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and did eat with them. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning and expounded it by order unto them (Acts 11:1-3).

On that I need not dwell. He takes particular care to show that the Spirit bade him go. It was not simply an angelic interposition. We have the two things. We find here the same distinction as is found elsewhere; namely, that where it is providential it is angelic; and where it is anything that touches

upon truth for the soul, it is the Spirit. Both are true, and, although there may be a difference in the form, and there may not be any visible interposition of an angel, or any audible interposition of the Spirit of God, it is as real now as then: Angels are not the less real because we do not see them; and the Spirit of God as surely gives His guidance as if we heard Him. That is a matter of faith simply.

But I recall your attention to this -- that men were to be sent to Joppa.

> And call for Simon whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved {Acts 11:14}.

It is not, "Whereby thou and all thy house shall be converted," for several of them, at least, if not all, were converted already. But though converted, they had not been entitled to that peace, joy, liberty, conscious relationship of sons of God, which now they were. The Holy Ghost only seals them as settled on redemption by the grace of God -- not merely waiting for it, or hoping that in some inscrutable way God would give them the benefit of it, although they never had the enjoyment of it as a possessed thing in this world; but now they had it here in this world.

> And, as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost {Acts 11:15, 16}.

There we have this very important phrase of the Spirit of God; that is "the baptism of the Holy Ghost." Here it takes in the Gentile as well as the Jew. As Paul says in ch. 12 of First Corinthians,

> For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, and have all been made to drink of one Spirit {1 Cor. 12:13}.

It is the great distinctive position of the church of God. It is what makes the believers to be not merely believers, but the church -- nay, more than that, the body; because one may look at the church in the point of view of a building -- a house where God dwells. That is a very different thing from being the body of Christ. The house where God dwells may have stones in it that are not really instinct with life. There may be deceivers. There may be persons that enter into that house that ought not to be there. We see how Simon Magus was brought in before. I do not say that the church was yet in its full place. If it was not, he was, at any rate, baptized; but, no doubt, what was true of him was even more carried out with others. That is to say, they were baptized and even breaking bread. But the body of Christ means those, and those only, who are united to the Lord Jesus by the Holy Ghost -- who consequently have a unity which is divine. There are no false members. There are none that are not living -- more than living. They have this oneness by the Holy Ghost which is a very different thing, and another and greater privilege altogether.

Well, the apostle Peter, then, was the great instrument of this new work of God, and thus the Lord accomplished what He had said, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." At the same time we have in the chapter just an incidental allusion made, which I must not pass by entirely, to another remarkable fact; and that is that the people that had been dispersed abroad in consequence of the persecution that arose were also preaching to the Gentiles. They went to various parts and preached, not merely to "the Grecians," as they are called in our New Testament, but to the Greeks. The New Testament distinguishes between Greeks and Grecians, only we must remember that in this verse, what is called Grecians ought to be Greeks. The "Grecians" were Greek-speaking Jews. The "Greeks" were Gentiles, not Jews; and the point here was not that they preached to the Grecians -- which was no new thing, and which had been done long before -- but they preached to the Greeks. If you look at any proper version -- any correct version of the New Testament -- you will find it is Greeks here and not Grecians. These, then, had heard the gospel; "and the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned to the Lord."

And this brings in Saul of Tarsus, but Saul is not the object that I have before me, but Peter. Herod comes before us in a new way in the 12th chapter. At that time there was a persecution. Herod had already killed James, the son of Zebedee, whom we must distinguish from James, the Lord's brother, who wrote the Epistle. This was the son of Zebedee. He was baptized with the baptism wherewith the Lord was baptized. He was drinking of that same cup, as the Lord said. Herod meant to lay his hand on Peter also, but the Lord ordered otherwise, and, the very night before the day he was to suffer, an angel was sent. But Peter was asleep; so little was he affected by any anxiety as to that which was coming. He lay between the soldiers, chained to them. The angel enters, awakes him from his sleep, delivers him from the chains, bids him clothe himself, leads him out, and afterwards brings him from the courts of the prison into the street, and leaves him. Peter goes to a house where at that very night there was a prayer-meeting. And the prayer-meeting was about Peter. So it is plain that, as far as that is concerned, they had very much the same thing that we should have ourselves under similar circumstances. No doubt it had a special character, but that also we know, too. There they were, praying for him; and the remarkable thing is that as Peter was little expecting the angel's visit to deliver him, so also the saints that were praying were taken completely by surprise when Peter stood at the door. We have in the most graphic manner the Spirit of God showing how Rhoda herself kept him there, for the joy that it was he, and she ran and told it to them to their astonishment, bringing out their unbelief indeed; but Peter was let in, and he tells the story, and goes to another place. Where he went we are not told.

But after this we find a still more remarkable occurrence, and a great event in the history of the church. One word, however, before I pass on. I have no doubt whatever that the 12th of Acts has a look to the future, and that, just before we have Paul coming out in his full character as the apostle of the Gentiles, we have an account of, or typical view of, God's dealings with the Jews. We have under James and Peter them that suffer and those that are spared. We have the Lord

interfering to deliver, and at the very same time the presence of the persecutor -- the wicked one -- in Jerusalem itself, as there will be "the wicked one" in Jerusalem at the latter day. We have Herod seen under heaven, who is evidently a figure of the antichrist that will persecute, and receive his doom, in the day that is coming. It is remarkable, too, how close the analogy is, because, when Herod is seen upon his throne, the voice of the people was that it was not the voice of a man but the voice of a god, and because he gave not God the glory -- because he did not, like Peter, rebuke them, and tell them to stand up upon their feet, and that it was not god but man -- because, on the contrary, he arrogated to himself and delighted in this false ascription, God smote him by His vengeance, just as the false prophet will be smitten in the day that is coming. Well, that clears the way for the dealing of God with the Gentiles.

And after the Holy Ghost is given, and Paul and Barnabas go forth on their first great Gentile mission, we have the final struggle. The Pharisaic spirit that had objected to Peter's going to the Gentiles now put forth itself once more, and the great question had to be decided whether the Gentile believers had anything to do with the law of Moses; whether they were virtually to become Jews in any measure. And the Spirit of God decided this, Peter taking a remarkable part in the discussion, and, indeed, the apostles in general, Paul and Barnabas, too, having their place, though it is important to observe that they are not spoken of as apostles. It was not the authority of Paul and Barnabas that decided it. On the contrary, there was a great deal of dissension and disputation, and it is quite clear that Paul and Barnabas were not able to stop the mouths of the objectors in Jerusalem. Who did it then? The Jewish apostles themselves. Nothing could be more profitable. It was out of Jerusalem that the evil came; it was in Jerusalem that the evil was judged. It would not at all have met the case to deal with it at Antioch. It was there they went down, no doubt, and did the mischief; but it was not decided there. It was decided in the fountain of the mischief. It was decided not by Paul and Barnabas, which would not at all have answered the same thing, but it was decided by the Jewish apostles. And this is exactly what ch. 15 of the Acts of the Apostles brings before us, together with the part that Peter took in it. I shall be brief in speaking of it.

> Certain men, which came down from Juda, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot he saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed.

You must remember that it was not the unbelieving Pharisees, but persons within the bosom of the church who retained their old leaven. And they said,

> It was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together, for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing {Acts 15:5, 6}.

I mention that, because I am persuaded that there is often an idea that it is one of the sad signs of the present state of ruin that one finds sometimes a spirit that is uncomely and disputatious. But we see that this was the case even in the presence of the apostles -- the whole of them -- so that, although I do not say that to mitigate our sorrow and shame at everything that is unworthy, still there is the sad fact that from the beginning there was too much disputation, even against the very persons who had a title and an authority that no men have ever had since their day.

> Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe {Acts 15:7}.

That gives us the peculiar work of Peter, and my object has been to chew the way in which God put honor upon that blessed servant of His. It was by his mouth that the Jews, as a whole, heard the gospel in its fulness and received the Holy Ghost on their being baptized as well as believing, as we find on the day of Pentecost. That is, it was not enough that the Jews must be baptized, as we have seen (for he would not allow such a thing as their shirking the place of separateness to the name of the Lord), but now you see it is a question of the Gentiles, and it was by the same. Now this is very important, and Peter was used to preach to the Gentiles first of all; and Paul, I would observe, was used to write to the Jews last of all. Both were perfectly in season, and this shuts out all thought of independence, because it might have been thought that Peter was out of his place. He was the apostle of the circumcision. Yes, but for all that it was by his mouth that the Gentiles first heard the gospel.

On the other hand it might have been said, "What has Paul to do with the Jews?" Paul has this to do with the Jews -- that he wrote a much more important epistle to them than any of the apostles of the circumcision; and therefore the Epistle to the Hebrews has a character altogether peculiar. It is not merely making use of Jewish types and law and prophets and psalms, but it is much more than that. The Epistle to the Hebrews is the summons to go outside the camp -- the old place where the tabernacle and everything were -- to go forth unto Christ. Forms were tolerated by such Christians, and in such Christians as had been Jews; but from the moment that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written -- from that time forth they had to quit everything for Christ; so that Peter, the Jewish apostle, should be used to preach to the Gentiles, and that Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, should be used to write such an epistle to Jews, strikes me as a beautiful proof of the way in which God took care that, where every man had his work, He would not allow the slightest thought of two

churches, or of such absolute separateness of work as to make one independent of the other. Independence was completely set aside by such an action on the part of the Spirit of God by those two blessed men.

We shall now see how truly that is the case here by Peter. Although he was the apostle of the circumcision, God made choice of him,

> that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the, disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they {Acts 15:7-11}.

Mark the strength of the language. Any one else would have said, "We believe that, they shall be saved, even as we," but now Peter puts down the Jew, and says,

> We believe that, through the grace of God, we shall be saved -- we Jews -- even as they;

not, "they, even as we." Thus there is the utmost care to show the ground of sovereign grace that was now given out, and more particularly with such a certain sound, from the apostle of the circumcision. It is a sorrowful thing that that is the very man that went down to Antioch and there dissembled.

It is not my purpose to-night to enter into the subject of Peter in his own Epistles, but I may just add a closing word as to Peter in Paul's Epistles. The Epistle to the Galatians, as we know, speaks, I presume, of what occurred after this council. Peter goes down, and, sad to say, forgets in practice not only the word of the Lord in His life, and the word of the Lord in resurrection, but the word of the Lord from heaven -- forgets all these wondrous dealings of God. And how was that? In a way that may often snare for peace sake, compromise! It is true it did not look much. He would not eat with the Gentiles. It is a question, not of the Lord's table, but of ordinary intercourse with them, and this was so extremely important, as it appears to me, that the apostle Paul treats Peter's absenting himself, and not eating with the Gentiles, as compromising the truth of the gospel. A very little thing in itself, it might seem, but it was the symbol of a mighty truth. It was the question whether Jews and Gentiles stood on a common ground of grace. Not eat with them? Why that was the very figure by which God had instructed him, in lowering the sheet. "Arise, Peter, kill and eat." And now this very Peter, sad to say, lives to show the utter failure of the most blessed servant of the Lord, and that, too, after the wonderful grace that God had shown him, and the honor that He had put upon him.

And, mark, he breaks down in the very thing that God had given him to do as his peculiar work. Has that no voice to us? And are we not to learn, beloved friends, that it is always true that whenever we are confident, that whenever we lose either the sense of dependence, or the need of waiting, upon God because we distrust ourselves -- whenever we go down thinking we are strong, as no doubt Peter did -- such is the time when we fail. The very fact of Peter's going down to Antioch was a proof of communion with the Gentiles. You may depend upon it, he never had tho smallest question or slightest thought of what he was going to do there; nor did he when he separated himself from the Gentiles see the desperate evil that was involved in it, and what a blow was struck at the truth of the gospel; because the truth of the gospel is to make nothing of man; the truth of the gospel is to make everything of Christ. Why then did he not eat with the Gentiles? These Gentiles, too, were believers. Thus there was a complete failure in what least of all became Peter. Do I say that for the purpose of magnifying his fault? I say it for the purpose of guarding against such a fault in ourselves, and more particularly in the thing in which we might not suspect ourselves. I have always known this to be the case—that in the very point in which we have been proud we have been broken down. Have you never seen persons boast of their faith? Look for unbelief there. Have you never seen persons confident of their love? Expect that in that very matter of love they will fail. Have you ever seen them boastful of knowledge? They will break down in knowledge. In the very thing in which we exalt ourselves we must be abased.

What, then, is the great lesson of it all? To boast of nothing, to be confident of nothing, to exalt ourselves in nothing, but Christ. Exalt Him, and know that in dependence upon Him we shall be kept, spite of our weakness. No previous blessing, no previous power, no previous honor that God may have put upon us, is any safeguard in the hour of difficulty, and more particularly when we enter upon anything confidently.

It is thus, I believe, that we are to explain what took place at Antioch. We must not allow the dreadful idea that was started in the early church, that this dispute was a kind of friendly skirmish between Paul and Peter for the purpose of illustrating a principle; that is, that Peter pretended to fail in what he did not fail in, and that Paul rebuked him in order to bring out a principle. Let men -- let divines if they will -- represent the apostles as playing the miserable part of religious actors upon the world's stage! It is not for us to doubt that it was a far more solemn thing. It was Satan. Satan took advantage of one whom he had overturned before; but that might have been said to have been in the days when he had not the Holy Ghost. Ah, but remember, beloved friends, that though the Spirit of God is power, the Spirit of God does not act as power except so far as Christ is before us. We have not got a lease of the Spirit. We have not got that kind of possession of the Spirit that can claim His activity for our own purposes, or at our own will.

We have only the power of the Spirit where we are abased, and where Christ is the Object that is before our soul. And it is because this was not so that both Peter and Barnabas failed on that very day. It was indeed a failure so serious that the apostle Paul does apply to them what ignorant men -- as I must call them -- have dared to apply to them all -- the charge of dissimulation. It was so; and it was of a most serious

character, and it was sinful dissimulation. It was not merely the appearance of it; it was really so. It was shirking what God always calls us to -- the truth of Christ at all costs -- the truth of Christ for the comfort of souls, and more particularly for the despised. The despised Gentiles -- for such they were -- were special objects for the grace of God; and Paul felt it, and judged and rebuked even the great apostle of the circumcision.

I need not then, beloved friends, say more now. This will suffice for the glance, which I have been endeavoring to give, at the history of Peter as shown us in the Acts of the Apostles.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 8: 230, 246, 268, 284, 298, 311; NS 9:10, 26.)

An Exposition of the Gospel of Mark

by

William Kelly

www.presenttruthpublishers.com

Preface to the Present Truth Publishers Edition

Notes and answers to questions by W. Kelly from *The Bible Treasury* have been added as footnotes to his *An Exposition of the Gospel of Mark*. These notes are enclosed in the iconic symbol ◆ at the beginning and end of the added note. Notes enclosed in braces { } have been added by the editor.

Scripture references have been added in braces. But also, "Mark" has been substituted for numerous references to chapters. This facilitates generating a more complete Scripture Index.

The text has not been changed.

An Exposition of the Gospel of Mark has been scanned from the H. L. Heijkoop reprint of 1971. This included the Foreword by W. J. Hocking.

Note that the Scripture quotations in *An Exposition of the Gospel of Mark* that are in bold are words peculiar to Mark; i.e., Mark alone states these things. This has been incorporated from the 1907 edition by E. E. Whitfield.

The reader will find text-critical notes on Mark collected in *Two Nineteenth Century Versions of the New Testament*, pp. 452-460, complied by D. P. Ryan, available from Present Truth Publishers. Also, W. Kelly's comments on the Revised Version on Mark are reproduced here as image files (not searchable with Adobe Reader).

Foreword

In the Second Gospel, as distinguished from its three fellows, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is depicted as the One Who, according to prophecy, presented Himself to the Jews as the Servant of Jehovah and the Prophet of Israel, sent to them to preach the gospel.

In his second address in Jerusalem after Pentecost, the apostle Peter charged the Jews, the "men of Israel," with the sin of rejecting their Messiah, to Whom he gave the double character of Righteous Servant and Prophet (Acts 3:13, 26). They were guilty of delivering Him up to death, having thus denied God's Servant, Jesus, Whom He had sent to bless them, in turning away every one of them from his iniquities (see vv. 13, 26, R.V.). Moreover, Jesus Christ, the Holy One and the Just, was the Prophet Whom God had raised up" like unto" Moses, as was promised in the Pentateuch (see vv. 22, 23; Deut. 18:15).

What a worthy Servant did the Son of God become! And the detailed perfections of His lowly service as such are prominently displayed in this Gospel. The diligence of His activities is indicated by the word "immediately," and its synonyms, which occur about forty times in the narrative. This alacrity showed His delight to run in the way of Jehovah's commandments.

The Servant's unremitting zeal in His ministry of love, to take only one instance, is illustrated by the account of His labors in Capernaum on a single sabbath-day (Mark 1:21-34). That Jewish day of rest was occupied by Him in teaching in the synagogue, in casting out a demon, in visiting Simon's house and healing the apostle's wife's mother, and then in curing great crowds of diseased persons, who came to Him before nightfall. This was a sample of the daily tasks of Jehovah's Righteous Servant in a world of sin and sorrow. The sins of the nation caused Him to toil (Isa. 43:24).

As the revealing Prophet of Israel, the Lord Jesus, amongst many other utterances of wisdom and truth, unfolded the mystery of the kingdom of God (Mark 4), and the circumstances of His future coming to restore Israel and judge the world (Mark 13).

This exposition of Mark by Mr. Kelly was first printed in the *Bible Treasury* for the years, 1864-66 (vols. 5 and 6). The "Remarks," as the papers were then entitled, appear to have been based upon addresses on the Gospel delivered by the author. This fact explains why the various sections of the Gospel are for the most part considered from a general point of view, and not verse by verse, which is the usual habit of commentators.

The quotations from the Gospel made by the author in his discourses are in the main from the Authorized Version {KJV} throughout, except a small portion beginning with Mark 11, where new translations are given. Although the author's judgment with regard to various readings in many other passages may be ascertained from Mr. Kelly's later writings, it has been thought preferable to reproduce the comments in the form originally issued, and not to follow the edition of 1907 in this respect. Brief additions only have been made in the form of notes on pages 129-30, 192, 226-7 {changed in this edition}.

A bird's-eye view of a book of scripture is always helpful to the understanding. Accordingly, as an introduction to the expository remarks, a short summary, giving the scope of the Gospel as a whole, is added. This sketch was written by Mr. Kelly at the request of the Editor of *the Believer's Monthly Magazine*, in which periodical it appeared in the issue for March, 1896. It was re-issued in the *Bible Treasury* for August, 1900, and then incorporated in the author's valuable volume on the Inspiration of the Scriptures, published in 1903. There is also a general survey of Mark in his Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Gospels, which is less concise than the one included with the Exposition now re-issued.

It will be noticed that in this Introduction or Summary (pp. 281-282), the Gospel of Mark is divided into three principal parts, the first ending with ch. 5, and the second with chapter 10:45.

W. J. Hocking, March, 1934.

Introduction

Mark 1 presents neither genealogy nor early history, as we have in the accounts of Matthew and Luke. Yet this is not due to his abridging previously well-known facts, but to the divine design which made a genealogy here out of place: the service even of such a Servant did not call for it. Here as everywhere none so much abounds in striking details. The forerunner is briefly introduced preaching and baptizing. Jesus too is baptized, and then tempted of Satan; here without the details given by Matthew and Luke, yet only Mark speaks of His being with the wild beasts. When John is imprisoned, Christ begins His public service, saying, "The time is fulfilled." Calling certain disciples to follow Him, He promises to make them fishers of men. His words and works attest the truth. The unclean spirit is cast out publicly. Simon's mother-in-law is healed of fever, and forthwith ministers to them. Sick and demoniacs are alike set free in numbers. He goes to preach; for this He is come forth. He prays without seeking fame; and a leper is cleansed with His touch as benignant as His word is in divine power, love, and compassion.

In **Mark 2** are given minute details of the paralytic not healed only but forgiven (for sin is the root of evil), and made to walk, that they might know the Son of man's title on earth to remit sins: a title which causes the scribes to blaspheme. He goes on in grace to call a despised tax-gatherer to follow Him, eats with those whom the Pharisees branded as sinners beyond others, and vindicates it as His mission: "I came not to call righteous, but sinners." What a Savior for guilty man! Any truly righteous were already called: He came to call sinners. Those who believed were to rejoice in His presence there: let John's disciples and those of the Pharisees fast in unbelief of Him; full soon should His own have reason to fast. Besides, the new truth and power of the kingdom cannot without loss mix with old things. The Sabbath itself was made for man, and the Son of man is its Lord, not its slave as Pharisees wished.

Hence, in **Mark 3**, He on the Sabbath heals a man with a withered hand. He was here, Sabbath-day or not, to do good and save; but the orthodox counseled with their time-serving adversaries how to destroy Him. If He withdraws, it is to heal and deliver more abundantly; and after being alone on the mountain, He calls and appoints twelve, whom He would, to carry on the work of grace in power like His own. For He did all in the Spirit; but such was His unflagging zeal that His relations called Him deranged; and such His power, that the scribes from Jerusalem imputed it in their malice to Satan. Thereon He pronounces sentence, and announces His relationship, not after the flesh, but with him, whoever he be, that does the will of God.

Accordingly, in **Mark 4**, seated on board ship, He teaches the new departure, contingent upon the people's apostasy, and takes the place of the Sower in the world, and such that three parts of the seed come to nothing, and only a fourth by grace takes effect in varying measure where conscience works before God. Light is to shine in service; the veil no longer hides; and he that has gets more, as he that has not loses all. A parable follows peculiar to Mark, and emblematic of the Lord's ways in service, Who works throughout and produces all, yet hiddenly now till the harvest is come when He reaps. The parable of mustard seed illustrates the outward rise from little to a great show on the earth. Such would be the abnormal result of service in man's hand. The evening closes with the storm on the lake, Jesus asleep in the boat now filling, and the alarmed disciples awaking Him Who in two words made a great calm.

In **Mark 5** we see Him met by the fiercest of demoniacs, Legion; for many spirits were there. Jesus, expelling them from the possessed, let them enter a great herd of swine which bore witness to their evil power in rushing at once to destruction; while the man sat clothed and in his right mind, beseeching to be with Jesus. The time, however, is come, not yet for this, but to testify to his friends what great things the Lord, even Jesus, had done for him; while those who heard, alas! besought, not Legion, but the Lord to depart from their borders. And Jesus departs. On the other side Jairus beseeches Him to come and lay His hands on his dying daughter. As He went, a woman touches Him secretly and is healed of her issue of blood; the Lord will have her too in the light and without fear. The damsel now dead is restored to life, as the Lord will do for Israel by-and-by.

This closes the first part of the Gospel.

Then **Mark 6** lays bare the unbelief that could not deny His word or work, yet stumbled at His humiliation in the grace which escaped them. So the Lord before His departure began to send forth the twelve with power over unclean spirits, but without resources of their own; He could control men's hearts as He pleased. Meanwhile, Herod is shown as troubled in conscience because of John as well as Herodias, dreading the report of Jesus as a resurrection of John. And the Lord gives the disciples, full of their great work, their needed quiet with Himself, while He waits on man's wants and satisfies the poor with bread. Then sending away the multitude and the disciples by ship to Bethsaida, while He went on high to pray, He appears to them toiling in vain against contrary wind, and walked the water as if He would pass them, but immediately rejoins them on their crying out in fear; and the wind ceased. When they reached land, those who once wished Him to depart bring their sick, earnestly seeking that they may be healed.

Mark 7 manifests the superficial worthlessness of the religious chiefs and their tradition. Man's heart was a spring of evil; but grace reveals God's heart, even to the Syro-Phcenician, and His power to deliver her demoniac daughter; while the deaf stammering one, like the Jewish remnant, is led apart and healed, that he may hear and speak

to the praise of God.

In **Mark 8**, a fresh pledge, in the seven loaves multiplied, is given of divine compassion to the poor of His people, as also of His power to make the blind, again led outside, see clearly. The leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod was evil; yet the disciples, though ill-affected by it, had no uncertainty as to the Messiah, but like Peter confessed Him. This, however, must yield to the deeper glory of the Son of man in His rejection and death; but it was too much for Peter, who deprecates it and is rebuked of the Lord, even insisting on a path like His own for His followers, and at all cost.

In **Mark 9** His glory as Son of man and Son of God is presented to witnesses on the hill, while below even His own failed in faith to use His name against Satan. How painful to the Lord! How humbling to the disciples! "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" Only His presence in a coming day will deliver the people from Satan's power. Meanwhile it is a question of faith for individual deliverance. Power depends on faith; the ability is in the believing. Jesus acts by His word in power. But He goes on to be slain and to rise the third day, while they, understanding nothing, dispute who should be greatest, and have a little child set before them as their right example. Even John is jealous for "us" rather than for Christ; but the Lord in grace owns all He can. Woe to the despiser of the little ones that believe! Woe, too, when hand, foot, or eye causes to stumble! It is not earthly judgments, but unquenchable fire that awaits the unbelieving; as believers are to have salt (the preservative power of the truth) in themselves, and peace with one another.

Mark 10 shows our Lord vindicating the relationships that God ordained from the beginning. He insists on the purity of marriage, and blesses babes. Yet while appreciating the blameless young man, who sought everlasting life (not to be saved), He denies goodness in man, and lays bare love of means and position, which is ruin, as he left Jesus to go away in sorrow. The Savior thereon dwells on the danger, not blessing, of wealth, to the astonishment of His own; and when Peter boasts their self-denial, the Lord declares the sure remembrance of every loss for His sake (and the gospel's, peculiar to Mark), not only spiritual gain now but life everlasting beyond, with the caution that many first shall be last, and the last first. Then His death and delivery to the Gentiles are announced, and the ambition of Zebedee's sons, as well as the displeasure of the ten, corrected by the cross as God's pattern in a lost world.

This ends the second part of the Gospel.

The last presentation, from v. 46, begins with blind Bartimaeus appealing to David's Son and receiving his sight, as Israel will in due time. In **Mark 11** He is presented as the anointed King, and owned with hosannas; He pronounces on the barren fig-tree which is seen withered next morning, cleanses the sanctuary, and exposes the incompetence as well as the insincerity of the officials who demand His authority.

Mark 12 sets forth in a parable Israel's rebellion and Messiah's rejection but exaltation, and in a few words the hypocrisy of the question as to Caesar, to whom they were no more subject than to God. Then the Sadducees (who talked of resurrection to undermine it and Him) hear the truth which refutes their error; and the intelligent scribe has the moral sum of the law laid down for his encouragement. Jesus puts the question of how David's Son is David's Lord, which is life to him that answers it according to God. But alas! religious show and pretensions with selfishness end in more severe judgment; while the widow and her two mites have everlasting record.

In the brief form of the prophecy in **Mark 13** the special aim of the Spirit is evident from the fullness given to service past or future; so it is, not only in the center, but near the end. Hence, in that character "the Son" does not know; yet He gave to His bondmen their authority, and to each his work. Nowhere else is service so distinctly noticed.

The end approaches in **Mark 14**, His final rejection, His death, resurrection, and ascension, yet "working with them" still as the Lord.

The chief priests plot, but God's will is done. Love anoints the Lord's body for His burial; the traitor makes his sad bargain with the rejoicing chief priests; the last passover is eaten, and the Lord's supper instituted. Peter is warned, and all three sleep while the Lord goes through the agony in Gethsemane. Judas then leads the band that takes Jesus, and the high priest condemns Him, not for the false witness of others but for His own confession of the truth, while Peter denies Him thrice and with oaths.

Mark 15 shows us Jesus delivered to Pilate, the Gentile judge, who owns Him guiltless, and knows the chief priests' envy, but gives Him up to be crucified. Thereon ensues the scene beyond all before or to come. The Messiah, the righteous Servant, forsaken by all, even by God (for so it must be for our sins), expires on the cross; the centurion in charge confesses Him Son of God; and Joseph, an honorable councillor, lays His body in his own rock-hewn sepulcher.

In **Mark 16** we have His resurrection briefly told by an angel to the women that saw the sepulcher open and empty. They were too fearful and amazed to say anything. In the second part of the chapter, of which some unreasonably and unbelievingly doubt, we have the Lord appearing to Mary of Magdala who is disbelieved; then manifested to the two going to Emmaus, as afterward to the eleven at table, with reproof of their unbelief. Yet did He give them their great commission of the gospel to all the creation, with signs following those that believed. And if He risen and ascended is styled "Lord," none the less true to the design of the Gospel is He said to be "working with them" and confirming their words, as His servants went forth and preached everywhere. Here only in the New Testament have we the fact historically stated, however briefly. Can specific purpose be clearer first and last?

Mark 1

Mark gives us the ministry of the Lord. His account is brief; and there are few events which are not recorded by Matthew and Luke. Nevertheless, what a gap there would be in our view of the Savior's life and work here below, if we had not Mark! In none have we a more characteristic manner of presenting what is given us. In none have we such graphic, vivid life-touches of our Master: not only what He said and did, but how He looked and felt. Besides there is the evident design of drawing our attention to His gospel-service; and all the incidents chosen, and the peculiar mode in which they are handled, will be found to bear upon this weighty and affecting theme: the Lord God as the Servant, in lowly, faithful ministration of the gospel here below.

The very opening illustrates this

> "**The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God**: as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. The voice of one crying, etc. {Mark 1:1, 2}.

We at once enter on the great business the Holy Ghost had in hand. There is no blowing of trumpets to usher in the king in due style and title. This has its just place in Matthew, where the descent traced from Abraham and David, along the chosen royal line of Solomon too, so admirably agrees with God's object there. And the circumstances before and after His birth follow, all carrying out the same end of presenting Jesus as the true and blessed Messiah of Israel. Luke and John, it could be readily shown, were endowed by the Spirit with equally striking and suited wisdom for maintaining the aim of their Gospels respectively; but space forbids, for the present, our delaying to speak of these things particularly.

It is well, however, in noting the beautiful immediateness of the picture here brought before our eyes, to observe that there is no precipitancy, no omission of what was a most important preface for the account of Jesus thus ministering -- the previous appearance and services of John the Baptist. To this there seems to be an allusion in the opening words. It was more than prophecy, though in accordance, as vv. 2 and 3 prove, with the prophets. "The law and the prophets," we are told elsewhere, "were until John," who took a great step in. advance -- "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." Such was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, after long silence had reigned as to God's testimony in Jerusalem.

Further, is it not touching to see that, if we are about to follow the steps of God's faithful and only perfect Servant, the change which the Holy Ghost, in sovereign wisdom, makes in His citation (v. 2) of Mal. 3:1, attests the divine glory of Jesus? In the prophecy it is Jehovah sending His messenger Who would prepare the way before Him. In the evangelist it is still Jehovah sending His messenger, but it is now before "Thy face," i.e., the face of Jesus Christ. The truth is, Jesus, humble Himself as He might, was Jehovah. Matthew elicits the same truth from His name. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save *His* people from their sins." Now the Jews were the people of none but Jehovah. It is the more remarkable in the opening of our Gospel; for Mark, unlike Matthew, rarely quotes the scriptures. How perfectly it is in keeping with the Gospel, and its opening part also, is evident. If the Lord of glory was coming or comes in the form of a servant and the likeness of men, it was most appropriate that prophecy should (not be broken but) bend before Him, and that a new and still more blessed testimony should begin.

But *where* cries this voice of the herald, and where was he baptizing? In the wilderness." What, then, was the state of Jerusalem and the people of God? They must go outside to John if they would take their right place before God. What he presented was the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. The effect was great; I say not savingly, but extensive, and not without touching the conscience.

> There went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins {Mark 1:5}.

All this is here sketched by Mark, clearly but rapidly and in brief, without stopping by the way to set before us, as was needful to the purpose of God in Matthew, the proud and false-hearted men who stood in the place of religious leaders of the day, objects of God's certain and scrutinizing judgment.

But if John had his own special place, and if his abode, and garb, and food (Mark 1:6), witnessed his separation from the evil state of Israel, it was his happier task to testify the superiority of Christ's person and of His ministry, as compared with his own (Mark:1:7, 8). Nothing is here said of baptizing with fire, as in Matthew and Luke, to both of whose subjects it was requisite. But Mark was inspired to speak only of that part of John's testimony which is directly associated with the Lord's gospel work, namely, baptizing with the Holy Ghost. It is not, of course, that under Christ, repentance ceased, and can ever but be, in a world of sin, the necessary pathway of a soul that is born of God. Still, the turning of a soul to God, in a sense of sin and self-judgment, is different from the divine power which sets evil aside on the basis of a redemption accomplished by the grace of God. This is the characteristic blessing of Christianity.

Yet was Jesus, the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, Himself baptized by John in the Jordan (v. 9), Himself receives the Holy Ghost! What a sight and truth! Infinitely above sin and sins (which He did not even know), yet was He baptized with water: He had no unrighteousness to confess, but thus it became Him to fulfil all righteousness. From Nazareth of Galilee came *He*, Who was God over all, blessed for ever. There He dwelt, as Matthew tells us, so that the prophets' saying might be in this, as in all else, fulfilled. Could heaven behold unmoved such grace? Impossible.

> And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw

> the heavens opened [cleaving asunder], and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him.

What meaning had that act of baptism in the mind of God!

> And there came a voice from heaven saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased {Mark 1:11}.

"Him," as St. John says, "hath God the Father sealed" {John 6:27}. It is not merely the fact, but "He saw," etc., which is here recorded. Though truly God, He was man; though a Son, He became a servant, and was now about to enter on His ministry. He receives the Spirit as well as the recognition of His Sonship. He had justified God's sentence on, and call to, Israel yea, He had in grace joined the souls who had bowed to it in the waters of Jordan; but this could not be without the answer of the Father for His heart's joy in the path He was about to tread. The one was the fulfilment of every kind of righteousness and not legal only (this in grace, for there was no necessity of evil in His case); the other was His recognition thereon by the Father in the nearest personal relationship, over which His submission to baptism might have cast a cloud to carnal eyes.

> And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness; and He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; **and was with the wild beasts**, and the angels ministered unto Him (Mark 1:12, 13).

What a picture of His position in a few words of God! Moses, the lawgiver, had been with God on the mount forty days; Elijah, the prophet, had been in the wilderness with God for the same, sustained without the need of man's food. But what was either miracle compared with the position of Jesus? For Him the Son, to be with God was, and had been from all eternity, His natural place, so to speak; but now He was come down to the earth, a man among men; and in the wilderness, to which sin had reduced this fair creation, He is for forty days tempted of Satan. Man was not there; but the wild beasts were, as our evangelist so forcibly adds; and there too the angels were ministering to Him. It was all His wondrous preparation for a service no less wondrous.

We have seen thus far in Christ the great preparatives for the service of God, the first of them at least, and, of course, modified by His intrinsic and absolute sinlessness. And such, I believe, to be, in measure, true of every one whom the Lord calls to follow in His own path. There is, first, the owning of our true place before God. And what real enjoyment of our spiritual relationship can there be, till we bow before God in the truth of our condition? There nay be a sort of joy arising from the thought of sins being forgiven; but forgiveness of sins, however sweet and important, is, after all, but an act -- an immense, divine act -- of sovereign grace through the blood-shedding of the Savior. It is not in itself the existence or the enjoyment of our new definite relationship of sons with the Father. This, along with the seal of the Spirit, is what is next given. We, too, led by the Spirit, have the happy witness that we are the children of God. But, following this, there must be the consciousness of what the power of Satan is, and of the wilderness, too, before there can be the full ability to serve others in the power of God.

> Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God {Mark 1:14}.

This was the fitting moment for His public ministry. It was an hour little suited for nature, when Messiah's forerunner was tasting the enmity of the world; but Jesus came not to escape the sorrows of love in a hating world, but to make known what God is, in spite of, yea, because of such a world. Therefore He says,

> The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel {Mark 1:15}.

There was no more delay for the testimony of grace. It was no question of the law, but of repentance and believing in the gospel. But though it was now the time for divine action, grace will have sharers of its own joy. Accordingly, we have Simon and Andrew, James and John, called to become fishers of men (Mark 1:16-20). They had known and believed in Jesus before, but now they must follow and be with Him. Boats, nets, father -- their earthly property, their ordinary occupation, their natural relationship -- must yield to the call of Jesus. Not that all are called to go after Jesus thus; but assuredly it is the Holy Ghost Who leads the soul that is born again to call Him Lord. Is this confession to be real or is it unmeaning? By His blood we are redeemed to God. We are not our own; we are bought with a price. He is our Lord; not only in great things, but in the smallest matters of everyday life. And sure I am that a crisis comes in the history of believing souls, when they must be put to the proof how far this is true in their experience. For Satan does seek to tempt us, out of the happy place of the servants of Christ, to make ourselves lords, as it were. Are we seeking our own interests, our own pleasure, our own ease? Are we struggling for our own will? Are we seeking to be something in the world, or, at any rate, something in the church? What is this but to be lords instead of His servants? But to own Him as Lord, to do His will, this is our own proper business. For this we are saved. This is what He died for; and this is what we ought to live for -- to own Jesus Lord. To live for ourselves in anything is to defraud Him of His rights; and it is to deny, so far, the great price He paid to make us His.

> And they went into Capernaum, and straightway on the sabbath-day He entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes {Mark 1:21, 22}.

This is the first and essential point in the ministration of God's word, that it should be spoken with authority. Flesh may imitate it. The world thinks that self-will is the only thing that can avail to effect any end. But, however strong man's will may seem in the things of men, the certainty of God's will is the one thing by which the Holy Spirit clothes the word with authority in divine things. This was pre-eminently the case with Christ, for He alone as man had the Lord always before Him. But even with us there should be the speaking with assurance of God's mind and will

(1 Pet. 4:2), if we speak for God at all; otherwise it would be better to be silent. With the scribes it is not so. They may reason or they may dazzle, as argument or fancy preponderates. But for us, it is better not to speak if we have not the certainty of that which God would have spoken at any given time. By speaking uncertainly, we only communicate our own doubts or darkness to others. But if we have by grace the certainty of God's truth, let it be spoken with authority. It is as servant that Christ does so here. He was Himself the perfection of humility; for it is in no way inconsistent with a lowly mind to speak with the fullest authority where we have no doubt about the mind of God.

But next we find

> there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, saying, Let us alone: what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him {Mark 1:23-26}. [86]

How strikingly these demoniacal possessions appeared in the presence of Jesus! One might almost think, as we read the Gospels, that all then existing and possible cases had been crowded around Him. But the truth is, there may have been as many before, but the presence of divine light brought it all out then; the presence of Jesus, the Son of God, drove Satan to bay, and withdrew the mask which may previously have covered his victims. And in a degree this may be observed wherever the power of God's truth and holiness is at work. Does He raise a standard? Their opposition will at once be felt, and the enemy will declare himself. The unclean spirit would gladly be left alone, but owns the power of the despised Jesus of Nazareth. The power of Satan could but feel the presence and supremacy of the despised of men, but Holy One of God. Jesus, however, rebukes him, and delivers the possessed to the astonishment of all who own the new doctrine by reason of the power which judged and expelled the enemy.

Nor is this all. The divine word was felt, and demons were forced out. Sickness, too, flees before His touch; and this not only in the individual case of Simon's wife's mother, but in crowds of others, miserable and distressed in every form. As to this, indeed, we have but to humble ourselves before God; for the church was once the seat of this same wondrous energy of rebuking diseases and casting out devils. They were the powers of the world to come. But God has stripped the church of her ornaments to our shame; and it becomes us to be humbled for it. Let us, however, turn to Jesus. Unwearied with His day of toil and service for others, at even it was still the same. He evermore carries on His work of love; for

> when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils, and all the city was gathered together at the door; and He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils, and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him {Mark 1:32-34}.

He refused that mixed testimony. It must be divine, in order to be accepted of Him.

But what is so blessed for us and so instructive too, is the next lovely feature that we find in the Lord as the Servant on earth.

> In the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed {Mark 1:35}.

Occupied though He had been, early and late, with the sorrows of others, yet here we find Him long preventing the dawn, while it was yet the dark of night, in order to hold intercourse with His Father. And what were the communications between such a Father and such a Son! The Old Testament tells us,

> The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned.

The New Testament tells us how He went a great while before day into a solitary place, and there He prayed. And if He thus retired to be with God, Himself the Lord God, before He entered upon the work of the day, can we wonder that we fail so much in outward labor, who fail yet more in this inward intimacy with our Father:? Be assured, the secret of holy strength and endurance in service is found there alone.

Before we speak of the cleansing of the leper, let us consider a little the structure of our Gospel as compared with the others.: A close inspection will soon satisfy the reader that Mark follows the order of the facts, as does John, with a very slight exception, so far as he gives us an historical - account. Neither Luke nor Matthew adheres to the obvious successional order of events: the former, with a view to developing the moral bearings of the facts, recorded the real condition of man and the admirable resources of divine grace; the latter, so as to manifest more vividly the change of dispensation consequent on the rejection of the Messiah. This I believe to have been the aim of the Holy Spirit in their Gospels respectively, without pretending to say how far the authors may have entered into the far-reaching purposes of God in their own inspired writings. In general, the character of the New Testament inspiration is intelligent communion with the mind of God, and not an instrumental medium only, as was the case ordinarily with the Jewish prophets (1 Pet. 1:10-12). The great question, however, is as to God's intention; and He looked to the permanent instruction and

86. ◆ . . . Mark and Luke are explicit that the cure in the synagogue at Capernaum was on the same sabbath when he healed Simon's mother-in-law, soon after the four apostles were called as Mark proves, whereas only Luke reserves that call for fuller development in the miraculous draught which so powerfully acted on Peter's soul (Luke 5:1-11). But both conclusively show that the cure of legion (Matthew telling us of two demoniacs) was after the day when the parables of the kingdom were delivered (Matt. 13), and the storm on the lake when the Lord rebuked the winds and the raging water (*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:160). ◆

blessing of His church through the written word.

Difference there is, frequent and grave, between the various presentations of the Lord in the Gospels and this both in the order of the narratives and in the manner in which the separate circumstances and discourses are brought before us. To what are we to attribute these constantly varying shades? is it to the mere infirmity of good men, who did as well as they could, but could not be expected absolutely to tally, as even the best and ablest will disagree in their thoughts, feelings, apprehensions, and judgments? Or, on the contrary, are we to attribute these seeming discrepancies not to man's weakness but to God's wisdom? And are we reverently to ponder their every divergence from one another, as no less fraught with truth than their evident unions? Not that we would for a moment forget that in the books of Scripture we have the beautiful maintenance of the individual, style and manner of the writers. But let us all and always remember that individuality sustained is a very distinct thing from error allowed, and that divine inspiration neither admits error nor destroys individuality.

That there are numerous and striking differences in the Gospels is plain to all but the most careless reader; that these differences are divinely given, and not the flaws of oversight, is equally certain to the believer. To confess the inspiration of the evangelists; and withal to attribute to the Gospels mistake of any kind, is to deceive oneself as well as sin against God. Inspiration is no more inspiration if it be compatible with error. To account for the shades of difference, to show how necessary, and reasonable, and divinely perfect they all are, is another matter, and depends on our measure of spiritual understanding and power; but no Christian ought to hesitate for an instant as to resenting every impeachment of the word of God.

Now God has taken care that of the writers of the Gospels, two (Matthew and John) should be apostles, and two (Mark and Luke) not, though all, of course, are alike inspired. Further, His wisdom has arranged that, of these two classes, one of each (Mark and John) should adhere to chronological order, and the others (Matthew and Luke) should adopt, to a certain extent, a grouping of facts necessarily different from the simple transcription of the facts as they occurred. It is remarkable that to our evangelist, though not an apostle, we are indebted for the clearest view of the historical line of our Savior's ministry, followed by that which closed and crowned it, from the cross to the ascension. The proofs that Mark, in his brief, rapid, but most graphic sketch, preserves the series intact, will appear from time to time as we pursue its course. The fact is stated here, the importance of which, if accepted as true, is manifest; for we thus have a standard of sequence whereby we can measure, as on an absolutely perfect scale, the displacements of Matthew and Luke. We have, then, to consider in detail the principle and objects which the Holy Ghost had in view when He led these evangelists to gather together certain incidents, miracles, or discourses, taken out of their place, but according to an order quite as real as that of Mark, and, of course, still more proper for their own specific design.

The omission or insertion of particular points in one or more Gospels, not in the rest, is due to the same cause. For example, the first dawning of the true light on the hearts of Andrew, John, Peter, etc., is given nowhere but in John 1.

> He falleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

On the other hand, not John but the other evangelists show us their official summons to follow Christ and become fishers of men; but of these Luke only (Luke 5) furnishes, and this out of its actual date, the details of the miraculous draught of fishes which the Lord caused to act with such searching power on the soul of Peter, as well as on his partners. Otherwise, the succession of events in Luke coalesces with that of Mark, save that the former alone opens with the scene in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-29), which so live portrayed the intervention of divine goodness, Jesus anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, and, on His rejection by His own people, the overflowing of grace to the Gentiles. Matthew here (Matt. 4:23-25) has no details, but dwells on His preaching and miracles throughout all Galilee, and its widespread fame and effects; after which broad outline follows the Sermon on the Mount, transplanted from its place as to date, so as to give at the outset a fuller exposition of the principles of the kingdom. Mark has not the Sermon; his task was not to unfold the character of the kingdom of heaven in contradistinction to the law (as the Prophet like unto and greater than Moses does in Matthew), but to recount the works and gospel-ministry of the Lord; its place, if it had been inserted there, would have been, I believe, in the middle of ch. 3. Thus, the comparison of the chronological line of things in Mark, as being, so to speak, a fixed scale, greatly facilitates our perception of the displacements in Matthew or Luke, and our consideration of the divine wisdom which, in either case, so ordered their accounts.

To return.

> There came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean {Mark 1:40}.

What a picture of helpless misery this leper kneeling before Jesus! not therefore without hope, for he besought the Savior in his deep distress. There was no cure for leprosy; if God cured, there were offerings for cleansing. "Am I God to kill and make alive," said the alarmed king of Israel, "that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" In truth, to be a leper was to be "as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh, out of his mother's womb" (Num. 12:12). Yet was this leper importunate with Jesus, of Whose power he had no doubt. "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." This was the only question in a heart broken down to feel his real condition, his urgent and extreme need. Was Jesus willing? And what an answer came to feeble faith! For God will be God evermore, and surpass even our truest thoughts of Himself.

> And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean {Mark 1:41}.

What new thing was this on earth! A man most surely, yet, as

surely, infinitely more than man; a heart touched with exquisite feelings of pity; a hand stretched to touch a leper! Was this law? Had it been only law, and a mere man in question, there would have been not the cleansing of the unclean, but the defilement of him who ventured into contact with that loathsome, forbidden object. But descend ever so low as He might in grace, Jesus was the Son of God, a divine person, Who alone of all men could sinlessly say, "*I will*; be thou clean." No exertion of power could have so met the leper's wants, his wants of soul as well as of body. The tenderness, the perfect, unselfish love that touched him -- what should not this be to our hearts? Assuredly, it revealed the heart of Jesus, as no words alone could have done; and yet the words revealed One Who was God on earth. It was divine grace in man, in Jesus, the perfect servant of God, and the more blessedly serving man's necessities, because thus perfectly serving God. Hence, immediate cleansing followed, the very reverse of contamination contracted. "And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed."

> And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man, etc. {Mark 1:43, 44}.

It was of importance that the priest, at the sight of the leper cleansed, should be compelled to own and witness and, as it were, formally take cognizance of the proof that the hand of God was there at work, not now writing judgment on the proud profanity of man, but in the might, and withal deepest condescension, of grace working the cure of abject and otherwise hopeless wretchedness and suffering, the standing type of a sinner. Besides, grace respects and maintains law till death and resurrection brought in another, and surpassing, and abiding glory for those who have their portion in it by faith; neither does it seek its own credit, but that God in all things should be glorified through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

> But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places; and they came to Him from every quarter {Mark 1:45}.

Jesus sought not His own things; and just, as in the previous scene (v. 37) human applause was but the occasion of His turning away from the eclat of miracles to other and more despised work; so here He avoids town for neglected wilds, though ever open to the appeal of need, come whence it may.

Mark 2

We have seen the Lord formally introduced and entering on His public gospel ministry, endowed with the power of the Spirit and tempted in vain, though to the uttermost, by the devil. We have seen Him, after calling chosen witnesses, expose and expel the unclean spirit which possessed a man. There was the power of God, no less than the authority of the word. Extreme violent sickness fled and strength was ministered-strength to minister -- at His hand: diseases and demons alike yielded to this Minister of good in an evil day, Who sought not their testimony but the face of His Father, in secret, while men slept. But if preaching the gospel and driving out devils was His main service, His compassionate heart and hand were open to every cry of need, as the leper proved who came in the abject confession of his misery, whose healing He subjects rigorously to the Levitical law of cleansing and thus compels the priests themselves to behold, in this very subjection to the law, the evidence of the presence and power of One Who was above it.

After an interval spent in desert places with such as flocked to Him by the fame which kept Him from any city, we find our Lord once more in Capernaum; and at once crowds besiege, not the house only, but the very door, to hear the word He was speaking (Mark 2:1, 2). Alas! Capernaum, Wert thou not exalted to heaven? Art thou not brought down to hell? The mighty works done in thee were less mighty than the word which thus attracted thee, as a very lovely voice of one that had a pleasant voice and could play well on an instrument; and yet all fell on heedless hearts and unploughed consciences; and they knew not, though they did know and will yet, that a prophet, and more than a prophet, was among them.

But if the mass listened only with their ears, there was faith which persevered in face of difficulties, and failed not to make its suit to Jesus. What could seem more desperate? The leper at least could come to Him, could beseech, could kneel down to Him: how could the paralytic pierce the throng which severed him from the Savior? If he could not come himself, he could be brought. And so it was. They come bringing the paralytic on his bed, or couch, which was borne of four.

> And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay (Mark 2:4).

O Lord, how sweet, how refreshing to Thy heart this confidence in Thee, this most eloquent, even if unuttered, appeal to Thy love and power! It was faith, not alone of the patient, but of his bearers; and faith, now as ever, gets not only what it asks, but far more and better.

> When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee (Mark 2:5).

Yes, this was the root of the evil, deeper than either leprosy or paralysis -- sin -- which man accounts so small a matter, a mere moral scar on the surface! What was sin not to Him Who on the cross was made sin? Who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? Filled with love, and in view of the faith which has there sought Him out, He acts in the sovereignty of grace and pronounces the wondrous words, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." He Who knew all men, and did not commit

Himself to them; He Who knew God and His handiwork commits Himself to faith. It may be weak faith, but it is of God; and His eye was quick to see it and to bless it according to all the love of His heart. "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

But Satan, too, had his congregation there.

> There were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? {Mark 2:6, 7}.

They were wise in their own conceits, they were judges of law and gospel, and neither doers of the one, nor believers of the other. They were worse. Receptors of Christ and His mercy, their proud reason disdained the blessed truth of God their proud self-righteousness spurned and hated that grace of which they never knew the need. The amplest evidence of holy power, the power of God, in opposition to Satan and in compassion to man, had been vouchsafed; but what of that to reasoning scribes, used to the world as it is, and jealous of their own religious importance? One here below pronouncing the forgiveness of sins to a miserable sinner who had not even sought it! This was in their eyes startling, blasphemous, an encroachment on God's prerogative. Not that they cared for God or loved man, but they hated Jesus for His grace; and if it were the truth, their occupation was gone. But no, it could not be it was unheard of since the world began:

> Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

Ah, there was the secret; the glory of Jesus was unknown, His divine dignity entirely left out of the account. The principle they urged was true, the application fatally false. How often this is the rock on which religious unbelievers split and perish!

And yet forthwith (Mark 2:8, 9) He gave them evidence of what and who He was; for He perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned in their hearts, taxed them with their hidden thoughts, and appealed to themselves whether it was easier by a word to convey forgiveness or a bodily cure. Which claim was readiest? Who but a divine person, or the wielder of divine power, could say either the one or the other? They were equally easy to God, alike impossible to man. "But that ye may know," says He (in evident reference to Psa. 103:3)

> that the Son of man hath power (*ἐξουσίαν*, the right as well as the ability) on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion (Mark 2:10-12).

The outward sign of power guaranteed the gift of grace; and both betokened that He Who spoke was the Son of man on earth.

It will be observed that, though the Lord does here appropriate to Himself the double character of mercy, which Israel are yet to attribute to Jehovah in Psa. 103, it is not as Christ or Messiah, properly speaking, but as "Son of man." So He was. ever wont to speak. It is the title of His manhood, both in suffering rejection and in glory; as such He blesses faith here, as such He will judge unbelief by and by (John 5:27). Thus He vindicated on earth, by the powers of the world to come, that mercy which forgave the sinful soul before them. What a withering rebuke to caviling scribes! What a triumphant testimony to the gospel of grace in the name of Jesus! And God does not now leave Himself without a witness, where His Spirit carries to the heart the power of that name; and a witness that fails not to tell on the consciences where there are eyes to see the holy strength and liberty of one previously degraded in sin, and shame, and folly. Sin withers the man, as well as covers him with guilt. He Who pardons, communicates life and power, to the glory of God; and this as Son of man, the name of mercy to the ruined that bow to Him.

The next scene, after the record of His teaching by the seaside (Mark 2:13), still more opens and manifests the outflowing of grace: the call of Levi, the publican (or Matthew, as he calls himself). What a step and change! From the receipt of custom to follow Jesus, soon to be an apostle when the twelve were ordained! (Mark 3). No trade, no name was more scandalous in Israel. This was the very occasion for grace, as our Lord proves by His choice. Nor was this all, for as Jesus sat at meat in his house,

> many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples; for they were many, and they followed Him {Mark 2:15}.

In Pharisaic eyes He could not have gone lower in familiar love, unless He had turned outright to the Gentiles; for shepherds were not more an abomination to the Egyptians, than publicans were to the scribes and Pharisees. Hence, when they saw Him eat with these reprobates, they say, not to Jesus but to His disciples (for only pride and mischief were in their hearts),

> How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

But this effort to undermine Him with His followers and so to shake them, only draws out from the Lord His own strong, increasingly strong, expression of grace, as well as His exposure of His and their enemies' self-destructive pride:

> When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners (Mark 2:17).

On their own showing, what claim had they on all He had to bestow?

Next, a similar spirit of dishonesty and ill-will, which entangles the disciples of John also, goes to Jesus about His disciples (Mark. 2:18); for they and the Pharisees, who used to fast, came to Him asking why His disciples did not. But the Master stands up in their behalf and shows that a wisdom above their own led them in their weakness. Where was the sense, the propriety, the reverence in fasting if the Bridegroom was there? John Baptist had announced better things; but Pharisaism despised Jesus and had no heart for the joys of His presence. Let them all learn, however, that the days were coming when He should be taken away, and then

should they fast.

In truth, the whole scene intimated to those who had ears to hear the grave economical change that was at hand, and that Messiah's presence now was but transitional. His call of Levi and His eating and drinking with publicans were no dark signs that Israel as such were lost; the disciples' enjoyment of His brief stay before His taking away plainly signified the abrupt and impending catastrophe -- seemingly His, but really theirs; and the verses that follow (Mark 2:21, 22) bear witness to the new character of God's ways therein and to their incompatibility with Judaism. Neither its displayed form, nor its inner power can blend with the old thing: the kingdom of God, being not in word but in power, must have a new and suited vehicle wherein to work. Legal forms only prove their weakness if there be the energy of the Holy Ghost. The worn-out Jewish garment and old bottles disappear: new wine demands new bottles. Christianity, in its principle and its practice, is a fresh and full development of divine blessing. It was not a question of mending the old, but accepting the new.

The incident of the first Sabbath-day is here recorded, which, in point of fact, took place at this very time; for we must constantly bear in mind that Mark pursues the thread of history. Our Lord is intimating the break that was about to take place with Judaism and the introduction of the new character and power of the kingdom of God. Now this is a very serious truth always, but it was peculiarly solemn to Israel. What more perplexes a godly person than the very thought of God changing His mind? What difficulty greater than the notion that God could, as it were, unsay or undo what He had previously laid down? And I think there ought to be great delicacy in dealing with souls where we find there is a godly jealousy as to this, even though it may be ignorant and not without prejudice. But still it was the evident fact, that what God set up for a specific purpose in Israel never fully reflected His own mind. Eternal truth, breaking through the clouds of Judaism, shone out in the person of Christ, and is now verified in experience as well as faith by the Spirit's working in the children of God.

In a word, it was never the purpose of God to reveal Himself and bring out all His mind in connection with the Jews but with the church. Christianity and not Judaism is the expression of God's mind. Christ Himself, properly speaking, is the image of the invisible God; and Christianity is the practical present result. It is the application of the life, mind, and affections of Christ to the heart and walk of those who are brought to God; and this, founded on His work and correspondent to His place in heaven by the Spirit sent down. All through the Jewish system, as well as before it, there were souls waiting for Christ, and the only persons that ever honored God in the Jewish system were those, who, by faith, were above that system. Those alone walked blameless in the various ordinances of the law who looked for the Messiah. It was this expectation, given by the Spirit of God, which lifted them above the earthly thoughts, the groveling desires, the selfishness of nature. It raised them above themselves, if one may so say, as well as above their fellows, for there is always divine power in Christ; and although it was far more fully displayed after Christ came, yet, as one may see before the sun rises, there is such a thing as the dawn, and streaks that betoken the coming day, so those who looked by the faith of Christ beyond the mere passing shadows which met and satisfied the religiousness of nature -- those only -- honored God even in the outward ordinances of Israel.

It is the same principle now as ever, but in a fuller way; because nothing is more certain than that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the saint of God, in the Christian. But how is it fulfilled? Never merely by endeavoring to keep the law. It never was fulfilled in that way nor can be. In point of fact, as we know, the men that were thus jealous for the law were themselves the greatest and bitterest of the enemies of the Lord Jesus. You know it was fleshly pride as to the law which blinded them into the delusion that even our blessed Lord Himself did not sufficiently honor it. We easily gather that Paul was taxed with the same reproach. And Stephen too was stoned to death because of this fertile and fatal mistake. So that we may lay it down as a fixed point, that the men who put the ordinances, or the outward regulations of God, in the place of God and Christ Himself, are men that never keep it up; even as Stephen told the Jews that they received the law by the disposition of angels, and had not kept it. These were the men whose voices were loudest about it to those who really honored God in that law as well as in the faith of the Messiah.

Take every believer -- I do not say on every occasion; for there is, sad to say, a danger of our own nature working, and that nature neither believes in Jesus nor keeps the law, but is a law-breaking, Christ-denying thing: the flesh is enmity against God Himself, and nature working its own way always dishonors God. But take the believer—not when he is yielding to his own corrupt nature; take him where, in truth alone, so to speak, we can rightly think of a believer as such -- in the exercise of his faith, in the manifestation of the new life which the grace of God has given him; and what is the character of this life? It cleaves to God, it delights in His word, it loves His will, it is attracted by whatever manifests Him. All proves that the believer loves God in heart and soul, loves Him better than himself; for he hates himself, and is ready to own, just so far as faith is in operation, his own folly, his frequent and shameful failure, while he seeks to justify and cleave to God, and -delights to make Him known.

How comes this? It is that divine principle of life, the energy of the Spirit of God, acting in the new man which enjoys each thing that flows from and displays God, and is the exercise of the new nature which we derive from God. Again, the believer, just in proportion as he has Christ before his soul, walks in the Spirit according to the will of God: if he has not Christ before him, it is as if he had no new nature; life is there, but it is only Christ that maintains, and manifests, and brings it out, giving its full exercise and scope. The believer's heart goes out towards misery, yea, towards poor guilty sinners. Flesh despises and hates, or is indifferent; but the new nature, under the Spirit's power, goes out in compassion and desire for another's blessing.

There, I say, is love again; and thus you have the two great moral principles, love to God and love to man. The believer, and the believer alone, walks in them; if he has Christ in his eye, he has them in his heart, and the Holy Ghost strengthens him to walk accordingly. It is thus that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those that walk after the Spirit. The Spirit of God is careful to show it is fulfilled in them that walk after the Spirit, not in such as only stand for the law.

Take the Jew, to whom the law was given; does he manifest real love? I do not say that some are not upright men, possessed of natural benevolence. The question now is of the manifestation of active love to God and man. If men have merely the law before them, what then? The Jew himself is the most striking example and proof that flesh is good for nothing; he is bent upon his own things in this world, coveting a place everywhere, loving money, and so on, of which we are all of us apt to be guilty by nature. Undoubtedly this is the case with the mere unconverted Israelite or the nominal Christian, in whom the Holy Ghost does not act. Unless Christ, either as an object of hope before He came, or now since He has come as the object of faith, be before the heart, there is no reality, nor can be, because the flesh is a false and hating thing. Unless a man have a new nature distinct from and above his own, there never is true (that is, divine) love.

The one means of accomplishing the law is to have Christ before and above us, yet in that our portion by faith. Hence it was that Enoch and Noah, and the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who never heard of the law, yet obeyed and pleased God. Were they not holy and godly men? Certainly they were. What made them so? The faith of the woman's seed, the promised Son, the Messiah. Then, when the law was given, what was it that made Moses and Aaron saints of the Lord? The law? Never. It was Christ. It was having Him before their soul. Not that God's law was not honored; but what enabled them to delight in the expression of God's mind -- be it what it might -- was their looking for and believing in God's blessed promise of the coming Deliverer, the Kinsman-Redeemer. And now He is come, that which has delivered us from wrath and judgment delivers us also, in proportion as it is the object of our souls, practically from self and the world, from corruption and violence of every kind. Let Christ be forgotten by a believer, what is the effect? He shows the pride, vanity, foolishness, malice of the old man; it is not of course, what is proper to him as a believer, but what belonged to him as a man before he believed. Self is allowed to come out and show its own hateful colors, when Christ is not the one standard and object Who fills the mind's eye and heart.

Now our Lord, at this very time, brings out, in His pointed acts connected with the Sabbath-day, an illustration of what has been before us; and I take this opportunity of dwelling on it a little in a practical way and also doctrinally, seeking the instruction for our own souls that the Lord gives us in these incidents. It is true, that the first and primary object was to fill up what He had already shown. To put a new piece upon an old garment would only make the rent worse; so to pour new wine into old bottles would only risk the loss both of the wine and the bottles. The attempt to mix the new forms and spirit of the kingdom of God with the old ways of Judaism would only end -- not in mending Judaism nor in preserving Christianity, but -- in the ruin of both. And this precisely has been the issue in the history of Christendom. The palpable failure of the outward Christian profession is the practical evidence of this truth. What Satan aimed at was to mingle together the old Jewish ordinances with Christian truth, and the result is such painful confusion that the light of truth and the grace of God are utterly darkened; such a complete jumbling together that simple souls are perplexed, to their exceeding loss and damage. They cannot in such a state see the difference between grace and law, and what it is to be brought under the name of Christ. All these things are dim before them; and hence ensues uncertainty of soul and powerlessness practically in glorifying God.

Our Lord follows this up by the instruction of the Sabbath-day.

> It came to pass that He went through the corn-fields on the Sabbath-day, and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath-day that which is not lawful? {Mark 2:23, 24}.

Now it is clear that there was no law of God against the case. The censure was a law of their own, and a notion of men which looks upon an outward fact and made a system of it -- man's constant danger. It is quite true that God had ordained upon the Sabbath-day rest for man and beast; but there was no ground whatever from the law of God to forbid a hungry man, as he passed through a field, from plucking the ears of corn to satisfy his want; nay, it was thoroughly according to the beneficence of God to provide from His people's plenty for such urgent need. There was remarkable care in Israel for the stranger, the bereaved, and the suffering. The poor in the land were not to be forgotten in the joy of harvest, and an express ordinance of God forbade their making clean riddance of the corners of the field.

But how came it to pass that there should be famished Israelites thus passing through a corn-field? And if such want existed, was it God or His enemy who turned the Sabbath-day into an iron vice for afflicting the sad at the will of heartless religionists? Thus it was that the Pharisees in their pretended desire to honor God on the one side, showed, on the other, their complete ignorance of His heart and character, which breathed the fullness of mercy towards want and wretchedness; all was set aside by the miserable codicil that man added to the will of God. But there was One on earth Who at once detected the forger's hand that presumed to meddle with the first testament. The Lord stands up for the guiltless.

> Have ye never read what David did, when he had need and was an hungred, he and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the

priests, and gave also to them that were with him? {Mark 2:25, 26}.

Our Lord here points to the rejection of the object of God's counsels -- of David, for instance, in his day, who was the anointed king, even while he was the despised one and hunted for his life upon the mountains of Israel. He and his company typified Jesus; and Jesus was found now in circumstances morally similar to those of David, anointed but not yet come to the crown. Thus it is that the Lord vindicates the disciples and maintains the principle that when God's witness is refused, it is madness for the rejecters to pretend to be glorifying God. Were they then despising a greater than David? For such to talk about the Sabbath-day in order to lay heavier burdens on the righteous, what was it in God's eyes? The Lord of glory was upon earth, and how came it that His disciples wanted even ears of corn to stay their hunger? What a tale this told! How was it that the disciples of Jesus were thus miserable? How out of course must be the foundations, for the Lord and His disciples to lack the most ordinary necessaries of life! Who were these graters of malicious words about the Sabbath-day that could forbid even this scanty pittance, while God's mercy would refuse to none, and least of all on that day? But that the Pharisees, rejecting the Lord Jesus, their own Messiah -- that they should have the face to abuse the Sabbath against His disciples! David, when he was in destitution because of the wickedness of Saul, who held the throne in an evil way, David and his followers could eat the showbread which was only, had things been in order, for the priests. If thus the hallowed bread became common, what was the past to the present? In the presence of the evil that despises God's beloved and faithful witnesses in the earth, the outward ordinances of the Lord lose their application for the time being. The sanctity of ritual disappears before the rejection of the Lord and His people.

And He said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath {Mark 2:27}.

The Sabbath was not intended to be a means of increasing the sufferings of poor man. If God sanctified it after the creation and enacted it at the giving of the law, was it that God wanted to make His people miserable? On the contrary, not only in its higher character, and beside the thought of His rest, of which it is a type, the Sabbath was made for man. Pharisees might turn the Sabbath into an engine for torturing man, but, in God's mind, the Sabbath came in most mercifully. There were the days of labor which God Himself had known something of in figure, for there was a time when He had wrought and made the earth; and God Himself was pleased to rest on the Sabbath and to sanctify it. Then sin came in and God could no longer own it, and His word is silent. We read of the Sabbath no more until God takes up His people in delivering mercy, and gives them manna from heaven. Then the Sabbath-day becomes again a marked thing, and rest follows, the type of Jesus sent down from above. It disappears from the beginning of the first book of Scripture and reappears in the second. God makes rest once more. He was giving to man in grace when He brought Israel out of Egypt. Of this the Sabbath was the appropriate sign. But Israel, understanding not the grace of God, accepted the conditions of His law. They took their stand upon their own righteousness when God gave them the ten commandments, and the consequence was that man under law failed miserably, dishonoring God, setting up calves of gold, bringing discredit, shame, and scandal upon the name of God throughout the whole world. This is no more than we have each done. The Israelites made this fatal mistake when they surrounded Mount Sinai. Instead of reminding God of His promise to Israel, instead of confessing that they could not_ be trusted and that it is only the mercy of God that enables any one to do His will, they, on the contrary, undertook boldly to earn the promised blessings by their own obedience. But they broke down increasingly till it came to the crisis of David's rejection in Israel God showed where His heart was, as He loves to, do at such a time. Granted that the. showbread was only for the priests; yet for them to keep their consecrated bread and let the anointed king starve would be strange homage to God and the king. And now the Son of David, the Lord of David, was there, and more rejected, more despised, than David himself.

The Lord, after He has thus drawn out of scripture the true lesson for the day, brings out the general beneficent object of God in the Sabbath for all days.

The Sabbath was made for man.

The Pharisees thought and spoke as if man was made for the Sabbath, to be put under it thus but the Sabbath was made for man's good and rest, raising his thoughts above the mere labor of his hands. But He brings in another principle:

The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath {Mark 2:28}.

He connects that with the Sabbath being made for man, but breaks out into a greater truth: the person of Christ is above all ordinances. His glory, even as the rejected man, eclipses all the twinkling rites instituted by the Lord Himself. I have no hesitation in saying that the Lord Who gave the law at Sinai, and He Who afterwards was born and lived a man upon earth, was the same blessed divine Person. He Who always acted throughout the Old Testament in government, Who came down and, suffered, and died upon the cross in grace, He now maintains, not merely that. He is Lord of the Sabbath in virtue of being divine, but of being Son of man; and what is the importance of this?

"Son of man" is the title of His rejection. "Son of man" is the name that He assumes when the Jews refused Him as the Messiah. You will find a remarkable proof of this in Matt. 16:13 and Luke 9:18 (the same fact recorded in the two different evangelists). He forbids His disciples to say that He was "the Christ." He leaves aside for a while the glory of His Messiahship: as such He had come and presented Himself to the Jews; but they would not have Him. Now He says, as it were, it is too late: I have given them ample proof -- miracle, prophecy, My own ways and words; everything shows that I am the Messiah, but they will not have Me. It is not that proof is wanting, but their hearts are steeled against all evidences. They are the enemies of God, and proved to be

such by refusing what God has fully vouchsafed. Now He takes another character altogether -- "Son of man."

And what may well and deeply affect us is this, it is as Son of man that He suffers on the cross.

> The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

"The Christ" was a title in particular connection with Israel after the flesh. He was their Messiah. He belonged to no other nation. He was the promised King of the Jews. But the Jews would not have Him. Well, says the Lord, you cannot deny that I am Son of man. It is a lowly name; but, after all, the Son of man opens the way to His magnificent rights and glory over all mankind. The Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The Son of man takes the kingdom over all tribes, and nations, and tongues. What leads to it all? His rejection as Messiah. He suffers as Son of man first, because it is determined, according to God's counsels and grace, to have companions with Him in the very same glory. It is through that very same fact that Christ has suffered as the Son of man, and has surely taken His glory because of it, that we shall be with Him -- that all Christians will be without a spot or stain, or any such thing: all through the suffering Son of man. But if I have Him humbled, I have the glorious Son of man.

In the present case, however, the Lord does not go further than the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath. He accepts His rejection, but He pleads for His disciples before those who boasted and disputed about the Sabbath, while they were dishonoring the Lord of the Sabbath. Could they deny what David had done, and God had sealed, sanctioned, and recorded for Israel's instruction? That is the first defense. The next is that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for it. The third plea, which is rather a consequence, is, that He Who was a blessed man, the Son of man, is Lord of the Sabbath. It is the glory of His person as the rejected, suffering Man: as such, and not only as God, He is above the Sabbath-day -- its Lord.

Mark 3

Jesus is in the synagogue upon another Sabbath-day; and there was a man there which had a withered hand, and they watched Him whether He would heal him on the Sabbath-day, that they might accuse Him. How remarkable it is that Satan gets an instinctive sense of what the Lord was going to do! Satan outwits himself in his servants by expecting good from the Lord and the Lord's people. This is a remarkable thing. Again, if you find a child of God doing something wrong, the world feels it at once. Even they have an instinctive feeling of what the child of God ought to do. They know that he has no business with the pleasures and vanities of the world. They are surprised to see a Christian there. Why is this? They have not a bit of conscience themselves. Those who have got a purged conscience or those who have got no conscience at all are far more likely to see what is right than those that carry a bad conscience. The man who had no conscience at all offers to follow the Lord wherever He goes. There was no struggle in it, no reality, no moral purpose. It was the mere vanity of the flesh, the same kind of presumption that said,

> All that the Lord hath said we will do.

The flesh always assumes its own competency, whereas faith feels that it is only God Who can work anything good and can ripen the fruits from trees of His own planting.

These men, I must repeat, who were assembled in the synagogue, expected the Lord to do good. They were looking for this; but they judged from their own thoughts what an awful thing it would be to heal on the Sabbath-day! Our Lord knew what they thought about it, but faith and love are very different things from human prudence. Mere prudence would have led a man not to have given them the smallest excuse, but grace does not mind giving people handles if they are disposed to take them. Grace is bent upon pleasing God, whether people like it or not; and Jesus therefore says to the man that had the withered hand,

> Stand forth.

He gives it a publicity and stamps the character of the transaction in the most manifest manner -- makes it a sign of what grace is, before them all.

> He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-days or to do evil? to save life or to kill? But they held their peace. And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out; and his hand was restored whole as the other (Mark 3:4, 5).

But those that would not let our Lord do what was good were ready, even as He hinted Himself, to do what was evil on the Sabbath-day. They conspired to kill Him, the Lord; and to kill Him, for what? Because He brought the goodness of God before their very eyes; and they hated God. They would not have allowed it to themselves for a moment, that Jesus was even a good man; so blind and perverted is the judgment when the heart is not right! All the grace of Jesus only appeared to their eyes as the most abominable iniquity. We may well think what the heart of man is, and learn hence what our own natural thoughts and feelings are -- not a whit better than theirs.

The point of this second tale is not so much the passing away of mere ordinances in presence of the rejected Christ, or the supremacy of His person above the highest earthly claim; rather is it the necessary superiority of grace as God's character and work in a world of sin and misery. How came this man with a withered hand in Israel? It was through sin somewhere, and was the evident token of misery. Could God rest where there reigned either the one or the other? Was either the manifestation of God? And what were these proud

sabbatarians, these enemies of grace and of Jesus? Were they, or was He, the true witness of what God is? Not more surely were they false representatives of God's character than Jesus was the manifestation of God's power as well as of His love. Jesus showed both in that word, "Stretch forth thine hand"; and by its restoration to be "whole as the other" proved that God, the Goodness of goodness, was there. And He was there, not maintaining the Pharisees in their thoughts about His law, but vindicating His own grace; for grace alone can bring blessing into a sin-stricken world. This may suffice for the general teaching of the second Sabbath-day, which I think is full of instruction, as giving us the witness that our Lord bore -- His patient, gracious ministry in deed as well as in word.

But a few words must now be said upon our relation to the sabbath. When God sanctified and instituted that day, whether you take the time of creation or the giving of the law, it was emphatically the seventh day and no other. No man could have been thought to honor God, had he kept the fourth or fifth, or any other. but the last day of the week. Instead of this, to have kept the first day of the week would have been an act of rebellion against God. How comes the mighty change? Is it that the first day is simply substituted for the seventh day? Is this what Scripture teaches? Taking the Acts of the Apostles, we find there that the apostles and others used to go on the sabbath-day into the synagogue of the Jews -- used to teach the Jews on that day, whenever there was an open door. On the first day they used to meet with Christians to take the Lord's Supper, or at any other services which might open. There was no such thing as dropping one day for another. Had it been a substitution, they would not still have gone on the sabbath-day with the Jew, and on the first day with the Christian. Yet they did both. At first such of the Christians as had been Jews went to the synagogue; and they were at liberty to take a part in reading scripture. If this were done now, generally, the person would be considered an intruder; but in a Jewish synagogue it was allowed and welcomed.

The apostles, therefore, and others, were perfectly justified in using this liberty for the truth; they were acting in the spirit of grace. Wherever we can go with a good conscience, and without joining in anything that is contrary to the word of God, there one may and ought to go, if it would be a service to the Lord. But where one is required to join in that or with those we know to be opposed to the will of God, how are we free to go? Are we at liberty in anything to make light of what we know to be disobedience? But in this case there was nothing of the kind; for at the synagogue they simply read the word of God and gave leave that it should be expounded. Who could say that this was wrong? If we knew that the Scripture and nothing but the Scripture was read upon any day of the week in a so-called church or chapel, and there were perfect room left to help, should one not be delighted to go, if indeed there would not be a kind of obligation upon us? If it were a mere crowd of heathen reading the Scriptures, one might enter it, and speak with them. The door would be, I believe, open, on the Lord's part, and grace would take advantage of it.

These facts are enough, then, to show that it is a great mistake to suppose that the Lord's day is a mere substitution for the sabbath. On the contrary, the Lord's day has a far higher character than the ancient day of rest. Not that one would for a moment forget that the sabbath-day was divinely appointed. It was founded upon two great truths of God. First, it involved, and displayed, and promised, as it were (in type, at least), creation-rest: it witnessed rest after God had finished His work of creating. The second notable connection with the sabbath-day was this: it was the day of law. On these two occasions of surpassing moment to man and Israel was the sabbath brought out by God with peculiar solemnity. The sabbath-day rests, therefore, upon divine ground; but it is the ground of creation and law. Is either of the two the Christian place? In no wise. Are you a mere child of man, a creature now? Then you are assuredly sinful and must be cast into hell. Are you on the ground of law? Then you are lost and condemned, for you are under the curse.

But the Christian is on the footing neither of creation nor of law. On what is he, then? He belongs to the new creation and stands in grace; the clean, exact contrast of the foundations of the sabbath-day. Hence it is that the first day of the week comes before us as a wholly new thing, the holy memorial of divine blessing, proper to the Christian individually and to the church of God. And on what basis does it rest? When Christ rose from the grave with a new life to give to every soul that believes in Him, at once Israel is set aside. Risen from the dead, what more connection had He with Israel than with the Gentiles? He was entirely above them both. We meet Him there, His work done, in resurrection-life. He is found, after that, meeting with disciples only; not with Jews and Gentiles, but in the midst of the assembly or that which is the type of it. But He first meets with individual saints, Mary Magdalene and others. We find Him in the assembly on the first day of the week. And the Lord's day has this character to us now. It is first the day of Christ's resurrection, when not merely the work of redemption was done, but the work of new creation begun in mighty power. Thus the new day is founded, not upon creation, but upon redemption; and it is the expression of grace, not of law.

These are the scriptural ways of putting the matter. Therefore is it to be maintained, not that the Christian man has got no special day in which he meets his Savior; for he has one incomparably more blessed than the sabbath of man. It is not that he has not got as good a day as the sabbath of Israel: he has an infinitely better one. He is not merely remembering a creation, which is passed away; but he has entered on a new creation. Not that he is occupied with a paradise that is lost; he looks onward confidently to that which is gained. The paradise of God is opened to him. It is not that he is following and occupied with Adam that fell; he has before his soul the Second man, the last Adam, that rose. These are our hopes. He is not, therefore, within the domain of the law that will curse him, but in the atmosphere of grace by which he is saved.

This shows us why people, whether they understand the difference or not -- all Christians -- keep the first day and not the sabbath. They may call it the sabbath-day; but this is quite a mistake, and a grievous one. Those who view it as the sabbath may be most excellent persons, but the notion is seriously an error in doctrine and practice. It is an earthly, Jewish principle; and it is a Christian's duty, if he know better, not to spare it, however he may feel for the prejudices of the godly.

I have heard of believers who could say, There is no harm in working upon the Lord's day. Who put such a thought into their heads? Seeking gain upon the Lord's day! Why, even the world shames those who do so. Christendom owns the Lord's day. They may not enter into it intelligently. It is impossible for them to appreciate its roots and fruit. But a Christian behaving more selfishly or loosely than a worldly man -- what a picture! How is the Lord's day, then, to be kept? It is a remarkable fact that nowhere is it made into a commandment. This is not the character of Christianity. When the Lord (as in John) speaks about commandments, they are always of a spiritual nature, and not like an ordinance. Take even baptism. People may call it an ordinance, but it is a misconception. So as to the Lord's Supper. When the Lord says, "This do in remembrance of Me," how lowering to call this a commandment! Supposing you were at the dying bed of one who loved you better than anyone else in this world; if he said, Here is my Bible, take it and keep it in remembrance of me; would you call this a commandment? Would it be the reason for keeping the Bible that you had a peremptory injunction to keep it? Such a thought would show that there was no heart there, and very little head either. I can understand a person in authority, if a child lacked feeling and sense, laying down something as a positive charge, just because the child wanted heart to do the right thing, unless it were made a matter of stringent obligation and penalty. But not so does the Lord speak to us. If you love the person who gives you the Bible to keep in remembrance of him, it is not as a mere commandment: but his heart gives you this token of his love to you, and your love keep it, of course, and keeps it best because it is love that does it.

There are places where commandments come in most beautifully. Where in the New Testament do you hear of commandments most? In the Gospels where the Lord's Supper, Christian baptism, or both, are shown out, commandments to the Christian are not, as such, mentioned. On the other hand, it is in the Gospel of John that we have the Spirit of God so full of the new commandments that the Lord lays upon us. These were the expressions of His mind. They brought in not His love only but His authority, which is blessed whenever it does come in, and the child of God loves and values both thoroughly. But if you bring in such thoughts into the Lord's Supper, what a complete misapprehension of the Lord's mind! It falsifies baptism and the Lord's Supper to change them into things enjoined in the way of commandment. They are the most precious institutions of the Lord, the symbol and acknowledgment of the great standing facts of Christianity.

As to the Lord's day, I must again recall the remarkable manner in which it is introduced in the New Testament. There is no positive word such as, "The first day of the week thou shalt keep." Wickedness thence infers that it is not to be kept. Some take advantage not to observe the day, because the Lord does not make it a matter of positive command. Another class take advantage of it in another form, and assume that it is the business of the church to decide in such matters. One is human laxity, and the other the self-importance of man. The Lord's day comes before us as those that are quickened with Christ; stamped with His own special presence. Christ was, and, I believe, is, with His disciples in a manner peculiar to that day. I do not say that the Lord did not visit His disciples upon other days, but He was specially and pre-eminently with them gathered together on that day. This is enough for me. If I own the word of God as that which has supreme power over my soul, if I value every act of Christ as that from which I am to gather divine instruction, how can this be lost upon me? But the Holy Ghost follows it up. That day which our Lord consecrated with His own presence in the midst of His gathered saints, the Holy Ghost impresses upon His people. It is not brought out in the form of law or injunction or threat; but the church of God, whatever other days they might meet on, took especial care to meet on this day.

There was also a sweet connection between the Lord's Supper and His day. The earliest disciples took that Supper every day; they seemed as if they could hardly part when they got together; and they came together as often as they could, and everything gave place to this. Not that I think that the Pentecostal state of things was the most maturely blessed. There was singular power of simplicity in them, and very wonderful manifestation of divine grace: but I have little doubt there were many souls that went on and grew and enjoyed the Lord more than they ever did on that day. It is an evil, unfounded notion, because the flesh constantly tends to draw the believer back from the first enjoyment of the Lord, to think that therefore it must be so. There is no necessity for declension at all. There is a kind of first fervor and freshness that is very apt to be lost in the soul; but if there is real integrity of heart to the Lord, positive growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ will follow. And although there may be a certain kind of joy that is not so great at the end of ten or twenty years as it was on the first day of coming to the knowledge of the Savior, yet I do not believe that it is therefore a more spiritual state or more glorifying to God. One is the blessedness of an infant; the other of a full-grown soul, more firmly, calmly, unselfishly, it may be, honoring God in its way, provided the soul, along with increase of knowledge, maintains its singleness of heart to the Lord. That is where we fail: but as far as the power of the Spirit of God goes, there is no reason why a soul should not be as happy after fifty years as at the first.

In the course of the New Testament, I think you find this very thing; the Spirit of God taking up the first day and showing that it was not merely a hasty feeling of the

disciples, but a truly godly one. The Spirit of God directed it when the apostles were there, and. not only leads them on, but preserves the record of the fact for us. Therefore, in Acts 20:7, we have it recorded, that so it was after the Jerusalem-state, when they went up to the temple to worship and used to break bread at home. For let me say in passing, the margin of Acts 2:46 is correct; it is in contrast with worshiping in the temple. They used to pray in the temple because they had been Jews, and they took their Christian feast at home. Now it may have been always the same houses where persons went. There is no such idea as moving about from house to house, but it was at home, i.e., in a private house and not in the temple.

After this state of things was passed away, we hear of assembling to break bread on the Lord's day, the first day of the week.. And, when we think of it, there is peculiar force and blessedness in the first day of the week being the Christian day. What is the idea of the Sabbath-day? I take the first six days to myself, to the world, to earthly things, and then at the end of it, when I may be tired of: serving myself and other people, I finish with the Lord and give the last day to Him. But now how beautifully the Christian form of the truth comes in! It is the first day.. I begin with the Savior. I begin with His grace. I begin with Him that died for me and rose again. I am not a Jew, I am a Christian; and, therefore; let us not forget, it is the seventh day which is the sabbath, for the one; but the first day, which is the Lord's day, for the, other; the day of Him Who by His own blood, death, and resurrection has acquired a just title for my eternal and heavenly blessing. He had it in His own person; He was Jehovah, the Lord of all, before ever He came into the world; but now He is Lord on another ground -- that of redemption -- because He has died and risen. There is at once the open door of my blessing -- of your blessing -- divine blessing to every poor soul that is brought by grace to receive Him and bow to Him.

We will not dwell further upon this subject now. I have desired to convey with simplicity the general principle of these two sabbath-days. Instead of pursuing the subjects of the chapter for the present, it seemed better to bring out the divine character of the sabbath-day and the still more blessed and equally divine character of the first day; the one being the day for the Jew, the other for the Christian. The sabbath-day will re-appear on the earth in the millennium. I mean that the seventh day of the week will be then kept by the Jews. The prophecies are plain that the sabbath of the Lord is yet to be observed. But by whom? By Israel and by the Gentiles, too; for the Gentiles by and by will be subordinate to Israel, and both on earthly ground. God's intention is to exalt Israel to the first place on the earth. Meanwhile, what becomes of Christians? They will be taken out of the earth altogether; they will be in heaven; all question of particular days will be completely at an end; we shall be in the day of eternity, we shall have entered upon the rest of God, the sabbatism that remains. In spirit we have done so even now, because we have received Christ and eternal life in Christ. But then we shall be manifestly in the eternal day, when there will be neither first day nor last day, but one infinity in the glorified state, blessedly serving our God and the Lamb.

But upon the earth, when Israel will be restored and brought back to their own land and converted by God's goodness there, will they observe the Lord's day? No; they will keep the sabbath. If you look at Ezekiel, you will see the force of it exactly. You might be able from thence to form a map of Israel's condition in the land; it is given there so distinctly and positively, that a person might with little trouble lay down the landmarks of each tribe of Israel. Thus clear is the word of God as to the future disposition of each tribe within the borders of the Holy Land. They will have not only a glorious city and temple -- the name of it, "The Lord is there" -- but when that day of glory comes, they will not be as we are, keeping the day of resurrection, but the sabbath, which was a sign between the Lord and Israel. Looking at the scriptures, you will find how often the sabbath-day is said to be Jehovah's sign to them; and He will cause His people then to keep the sabbath-day. They will do so in a far more blessed way than ever they did; they will rest upon Christ, though they will not have the same heavenly assurance that the Christian has now. When Christ rose from the dead, He had done with the world; and we, too, in Him, have done with the world now in the spirit of our souls, and in the character of our relationship to God. "They are not of the world." How far? "Even as I am not of the world" {John 17:16}. Christ is the measure and standard of how far we are not of the world; and not being of the world, we have a day that hears the stamp of joy upon it. The day that Christ rose from the dead and was manifested as not of the world -- that is the day for the Christian. But inasmuch as the world will be made a blessed world then, and the Lord will make it His own world, they will have a day suited for the world, the sabbath-day. Nothing can be more plain or more important, practically.

May our souls, each of us for himself, learn the truth; and, having learned it, may we be witnesses of it in word and deed! May we stand forth by His grace as those who now have nothing to do in this world but the will of God, for the glory of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! That is the business of every soul that loves Jesus and rests upon His blood and is risen with Him.

Jesus was now made manifest in the holy grace and power of His ministry, the vanquisher of Satan, and withal subject to God, superior to ordinances even as Son of man and the asserter of God's right to do good in an evil world. Much as man might like to profit for his own interests by His power and the mercy in which it was wielded, enmity to God in Him soon displayed itself. The self-righteous and the profane take counsel how to destroy Him.

But, His hour not being yet come, Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea, retiring from the hypocritical malice of His enemies, but unwearied in the errand of love on which He was sent.

> And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem . . . and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things He did came unto Him.

> And He spake to His disciples that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him. For He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues (Mark 3:7-10).

After all, how little can man arrest the stream of blessing! Till God's time arrives to yield to the cross, the stream of testimony may be diverted, but it will flow to the eternal joy of the poor and needy who bow to Jesus. In the cross it overflowed. But the Lord, intent on the best blessings for man, provides against the over-pressure of a crowd too engrossed in the relief of bodily weakness and suffering; while He refuses the testimony of the unclean spirits, compelled to bow and own His glory (Mark 3:11, 12). It was not for such to make Him known. He received not testimony from man as such, much less from demons. What was the value of any recognition of His person unless it were of God's own working by the Spirit?

Far, however, from hiding the light under a bushel, our Master now enters on a new and momentous step in the testimony of grace.

> And He goeth up into a mountain [for ministry has its source on high, and in no wise has its sanction from the multitude], and calleth unto Him whom He would; and they came unto Him. And He ordained (or appointed) twelve that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils (demons) {Mark 3:13-16}.

It was an act not only new and strange to man's eye, but in truth independent of Israel and man, and most significant in every point of view. The Lord separates Himself from men to God, and summons in sovereign choice whom He would; and they came. And if He caused twelve to be with Him specially and to be sent by Him, it was, as in His own case, with marked prominence given to preaching, but with title and ability to heal diseases and expel demons; and even among the apostles there was a peculiar place assigned from the first to Simon, surnamed by Him Peter, and to the sons of Zebedee, whom He surnamed Boanerges, followed by the rest, though one of them, Andrew, was certainly among the first who saw and followed Jesus, and was the means of bringing to Jesus his own brother Simon. But there are last who become first, and the Lord, Who calls and orders all, alone is wise and worthy. What a testimony to the condition of men and things around! Men, the Jews, needed to be preached to; all was out of course. It was not a question of heathen only. It was in the midst of self-satisfied Israel that the lowly Son of God thus wrought.

On their coming home, a crowd again assembled so that they could not even eat bread. But His kinsmen felt the reproach of the world, and went out, at the singular tidings, to lay hold on Him as if He were out of His mind! They were ashamed of a relative, mad, to their thinking, Who virtually condemned all the world, especially in what He had just done. It was nature, always blind in divine things.

Not so merely:

> the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the demons He casteth out demons {Mark 3:22}.

They were filled and guided of the enemy, and knew well it was no case of a madman, but of a real power which cast out demons. This their malice attributed to Satan in their effort to explain, weaken, and defame what they could not deny. The energy which dealt with Satan, in mercy to man, was owned; but if they owned it to be of God, their religious importance, their occupation, their gain were gone. And the highest of occupations is proverbially the basest of trades; and trading in souls and truth or falsehood exposes men to Satan. And the fatal die was cast. And these proud teachers, setting up to be authorized of God to reject His Son, sunk into the merest slaves of Satan. How solemnly and with what unbroken calm the Lord deals with them!

> And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit {Mark 3:23-30}.

It was not only self-contradictory and attributing good to the evil one, but blasphemous; yea, it was to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit; and judgment, eternal judgment, is the sentence of His lips, "because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" (Mark 3:30).

The concluding scene (Mark 3:31-35) is the grave and fitting sequel; for therein the Lord, in the hearing of a crowd that surrounded Him, renounces as it were all natural ties, were they the nearest ones of His mother and His brethren, substituting His disciples, whosoever should do the will of God, in the place of that relationship to Him from which apostate Israel was falling.

Mark 4

The Lord Jesus had been announced as the Messiah by His forerunner, had manifested Himself fully as such, so that all were responsible from the chief authorities down to the people at large. The last chapter showed what the result would be, the crowning testimony of the Spirit rejected as well as the Son of man in person, the unpardonable sin of that rebellious and apostate race, and the formation of new relationships, characterized by the doing of God's will, in lieu of the natural ties which were now solemnly and publicly disowned of the Lord.

This opens the way for a parabolic description of the Savior's ministry, its course and results, His attitude meanwhile and at the close, as well as the circumstances of His disciples while engaged under Him. Mark does not present a full view of the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven, which has its appropriate place in Matthew. Nevertheless, both he and Luke give us in a very complete manner, each suited to the special aim of the respective Gospels, the parable of the sower.

> And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root it withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred. And He said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (Mark 4:2-9).

This was His work now, scattering abroad the seed of the word. There was nothing in man acceptable to God. It was a question of something new and divine, the fruit of the operation of grace. A new life there must be if fruit unto God be looked for. There was nothing like it before: not even John's preaching went out thus far and wide, and still less the law and the prophets.

But then there are divers lessons to be learned; for the action is always responsible even where it is not efficacious. The seed was good; there was no: defect there; but man as such is good for nothing, and the effect, where there is not the saving work of the Spirit, comes to nothing sooner or later. Much, therefore, was, in this point of view, lost.

The first class, where all fails as to result, consists of the wayside hearers; "When they have heard," says the Lord (Mark 4:14, 15) in explanation,

> Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

This answers to the fowls of the air coming and devouring the seed that fell by the roadside. This is the direct, destructive power of the enemy which hinders the entrance of the word. It does not penetrate below the surface, never goes farther than talk, speculation, or admiration of the preacher. The moral state of death is evidently untouched, and Satan has it. all his own way.

Next, we have the case of the seed that fell on stony ground, where it had but little earth, and the effect was full of instantaneous promise.

> Immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

Here we have the flesh or nature doing its best, but proving its utter weakness. They are the persons,

> who, when they have heard the word, *immediately* receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, *immediately* they are offended.

Here the work went no deeper than the affections, without reaching the conscience and convicting it before God. To take the joy of Christianity where there has been no judgment of the life and state as in God's sight is really to slight and ignore Him altogether, making much of self. Haste in reception of the blessing is anything but the indication of a divine work. Hence the all-importance of repentance, which has been too much lost sight of through a desire to guard the freeness of grace and deliver the gospel from legal clogs. But this remedy is, at least, as dangerous as the disease which it was intended to cure. We must not weaken the solemn dealing of the Holy Ghost with the conscience. It is good, wholesome, and essential that the soul should weigh its condition in God's light and pronounce His judgment on itself; though, doubtless, repentance is of faith, and not a preparation for faith. Still there may be no kind of peace and all but despair as yet; the heart may be ploughed up deeply and with scarcely more than a hope of mercy, which keeps it from utterly sinking; and the Lord in due time brings home the word,

> Thy sins which are many are forgiven . . . thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.

Then, indeed, there is, at once, and lastingly, peace and joy in believing.

Where there is not the sounding of the heart thus morally, as in God's sight, the same haste which receives easily gives up without difficulty in presence of fiery trial. Well, in truth, it is for the soul, thus captivated by an imaginative joy through a mere feeling of the beauty, the truth, and the attractiveness of God's most unselfish love in the abstract, which may be mistaken for its own deep enjoyment of His grace to a sin-convicted soul -- well it is, if it discover the fatal error, and, after being turned aside, if it return, or rather turn in reality, to God, in divinely wrought sense of its sin and guilt, to find in Christ Jesus the only answer to its wants.

The third case is where some seed fell among thorns; but, being choked by the growing thorns, it yielded no fruit. Such

are they who hear the word; but the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful (Mark 4:18, 19), a serious and not infrequent thing. May we beware! There are various forms in which the evil works, but it is worldly lust and real selfishness, in distrust of God and indifference to His interests, so that the heart gets either overwhelmed with anxiety, or active in the pursuit of present things. The very semblance of devotedness is lost, and the soul goes back, it may be with intense avidity, to the world it had seemed to leave. There are none without the need of God's guard against them all. But ye that are poor, watch against encroaching cares; ye rich, be not enticed by the deceitfulness of riches; both of you, see that ye judge "the lusts of other things!"

On the other hand, there is seed that falls on good ground, and yields fruit, some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred: even there the result is checkered; for that which is fatal to the unbeliever may injure grievously the fruitfulness of the faithful.

> He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (Mark 4:9).

It is a grave matter for every soul, grave for him that hears; and what is it for him who has no ear to hear?

> And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable. And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. And He said unto them, **Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?** (Mark 4:10-13).

He explains the mind of God, not to the twelve only, but to those who were about Him. They were those within: all else were "without," to whom all things happen in parables, a rebelling people without even a reprover now. But those within have the privilege of knowing the mystery of the kingdom: grace thus wrought, distinguishing those separated to Christ from the guilty nation, given up increasingly to judicial darkness, though it reproved them for their want of understanding. Nor was this parable hard to discern, but elementary and fundamental, a sort of introduction to those which were to follow. Nevertheless, the gracious Lord, if He rebukes, proceeds to expound it, as we have seen, in vv. 14-20.

But, beside saving the soul, the engrafted word issues in testimony; and this is the next and characteristic statement of the Lord in our Gospel (Mark 4:21-23).

> And He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

The word is not "seed "only to produce fruit, but a candle or lamp to shine in the witness of God's grace and truth in this dark world, even as Christ, lowly as He was and servant of all, was its perfect expression personally. Was it then come to be put under a bushel or a bed, and not rather on its own appropriate stand? It could not be: for, in truth, "There is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." Thus we have the responsibility to shine in the world, holding forth the word of life; and this with the settled certainty that all must come out whether of good or evil, closing with the solemn appeal to individual conscience once more.

Again,

> He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath (Mark 4:24, 25).

It is still responsibility in the service and testimony of the Lord. We must take heed, then, what we hear: for what we receive, we are bound to communicate. Want of value for the treasures of God, want of confidence in His grace, reaps its own bitter harvest.

> With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given.

Such is the special connection here. Those only possess who give out in grace, and such shall receive yet more abundantly; while they who have not in reality shall lose even the show they have.

The next parable, which is peculiar to our Gospel, is singularly characteristic of it. It is the work of the kingdom.

> **So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come** (Mark 4:26-29).

The absence and apparent disregard of the Lord are supposed, not His manifestation and active interference. Harvest being come, He reaps, instead of sending His angels, as in Matthew.

This is followed by the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32), which shows its growth from a small beginning into a great development, and a system of protection on the earth even for the emissaries of the god of this world.

> And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake He not unto them: and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.

The final scene of the chapter (Mark 4:35-41) sets forth the trials to which His people are exposed in their work, with Him in their midst. Their foolish, selfish unbelief is as plain as His calm supremacy over that which He only could control, and His just rebuke of their timidity, blind to the glory of His person.

Mark 5

We have still an unfolding of the service of Jesus. In this chapter, it is not simply the ministration of the word with its various hindrances and measures of success as far as God is pleased to work both in quickening power and fruitfulness, and this to the end. Neither is it a picture of the tempest-tossed condition of the disciples, Jesus with them, meanwhile, in their dangers, but apparently heedless till appealed to, yet all through the security of His people.

Now we have another thing, the ministry of Jesus in presence of Satan's power and the utter confessed weakness and misery of nature. An instructive lesson indeed! for not only do we see the all-conquering might of Him Who was crucified in weakness, but the extent of the deliverance shown forth in him who was both set free from the thraldom of Satan and who afterwards became the active witness to others of the Lord's greatness and power to others. It is not merely sin here, or the lusts of the flesh and the world. We know how continually God does save from human violence and corruption and their consequences. In Legion, however, we have rather the direct agency of Satan, paramount if not there. As to this, men ordinarily are incredulous; or if they admit it ever thus acted, they would limit it to the time of Christ on earth. That there may have been a greater rising up of the enemy's power in opposition to the Son of God when here below is a very different statement, and I believe it; but it is a most erroneous conclusion that his power was then so shattered as a matter of fact that cases of demoniacal possession were never afterward to appear. The New Testament refutes the illusion. After Christ died and rose (and this must have gone in the direction of destroying the energy of Satan further than anything else), He charged His servants to preach the gospel with this sign accompanying them: "In My name they shall cast out devils." And so, in the Acts of the Apostles, we find the word confirmed thereby. Sick folks were brought, and persons vexed with unclean spirits; "and they were healed every one" (Acts 5:16). This was after the descent of the Holy Ghost, too; so that this mighty event, following redemption, had not of itself extinguished cases of possession. Nor was this confined to Peter or the other apostles; but similar power accompanied Philip, the evangelist, at Samaria.

> For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; And many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

I need not dwell on such strong cases as the divining damsel of Philippi, nor that at Ephesus (Acts 19), which the seven sons of Sceva proved to be too real to their cost: they are well known.

The truth is, the great victory of Christ is for faith and the church's deliverance and joy, though no doubt it was attested largely to the world in miraculous signs, as it will be applied by and by in a power which will bind Satan first, and finally crush him for ever. But in the meantime the church is the scene where Christ's victory and power are made good by the Holy Ghost. The world, so far from being made better, is proved to be farther than ever from God, as Satan is proved to be its prince and god in the cross of Christ, but for this very reason the object for the time of the fullest testimony of God's grace in the name of the Crucified. The gospel which is sent so abundantly to gather *out* of the world -- mark, not to bless *it*, but to gather out -- treats the world as already condemned and only awaiting unsparing judgment when Jesus is revealed from heaven. Hence separation from the world is the paramount duty of, and only right course for, the Christian. The guilt of the blood of Jesus lies upon it: and the only escape for any soul is by faith in that blood, which, if it bring nigh to God, puts the believer in principle outside and above the world: such is the ground, and seeking, and walk of faith. Hence also the possible amelioration of the world and of man, as such, is a practical denial of the gospel, and a deep, though in many cases an unwitting, dishonor to the Lord Jesus. No ignorance justifies the allowance of such thoughts, and the more knowledge of divine truth there is, the more guilty they are. The grace of God supposes the total ruin of the objects of grace; and the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven will execute divine vengeance on those who feel not their sin and ruin, and who despise His grace.

Mark, then, describes in detail and most graphically the torment of this man with an unclean spirit.

> And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; **and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones** {Mark 5:25}.

The solitude of death, the rejection of human restraint and influence, the restlessness and the cruelty of that which possessed him, were most conspicuous; but not less so his recognition of a superior power and glory in Jesus.

> When he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of the most high God? **I adjure Thee by God**, that Thou torment me not. For He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit {Mark 5:6-7}.

It is remarkable by the way how the man is identified with the unclean spirit, just as now in grace the Holy Spirit blends most intimately with the believer. The man cries, "Torment me not," though it was a question of dealing with the spirit. So he answers,

> My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send *them* away out of the country {Mark 5:9}.

On the other hand, it was of importance to give the distinctest evidence that the dwelling of demons in a man is as certain and real, as it is of the utmost gravity. Hence the Lord hears their petition that they should be sent into the great herd of swine which was feeding at hand.

> And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirit went out, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea (**they were about two thousand**), and were choked in the sea {Mark 5:13}.

In some instances, the possessed had a serious disease also; in Legion's case we hear of none; but even if there had been, it would be absurd to suppose the transfer of disease to all the swine and such an effect as their immediate frantic rush to destruction. But the expulsion of all the devils from the man, and their possession of the herd, was an opportunity to show their love of destroying when a mightier hand no longer controlled their spiteful malice.

But, alas! what is man in presence of Jesus, or the merciful power which thus rescued the victim of the devil's torture?

> They went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil **and had the legion**, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and *they were afraid* {Mark 5:14, 15}.

Yes, afraid before Him Who breaks the captivity of the devil; more afraid of Jesus and His grace, than of the devil and his works! Nay, more than this.

> They that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts {Mark 5:17}.

Alas, alas! the swine and the devils were to them pleasanter neighbors than the Son of God. They had never sought to be free from either; they did seek to be rid of Jesus. Such is man; such the world was and is.

It is sweet to see the reverse of this in the heart of him who was emancipated. Not only was he at ease before the Savior,

> sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind,

but all his affections were towards Him, and where Jesus went, his desire was to follow. So,

> when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit, Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee {Mark 5:18, 19}.

The spiritual feeling that knit his soul to Jesus was of God, and would be gratified and satisfied in due time. But the grace of the Lord thought of others in this miserable scene of the enemy's wiles, to whom He would bless the testimony of him that had known so painfully the power of Satan. His" friends," therefore, rather than strangers, were to hear the message. "Tell them," said the Savior, "how great things *the Lord* hath done for thee." "And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him; and all men did marvel." And so may we, not only at the great things done, but at the simple faith displayed. "The Lord," for him, was "Jesus."

We have, next, the Lord going at the call of one of the rulers of the synagogue to heal his sick daughter, lying at the point of death (Mark 5:21-24). On the way, and in the throng, His garment is touched by a woman who had an issue of blood twelve years. Here, too, man was unavailing. Instead of finding relief from those most skilled, she

> **had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse**.

What a picture of human woe! and how common! But

> she said, If I may touch but *His* clothes, I shall be whole;

and she was right, as faith always is.

> Straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up: and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

But even conscious assurance is not enough for the grace of God. She had stolen, as it were, the blessing; she must have it, a free and full gift from the Lord, face to face.

> And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press, and said, Who touched My clothes? And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me? And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him and told Him all the truth {Mark 5:30-33}.

Blessed Lord, it is good somehow, anyhow, if it be Thy hand that does it, to be brought to tell Thee all the truth! For of a truth, it is but to have the cup filled of Thee to overflowing!

> And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace and be whole of thy plague.

Was the blessing less now that the gain of the believer was countersigned of the Lord? Was not the deed of power enhanced by the gracious words that sealed it hers with His own signet?

Such is now the blessing that faith seizes while the Lord is on the road to heal the sick daughter of Judah. And if evil news met the ruler's ear, while Jesus was crowning His mercy to her who touched Him, how swift is His goodness to shield a feeble heart from despair!

> Be not afraid: only believe.

It was not troubling the Master, but His proper work. With chosen witnesses, pillars of the circumcision, He goes, turns out the vain weepers who scorned His words of comfort, and in presence of the parents and His companions wakes the damsel from the sleep of death, to their great amazement (Mark 5:35-43). So at the end of the age He will raise up Israel.

Mark 6

There are three divisions I would make in the portion before us, in order to examine it more conveniently: first, the unbelieving rejection of Christ in "His own country"; secondly, the mission of the twelve; thirdly, the power, yet alas! fatal weakness withal, of an unpurged conscience, as illustrated in king Herod's behavior to John the Baptist.

First, the unwearied Servant comes into His own country, followed by His disciples.

> And when the sabbath-day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were *offended at Him* {Mark 6:2, 3}.

But what a lesson! The power of His teaching was owned, and the mighty works done by His hands; but even the despised Nazarenes were stumbled at the lowly Lord -- the lowly Servant -- of all. The meanest of mankind is not free from the same spirit of the world which blinds the highest. In truth the god of this world blinds all that are lost. The fact may come out more conspicuously in the princes of this world, where resources cannot help them to discern and proclaim the, Lord of glory; but the universality of the moral blindness is shown in such conduct as that of the men of Nazareth to the Lord Jesus. That the true heir to the throne of David, to speak of His regal glory, should be a "carpenter" was and is too much for flesh and blood. And yet, when it is believed, the grace of His humiliation is as striking as the need for it was urgent and absolute, if God was to be glorified and man delivered according to His mind. It is clear also that the grace of all He became and endured is only rightly seen by those who see in Him the Son -- He is the true God and eternal life.

Here, however, even as Prophet He is rejected; and Jesus bows to it as the common lot of those who labor for God in a world which knows them too well to pay them honor, and yet knows them not, as it knew Him not.

> A prophet,

said He,

> is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house {Mark 6:4}.

And as thus He speaks, so He acts, or rather does not act. For

> He could there do no mighty work, **save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them** {Mark 6:5}.

How admirable the perfection of His service! It seems to me that nothing displays it more than such ways as these: "He could there do no mighty work." Yes, He, the Creator of all, the Sustainer of all, could do nothing mighty there. He was the ever dependent and obedient Man Who had come to do not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him.

> All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made;

yet He could there do no mighty work. Blessed Lord, greater art Thou to me in Thy weakness thus, than in Thy strength, whereby all things consist! And yet there was the gracious exercise of healing as far as was morally consistent with the people and the place in God's eyes. For He did lay His hand upon a few sick folk and healed them. "And He marvelled," adds the Spirit of God, "because of their unbelief." This did not, however, hinder His testimony in the neighborhood; for He "went round about the villages teaching."

Secondly, He called the twelve and began to send them forth by two and two, and gave them power over unclean spirits, and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only, etc. {Matt. 6:7-13} I do not think the importance of the Lord's sending out His servants, whether the twelve or others, is adequately estimated by most. It was not yet, it could not be till His death and resurrection, that their mission could have its full character of world-wide grace. Still it is a most precious principle, this sending out of His messengers with a message of grace; as it was a new thing in the earth. And what a tale it told of the real, though hidden, glory of Him Who sent them! For who could thus commission and qualify with power over unclean spirits, save One Who was consciously divine? And what injunctions for His ambassadors!

> No scrip, no bread, no money in their purse, but be shod with sandals, and not put on two coats.

Truly His kingdom and His service were not of this world: else would the Lord have provided otherwise. Yet they went forth with the fullest sense of authority.

> And He said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

How wise and careful of the dignity of His messengers, as well as watchful lest the message should be compromised by the self-seeking of those charged with it!

> And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them.

That He was the Son of God, the Savior, did not lessen but aggravate the criminality of those who despised Him in their persons.

> Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

The substance of this preaching was that men should repent. There is no divine work in the sinner without repentance. There may be a sort of belief of no value without it: indeed nothing is more common in Christendom. But it is not so

where the Holy Spirit is at work, Who ploughs up the conscience as well as brings home to the heart the good seed that may be sown. External signs accompanied them; **for they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick**, and healed them.

The third point to be noticed now is the solemn history of conscience in **king** Herod, who, on hearing the fame of Jesus, imputed the miracles to John the Baptist, as risen from the dead {Mark 6:14ff}. There was the usual variety of opinion and uncertainty among men: but Herod's bad conscience made him positive that it was John whom he had beheaded. What a torment even here it is, unless in the yet more desperate case of those who are religiously seared! The Holy Spirit then turns aside to give the account of the circumstances, and to explain why Herod was thus uneasy and perplexed. The wicked Herodias, whom the tetrarch had guiltily married, though she was his brother's wife, had sought her revenge in vain. For, spite of his censure, John stood high in Herod's esteem as a just and holy man; and Herod, having heard him, did much and listened gladly. But there the fair show ended. Satan found the way to shut him up to a course from which there was no escape, save by repentance and the acknowledgment of his sins. It grew out of a royal revel where Herodias' daughter danced to the content of Herod and his guests, and drew from the king the rash promise, with an oath, **to give her what she asked to the half of his kingdom**. Now was the opportunity of the vindictive adulteress, who instructed her daughter to demand at once the head of John the Baptist upon a dish. And the king (whose fear for John had no higher source than nature), while very sorry, yields for the sake of his character before his guests, **immediately sends one of the guard** to despatch the prisoner, and presents his head to the damsel, as she also does to her mother. What an evident net of Satan's laying for the feet of one who was not without feeling! and how powerless is conscience, where God's servant is in one scale and the poor plighted honor of man in the other! How simple it all is in God's presence! The devil's promises are better broken than kept.

The latter part of the chapter, as well as the former, is singularly full of instruction for the service of the Lord. First of all, we had the Lord's own portion. Not only was He refused in His title of King or the Messiah, but despised as God's Servant. They heard His doctrine and were astonished at His wisdom no less than His power; but there was one thing that outweighed all in their minds -- "Is not this the carpenter?" and so He was. It appears, hence, that our Lord really thus wrought. He was not only the son of a carpenter, but a carpenter Himself. The Creator of heaven and earth spent a considerable part of His sojourn in this world in this lowly labor day by day.

Our Lord, accordingly, shut up from doing great deeds, turns to an unobtrusive work. Although debarred by their unbelief from rendering a conspicuous testimony to His glory, He did lay His hands upon "a few sick folk and healed them." There was no such thing in our Lord as mortified feeling; He turns calmly from the scorn that hindered His mighty works there to occupy Himself with cases few and inconsiderable. Can we overlook, even in this, Christ's perfection as the Servant?

The next thing we saw was the sending out of the twelve. There was the combination of two elements in them, hard to reconcile. They were to be placed in circumstances that would leave them open to the contempt of everyone.

They were to have no money in their purse; not even two coats, not shoes but sandals: they were to be without scrip or provision for the way. What could seem to be more helpless or more dependent than their condition? Yet, none the less, they, being sent forth as the messengers of the King, were invested with His own power. One remarkable proof of it was the power given them over unclean spirits. He

> began to send them forth by two and two [there was association in their service], and gave them power over unclean spirits.

And so sent out, not only did they preach that men should repent, but they cast out many devils and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them. The paramount thing in the mind of the Lord was the dealing with the power of Satan. There is much unbelief among men as to this. The world has grown old in material inventions; and as times pass over the earth, men get so accustomed to the power given to man over external nature, that they are apt by these very circumstances to forget and deny the unseen power and wiles of Satan. It was, therefore, of great importance that the disciples, who were called and sent by God's authority, in going forth through the land of Israel, should be clothed with the divine power, as far as it was communicable for Christ's sake.

But there is another thing, too, which is of great importance for the service of the Lord. As they called men to repent, so there is an astonishing answer in the conscience. The word reaches the heart even where it is least likely, as in the case of Herod, who is the instance the Spirit of God gives us here. Where men do not repent, still there is conscience, and the word does not fail to probe it. They may not heed the warning, they may turn from it, they may try to forget it and may succeed for a time in stifling all right feeling: but the barb is there, and although, as in a strong man, the effect of a wound may not be palpable for a time, still when the day of weakness comes, then the old wound re-appears, and what youthful vigor enabled him to slight may give increasing trouble till the whole scene is closed.

We have in Herod the history of a soul that had his conscience reached by the word of God, but nothing more. We know well that there is such a thing as resisting the Holy Ghost on the part of unconverted men; it is the commonest thing possible, where God's word is known, though it is not only resisting the word, but the Spirit of God. Therefore it was that Stephen said, when addressing the Jews,

> Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye {Acts 7}.

The Holy Ghost so far uses the word as to touch the conscience; and whosoever refuses this resists both the word

and Spirit of God. In Herod's case it was only John's testimony, but it was a mighty one, as far as the conviction of sin was concerned. John the Baptist did not pretend to bring in redemption; his main object was to point to One Who was coming. But there was a mighty work produced through him in leading men to the sense that they could not do without the Lord. Thus he brought before men that all was ruined in the sight of God, and that so far from things being prosperous or happy, the axe was lying at the root of the tree; judgment was at the door. And so it was: only that, first of all, the judgment that man deserved fell by grace upon Christ. That was the unlooked-for form in which divine judgment took place then in the cross. It was a most real dealing of God; but it was a judgment for the time stayed from falling upon the guilty, which fell upon the guiltless Son of God, and thereby redemption is accomplished. The whole work of Christ for the church of God has come in during the time of man's -- Israel's being left by the Lord to himself. It is the time of God's long-suffering, the world being permitted to follow its own way in the rejection of the gospel as much as in the crucifixion of Christ. This is what the world is doing now, and soon to consummate, when judgment will come.

Thus, conscience is shown in a man that felt what was right, and heard the word gladly for a time. But there was no repentance, no submission of his soul to the conviction that for a moment passed before his mind of what was true, just, and of God. The consequence was that circumstances were so managed by the enemy, and permitted of God, that Herod should evince the worthlessness of natural conscience even as regards the very person whom he had owned as a prophet. But at any rate all was lost now: and a guilty hour at a banquet, where the desire to gratify one as bad or worse than himself, ensnared his weakness and involved his word {Mark 6:26}. There is the end of natural conscience. Herod orders what he would not have conceived it possible for him to do. But we little know the power of that unclean and subtle adversary, the devil. It is just the counterpart of what the Lord was doing in grace by His disciples -- He gave them power over the unclean spirit. Men repent, and the power of Satan must be broken in order to this. Here, on the contrary, was a man who knew he was in an evil case; but the power of Satan was never really broken. There was no going to God in the sense that he could not deliver himself. The result was that Herod went on till in this evil hour the terrible deed was done; all was over and he, no doubt, given over to despair or indifference. Had there been the sense of the grace which is in Christ, there was grace enough to have blotted out that or any sin: but the heart that refuses to bow in conscience to God never acknowledges the grace there is in Christ.

Having thus, again, a little sketched the truth in this part of the chapter, as regards the principles of God for guiding in service, we may pass on. The apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. Now there was great simplicity in this, and a most wholesome thing it is for anyone engaged in the Lord's work to go to Jesus with what has been done and taught. It is well to examine, and perhaps rehearse; but to whom can we do it with safety but to Jesus? There is such a thing as going out in service, but there should be the returning and telling Jesus all that we have had to do or say. There may be occasions where it is well and comely to cheer others with the wonderful works of God; but there is no time where it is not well and wholesome to go to the Lord about it. In His presence there is no danger of being puffed up and thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. There we learn how little we are and the defectiveness even of that which we most desire for the edification of one another.

Our Lord thoroughly shows His interest and sympathy in this, and says to them,

> **Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat** {Mark 6:31}.

Well for us if we needed thus to rest more; that is to say, if our labors were so abundant, our self-denying efforts for the blessing of others were so continual, that we could be sure that this was the Lord's word for us, "Come ye into a desert place and rest a while!" I am afraid that sometimes we rather need to be stirred up to feel what a claim souls have upon us, what we owe not merely to the saints of God to seek their blessing but to every creature, for we are debtors to all. Having such a Christ as we have, we ought to feel that we have riches enough for everything -- riches of grace in Him, not merely for the saints of God, but for the poorest of sinners. The twelve had so discharged their mission that our Lord could tell them thus to turn aside and rest a while. There was more than rest for the body: with Him what repose for the soul! It is a good thing at times to be thus alone, and yet not alone -- alone from man that we may be with the only One Who can give us fresh strength and, at the same time, adequate lowliness for the better discharge of our service, whatever it may be.

They depart then into a desert place by ship privately. Now it is the Lord's ways of goodness that I think so well worthy of note in this place. We do not make enough of the Lord; we are not quite simple in our thoughts of His interest with us in all the details of circumstances day by day; we do not always think of Him as a real, living, tender Friend occupied with us and intent upon our good, and even deigning to care for our bodies, as well as our souls. Here is the proof of it as to the twelve.

> And the people **saw them departing**, and many knew Him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, **and outwent them**, and came together unto Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: **and He began to teach them many things** {Mark 6:33, 34}.

This is exceedingly sweet, because His object in retiring was to have given His disciples leisure: they had not time, so much as even to eat, and the haste of the multitude was really an intrusion; and yet the Lord at once turns to the crowd in love. Here again there is no such thing as the slightest

expression of disturbed feeling. There was no coldness shown to the intruders. On the contrary, He enters upon this fresh service with the same alacrity that He had turned aside with His disciples in order to give them a little rest by the way. More than that, He looks with compassion upon the multitude

> because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things.

He, at least, knew no leisure; at any rate, where did He ever take advantage of it, although there was infinitely more to try and weary Him as a man than ever fell upon any other? At once He turns to teach these needy men that which they little knew they needed.

> And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed. Send them away that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat {Mark 6:35, 36}.

Oh, do we not see the reflection of ourselves here? "Send them away." Was that all the disciples could think or say? Had they not profited more by the past experience of their Master? Had they not profited by the grace the Lord had been for so long a time displaying towards poor, shepherdless Israel? "*Send them away*." Send them away from Jesus! Without refreshment from Jesus! This was what even disciples could propose to the Lord Himself. Is not this what we learn of our own hearts? Do we not continually discover our little ability to count upon grace and to turn its boundless resources to meet present difficulties? When we have seen the Lord's ways, we may admire them; but faith is especially shown in knowing how to avail ourselves of what is in Christ for the want that is actually before us. Here the lack was in others; but what a lack in themselves, when the unbelief of disciples thus vents itself to the Lord?

> Send them away that they may go . . . and buy bread. But He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat {Mark 6:36, 37}.

It is always so that He acts -- "give." He loves a bountiful giver: He was so Himself, and He was now about to open the hearts of the disciples to feel aright. It was not only what was needed in an authoritative mission throughout the land of Israel, when the kingdom was going to be set up; but now it was a heart for the poor, despised, and wretched in Israel. The Lord would give the disciples His own sympathies. He would make them know what they themselves lacked -- teach them to feel what there is in Christ, even for the men who had no feeling for His wants, no consideration for the Lord in the retirement that He had sought. But this does not change the grace that is in Christ. Whatever may be the fault of another, we have to look well to it that it brings out from us the patient wisdom of grace. It is the hardest thing we have to learn. Here the disciples break down; but it was in the presence of One Who only turned it to the account of leading them to a perception of His own grace. This is the great point of the whole chapter; it is the fitting of others for the service on His own approaching and entire rejection.

Here we have not only the adequate power, but adequate affection. Power over the unclean spirit we have seen: moral power through the word, even over a natural man's conscience, had been proved; but now we have the perception of the Lord's feelings, His compassion for a multitude, even though unbelieving. There are many who truly believe in the love the Lord has for the church; but they do not at all understand the deep pity He has towards poor man as such. Now this the Lord was showing here. It is not a question merely of believers, but we have persons who, it is plain, were merely seeking to get what they could from Jesus; following Him on their own account, not for life eternal, not because of their sins, nor was it for the miracles even that they had seen, but for what He could give them for this life. The Lord did not refuse even this, but the disciples knew nothing of this grace. They had authority conferred on them; they had proved communicated power along with this; they had come and told the Lord what they had done and taught. But where was their affection answering to the Lord's? That they had it not is betrayed by their words to Him.

The Lord had now to communicate His own thoughts and feelings to them; and He does it after this sort. "He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat." They do not need to go: they do not need to buy. What Jesus tells them is to give: "Give ye them to eat."

> And they say unto Him, **Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?**

This is another working of unbelief in them. Not that they had the least thought of going and buying; but they wanted to put their insuperable difficulty before their Master. But what do we need such a one as Christ for, if not for that which we cannot even touch? The greater the difficulty, the more suited is the occasion for the Lord to display Himself. He is Lord of all; and if He is, what can a difficulty be, but only an appeal to His power, and which shows it was ever beyond measure. "Give ye them to eat."

> He saith unto them. **How many loaves have ye? Go and see**. And when they knew, they say, Five and two fishes {Mark 6:38}.

This is a feature that I think it well to notice, because it is important practically. The Lord loves, however truly working in His own power, to make use of that which we might despise in human wisdom. Moses may plead his impotence; but the Lord will make use of that man of slow speech. If he employ Aaron too, He will put the sentence of death upon everything that flesh leans upon. So now our Lord draws upon the resources that were already in the hands of the disciples. Not that such things as they had could have availed without Him; but that He is ever with us, in one way or another, ever ready to work and bless according to His almighty power and goodness.

When they bring word that there were five loaves and two fishes, doubtless it was with the conviction that no answer could be less satisfactory. How wise they were in thinking it a vain thing that such a multitude could be fed by anything that they possessed! But it is the way of God to make use of the weak and little, as truly as to abase that

which is self-confident of its greatness. And as the Lord was about to act upon this very principle with the twelve, He was now teaching them the same as to the feeding of the multitude then around them. It was the exerting His own creative power on that which was utterly contemptible, at least in human eyes. The five loaves and two fishes seemed to be absurd for such a multitude. But what was it not in the hands of Jesus?

But He does another thing. He commands that they should sit down **by companies** upon the **green** grass, and they **sat down in ranks by hundreds** and fifties {Matt. 6:40}. The Lord is not unmindful of outward order and decorum in His arrangements. He was about to work a stupendous miracle, and He arranges the people carefully, bringing before their eyes the conviction of what there was in Him for the need of man. He was really there, the promised One, that was to feed His poor with bread. Where were they that they had never thought of Him, that they did not count upon such love as this for a still greater want than the bread that perishes for the body? But it was the Lord acting from His own goodness, and in no respect even according to the mind of a disciple. The multitude was unprepared for the work; but the disciples were just as blind. They no more expected what was coming than the multitude. Our being believers is no proof at all we shall have faith for any particular exigency before us. Present dependence upon God is necessary to give us a just thought of the Lord's ways; otherwise we may be as foolish as if we had no faith at all; and we shall be sure to be so, if we do not measure the difficulties by Jesus. Bring Him in and the difficulty is at an end.

But, further, the Lord employs the disciples between Himself and the multitude. How continually we find the Lord returning good for their evil, putting honor upon the poor disciples who so little appreciated His feelings of love and compassion! He does not distribute the bread directly, as if He made no account of His servants. He meant to show His disciples that the love of Christ delights to work in human channels. The same unbelief, which on one side sees nothing in Jesus, on the other is apt to overlook and deny the use Jesus makes of suited instruments to dispense His blessings in this world. But as it was Jesus alone Who was the source of it all, the disciples were to be the channels, both learning and teaching what grace could do to them, and through them. The disciples, accordingly, take the bread from the hands of Jesus; and thus it is that the supply is provided for the vast multitude. It was the Lord's way then, and it is His way now. The wonders of His grace are not as it were all reserved for His own exclusive hand: for although He alone is the constant, active spring of grace, yet at the same time He works by whom He will, and He puts often the most honor upon the least comely member; for as we know it is in nature the most vital and essential member that is the most guarded and the least apparent, so it is in His body the church:

> He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.

He Himself was among them as "he that serveth." It is in no way the Lord showing the worth of this one or that one, but displaying His own grace and power according to His own sovereign will. But the disciples must learn that, if they were rebuked, and their unbelief made most apparent, the Lord's grace was not altered towards them; nay, His grace could employ them immediately afterwards to be the distributors to the famishing multitude of the bread of His providing. What grace towards them!

The whole scene is most instructive, and particularly so as giving us to see the manner of His own service, and the failure of others.

> When He had taken the five loaves and two fishes He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all. And they did all eat and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men {Mark 6:41-44}.

The very fragments far exceeded the provision they had at first, but even the fragments were not to be forgotten or despised. What simplicity of care, even where He ensured that there should be the testimony before their eyes of the miraculous character of the whole transaction!

The next scene has also its lesson for us.

> Straightway He constrained His disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while He sent away the people. And when He had sent them away, He departed into a mountain to pray {Mark 6:45, 46}.

It was one of the great signs of the Messiah that He would satisfy His poor with bread, as you may remember in Psa. 132. The Lord ought to have been thus recognized: but He was not. Accordingly, He sent them away. The people, instead of being gathered to the Lord, as to their King, have been for a season, at least, put aside. He has dismissed the multitude, because of their unbelief; He has departed from Israel for a time, and gone on high to take the place of intercession. And while the Lord is there, the disciples are exposed to all the storms and fluctuations of this lower scene.

> And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. And He saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them {Mark 6:47, 47}.

It is a little picture of what was to be accomplished by and by. The Lord is gone on high now; He is not with the multitude, neither is He in bodily presence with the disciples. He has left the Jews for the time; He is also away from the disciples. They have their work to do, but apparently they make no progress. But in the midst of the contrariety of all things around them, He comes again.

> About the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and **would have passed by them**. But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they **supposed** it had been a spirit, and cried out. For they **all saw Him**, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And He went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased {Mark 6:48-50}.

Then we find that, having come to shore with the disciples, the Lord accomplished all that was spoken.

> **When they were come out of the ship**, straightway they knew Him, and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was. **And whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets**, and besought Him that they might touch, if it were but the border of His garment; and as many as touched Him were made whole {Mark 6:54-56}.

It is a little picture of what will be the consequence of the Lord's return to the earth. When the Lord and His disciples rejoin the shore that He had left, when He comes back again, whatever there is of human woe, wretchedness, weakness, sickness, in this world, all will flee before the presence and touch of the Son of God. He will then and thus manifest His goodness.

Accordingly, what we have here is the consummation and triumph of all ministry in His own ministry. The disciples are shown in their weakness meanwhile, but encouraged by the prospect of His return in power and glory, when all shall be made good that the Lord has ever promised, and that He has led His people to expect in this world.

It is a good thing for our souls to realize that while our Lord is away, we are not to be discouraged by difficulties, nor cast down if the wind is contrary and ourselves toiling in vain, yet not in vain. It is He Who has sent us across that troubled sea; it is He Who meanwhile intercedes for us; and as surely will He come to us; and when He does return, all that is lacking He will supply, all that hinders will be removed, and then will the universe duly, fully exult in its Lord, our Lord and Master, when He shall be exalted from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

This is what the final circumstances of the chapter typify. It may cheer us in any little service that is before us now. It is instruction for the service of the Lord, beginning with His own rejection in shame and ending with His glorious return, when all sickness and misery disappear before His presence.

Mark 7

In this chapter the scene is totally changed. It is no longer the accomplishment of promise, nor merely the retiring before the oppressive cruelty of him that was then in the place of outward authority. We have here the Lord morally dealing with, and judging, the religious chiefs of Jerusalem who, in their confidence and pride, undertook to blame His disciples and Himself with them.

It was themselves, however, who had made the word of God of none effect through their tradition. Thus we are on ground of peculiar importance at this present time, and indeed at all times, in Christendom. For there never has been a time in which this danger has not existed ever since the word of God was given, partially or completely, to the church. Traditions began to multiply apace when the apostles passed away. As the word of God, more particularly the New Testament, is not in the form of mere command, there was peculiar openness in Christendom to the influence of tradition. In the Jewish system, all was ordered by rule. It was the natural and obvious fashion of the Jewish economy that God regulated all their intercourse, gave positive injunctions as to the whole policy, left scarcely anything open to His people, but prescribed their private and public obligations, whether individual, family, or social; their religious duties as well as their political. In fact everything was made a matter of plain commandment, and yet even in that system, so inveterate is the heart of man in departing from the living God, that even there we find the leaders of the Jews taking away the people from these expressed commandments of God by putting them under the authority of their own tradition.

How comes it that there is this continual tendency in the heart of man and specially of those that take the place of guides of God's people, no matter when or where you look at it, to supplant His word by their tradition? It is because tradition gives importance to man, leaves room for superiority to self. The consequence is that not merely the religious chiefs are thus fond of gratifying their self-importance by imposing rules of their own, but the people love to have it so. This painful fact is brought out in all the word of God. Thus, throughout the Old Testament not only were the priests ever rebellious, but the people also: man never was subject to God, but has continually departed from God, in whatever way He might be trying him. This, then, came to an issue between the Lord and the Jewish religionists.

> Then came together unto Him the Pharisees and certain of the scribes which came from Jerusalem.

They had the highest authority as far as the earth was concerned; they came from the holy city of ancient religion, clothed with the credit of divine law and authority.

> **And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault** {Mark 7:2}.

Now there was clearly nothing moral in this, nothing that could touch the soul or that affected a man's relationship with God; but it was contrary to their traditions, and therefore they found fault. It is easy to conceive that this tradition may have had a pious origin. There may have been in the minds of these leaders an idea of keeping up before the people the importance of personal purity; for washing the hands would be a very natural sign that God looks for and insists on holiness in the works of His people. At any rate such was the custom expected from every professor, whether from that idea or any other of presenting to the minds of the Israelites

their duty in the things of God.

They may have pleaded indirectly. No doubt it was drawn from the word of God, because there were certain washings which men always practiced. Thus, the priests were to wash the sacrifices presented to God, as they had been themselves washed at the time of their consecration, and had always to wash hands and feet before entering the tabernacle. It seemed a reasonable and meet inference that this rite, at once simple and expressive, ought to be observed by every man among the holy people in his ordinary dealings day by day. Who, in fact, could have the necessity of personal purity kept too much before his eyes?

But there was precisely where man was in fault. The great principle of the word is that, God being infinitely wise and holy, where He does not lay down airy positive injunction of His own, woe to him who infringes liberty. Man, on the contrary, takes advantage of the opening, and, where God has not laid down a law, he makes one of his own. But God has given no warrant thus to legislate; and half the disputes and schisms that have occurred in Christendom are due to this cause. The haste of man to solve a difficulty has recourse to such measures, and the desire of man to enforce his own will where God, instead of laying down anything positive, has left things as a test for the heart, and therefore has purposely abstained from a command. It cannot be surprising that what is thus introduced is almost always evil; but supposing the thing imposed might seem ever so desirable, the principle is always faulty.

I desire to press the immense importance of giving no authority to any rule except the word now written. To hear men of God, to be helped by servants of God, to value an exposition of the truth, is all well, but is a very different thing from an authoritative canon or creed which men impose as binding upon conscience. It is never right to accept thus what comes from man. God alone and His word bind the conscience. His servants may teach, but if they teach aright, it is the truth of God. They bring the word of God to bear upon the conscience, and therefore nobody that understands the place of God's servant would wish to create a divided allegiance by imposing his own thoughts and words. His proper function as servant is rather to maintain the undisguised supremacy of God's word, so that the conscience may be put under a positive and increased sense of obligation. Whenever the work is well done, and blessed by God's grace, further question is at an end.

This is the true aim of such ministry as scripture recognizes. The truth is sufficiently brought out that men's consciences should be called into action. The Spirit of God gives divine force to it so that souls are left without excuse. Even in the preaching of the gospel every unconverted man is under the responsibility of receiving the testimony of God, but still more in divine things, after we have received the truth and have discovered the inestimable place and value of the word of God. It is of all-importance that our souls should hold fast and firm, that, whatever the helps imparted through man, whatever the light of God that shines through the vessels He employs, still it is God's light, God's truth; nothing else than God's word ought to be acknowledged as authoritative.

Assuredly, the business of a Christian, of a servant of God now, is not to stand between man and God, which was the position of a priest in Judaism, but to put away the obstacles which act as veils, that man may face the truth, and, indeed, God Himself, without being permitted to escape; so that the light that comes from God may shine full upon the conscience and the heart of man. This does not suit man left to himself; it displeases the world, which prefers a distant reserve; and these Pharisees and scribes, though they came from Jerusalem, were really of the world. Hence they reasoned in divine things as men do now, from principles that are true enough in worldly things: the word was not mixed with faith in their hearts.

No doubt, in the outward world, God has left man to himself in great measure, save that He keeps a certain providential check upon him. Government of the earth is committed to human hands, and man comes under the responsibility of exercising or observing that government here below. But still he is left to judge according to the means God has given. There may be certain landmarks God has laid down; for instance, the sacredness of human life, which God asserted before He called out Abraham, and which is a principle as obligatory now as ever it was.

> Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.

This was what God instituted at the time of the flood; but with such-like slight exceptions, man is left free to arrange, according to the circumstances, the various punishments and rewards in this world.

But in divine things, the main point is God dealing, by His word and Spirit, with conscience, as immediately subject to Himself. And hence it is, that everything which intercepts the direct application of the scripture from God Himself to His children is the most positive injury. It is man stepping into the place of God. This at once furnishes a sure test for deciding what is of God. and what is not. If you speak to me of helps for understanding the word of God, these exist and are given of God. Such is the object of ministry, which is the service that God has instituted for the purpose of giving effect to His word. But none the less is His word the means of dealing with sinners and of building up His children. True, it is the service of God in His word, not a rival or co-ordinate authority.

On the other hand, tradition is essentially different. It proceeds not from God, but from man. We find the attempt to introduce it even in the New Testament, and while the apostle Paul was in the midst of his labors. The church at Corinth shows, perhaps, the first attempt of the enemy to insinuate human tradition. They had allowed women to preach in the public assembly, which the apostle denounces. There was a good deal to be argued for it. People might have reasoned -- if women had gifts, why should these not be used? If gifts were possessed suited to bring out the truth of God, why not turn these to the utmost account in the Christian assembly? The word of God positively interdicts

this. It allows that a woman might prophesy; as for instance, the four daughters of Philip, the evangelist, no doubt, did prophesy.

The question is, where and how? In the first place, they were not to prophesy to men, because that would be an inversion of God's order. A woman is not suffered to teach or govern. Consequently, while they here allowed to bring out whatever light they had, even of the highest character, yet it was to be done in subjection to the word of the Lord. A man, as the apostle shows, is the glory of God; whereas the woman is put under subjection. Man has the official place of superiority to the woman. It could, therefore, never be supposed that God would give a gift to a woman in such sort as to set aside, in so important a manner, the difference established from the beginning, and sanctioned and insisted upon in the New Testament.

In the next place, within the public assembly, woman's speaking in any form, even asking a question, is forbidden. They are to ask their husbands at home. It was this very thing that drew out the apostle's condemnation of tradition: The Corinthians seem to have allowed and contended for liberty to be given to these gifted women to speak in the assembly. But the apostle takes them to task, and urges that if any of them were spiritual or prophets, they would be subject to the word of the Lord. On the other hand, if any of them were ignorant, let them be so. What a blow to the would-be-wise speculators to hear their theories treated as mere and wilful ignorance!

> If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant {1 Cor. 14:38}.

These high-flown men were really ignorant of the mind of God.

This, it is evident, is exceedingly important, because it puts us in presence of the great truth which the church of God has forgotten and trampled under foot in all ages. The word is not to come *out from ourselves* {1 Cor. 14:36}. We want the word that comes from God to the church; and not what the church, so called, pretends to utter. The church never teaches nor rules. That which comes from man or from the church has no authority whatever: on the contrary, the church is called to be in the place of subjection to Christ; she is not in the place of the Lord, but of the lady. Jesus is Lord; He alone commands the church, which is put by God in the place of the woman, as subject to the Lord.

This at once becomes a very weighty difference in practice. For we can all remember the day when we thought that human rules in the things of God were right and necessary. It seemed to us as if the ecclesiastical state could not be held together without human regulations. We judged that the present state differs so from what existed of old, that it is impossible to apply the word of God in its integrity to the church now, and, therefore, new rules must be introduced to suit our days. In admitting such a principle, you do two things. You dishonor the word of God, for the word of God is not a dead letter, like man's: the word of God is a living word now as then. Every Christian believes this for the salvation of his soul, but not for his walk and conduct every day; and more particularly not for the worship and government of the church. Is it not, on the very face of it, a mischievous principle to allow the word of God to be a living authority in one thing and to treat it virtually as obsolete and dead in another? Is it not venturing near the fatal slide of infidelity? I do not say that the persons who speak and act thus are infidel; but it is an infidel principle to consign to the grave any part of God's word; to maintain that all that part which dwells so largely upon the union and worship of Christians, the ways in which they are to walk together in the confession of their Lord, and in common subjection to the word and Spirit of God -- that all this is out of date and no longer obligatory on the saints.

But you do another dishonor by such a course; for you not only dethrone the word of God from its supremacy in the conscience, but you exalt the commandments of man; you slight the true authority and recognize a mere usurper. It is evident I must have something that governs me. If I am not simply subject to the word of God, I am sure to bow to the word of man. Some may prefer their own thoughts, if they think their own wisdom is superior to their neighbor's. But the general form taken is not so much an individual showing self-sufficiency, but rather the union of a number who encourage one another to join in this race of independence, which involves disobedience to the word of God. We are living at a time when Satan does all to lower Scripture, and when God has brought out its value and pressed its practical moment more home upon the conscience than in former days. There was a time when not one of us had ever been exercised upon this subject. It was taken for granted that a human supplement of rules is necessary. But any rule invented by man for the government of Christians is a tradition, and of the worst kind, because it is thus made a thing of positive authority for faith and practice.

The Pharisees in our chapter brought out this conventional washing of hands, and pressed it upon the disciples. The Spirit's comment is that

> **the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables** {Mark 7:3, 4}.

Every spiritual man must feel the quick, cutting condemnation of the whole principle, root and branch, which breathes through the language of the Spirit of God. However subdued the tone may be, the whole thing is treated as utterly weak and childish. The washing of persons is classed with the washing of cups and pots. Many like things they do. What a religion!

> Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? {Mark 7:5}.

It is remarkable how the Lord answers them. It is not by

discussing the source of the tradition or showing its futility. He deals at once with its broad character and its moral effect on the obedience that is due to God. This is, doubtless, a most admirable pattern for every Christian man. The Lord lays bare the moral fruit of these traditions, and thus the simple escape the snare of the enemy.

> He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you, hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men {Mark 7:6, 7}.

And this is His method of proof. He takes one of these noted traditions and shows that, plausible as it might seem, it was but the cunning sleight of deceivers, led by one more cunning than themselves, and destructive of the true fear of God. It drew men into disobedience, and made excuse for sin or rather denied it. Thus their zeal for tradition blinded them to what ordinary conscience must have felt,

> for laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men.

He does not call it a wicked tradition: it was "of men," and is not to be held.

> And He said unto them, **Full well ye reject** the commandment of God, **that ye may keep** your own tradition {Mark 7:9}.

There is the process: give up what is of God and then you will fall into the hands of man. There is great importance in the principle. It is not a comparison of things as to whether this is better than that. The evil is laying aside the commandment of God and preferring man's tradition to it. The only thing that has claim upon the Christian heart is what comes from God. Whatever God wills, whatever is His revealed mind on any given subject, demands the believer's reception and obedience.

> For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do {Mark 7:8}.

What is the harm of all this? It may not be wise, but is merely innocent, a person might argue. But the Lord does not judge so lightly of nullifying God's commandments by the deference that men show to the will and word of man.

> For **Moses** said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and whoso curseth [or speaks ill of] father or mother, let him die the death [surely die].

There we have the plain revelation of God's mind. To honor parents is right and of God; to make light of them unfits man to live in God's estimate. How did tradition dissolve so plain a duty?

> Ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother**, It is Corban, that is to say**, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; **and ye suffer him no more to do ought** for his father or his mother, making the word of God of none effect through your tradition **which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye** {Mark 7:11-13}.

Just consider what an issue this was. A man sees his father and mother in want; he has received in earthly goods that which would relieve them, but the tradition-mongers have invented a plan to benefit religion so-called at the cost of filial duty. If one said, "Corban," the duty was totally changed; and that which would have been due to the parent must now be devoted to the priest. No matter what the need of father and mother, that word "Corban" stopped all action of heart or conscience. The leaders had devised the scheme to secure property for religious purposes and to quiet persons from all trouble of conscience about the word of God.

But the Judge and Lord of all meets this at once. Who had given them authority to say, It is Corban? Where had God warranted such a practice? and who were they that dared to substitute their thoughts for the word of God? It was God Who called on man to honor his parents, and Who denounced all slight done to them. Yet here were men violating, under cloak of religion, both these commandments of God! This tradition of saying "Corban," the Lord treats not only as a wrong done to the parents, but as a rebellious act against the express commandment of God.

For my part I never heard of a tradition introduced into any religious body, or imposed upon any individuals, that was not contrary to the word of God. Such are the rules made by man in the things of God. Indeed, all religious societies have a system which they do not even profess to have derived from the word of God. There are those now in Christendom that cast themselves upon the word of God alone but such one would not lower to the level of a religious society. I say, then, that wherever you find men who join together in these voluntary societies, large or small, they introduce a system of their own for the purpose of distinguishing themselves from others, and regulations that they consider necessary for the establishment or extension of the society. They invent and impose human rules, which not only differ from the Scripture but contradict it. God's word is a living reality, and a complete standard of truth and practice. Everything that man adds as a supplement is a deformity; it is that which, as it does not flow from God, is inconsistent with the light. Man is incompetent to regulate what belongs to God.

Thus, persons say it is impossible to go on unless you have rules about ministry; it would not do to have everybody rising up and attempting to minister. It is freely admitted that, if there were not the looking to the Holy Ghost, there would be confusion; and that even where there is faith in Him, there is always the need of self-judgment why one does this or seeks that; but God is equal to all the difficulty. If we submit to the word of God, nothing can be more distinct or positive than that there is no such thing as a universal right to minister, on one hand, and no such thing as a process or any human means of conferring a title to minister upon a man. Not the church, but Christ; not the subject woman, but the risen man and Lord can call to the work of teaching the saints or of preaching the gospel.

It surprises many to hear that there is no such thing as a human institution to warrant the preaching of the gospel. A single text would destroy my statement, if it were not true;

but no scripture can be brought forward. The general practice of Christendom has no divine ground whatever for its justification. Hence they are obliged to take their stand upon tradition, which contradicts the plain word of God. For if any Christians have the power to preach, which comes only from the Lord, they are not only at liberty but bound to preach. It is a question of positive responsibility to Him before Whose judgment we must all be made manifest. The Lord, if He lights a candle, does not intend it to be put under a bushel, but to be set on a candlestick. It is at man's peril if he attempt to hinder the going forth of the energy of God's Spirit. Whoever has° the power of the Spirit to preach should go forth and use it: woe to him if he does not.

Take another case. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a person set apart by any human mode simply to teach the church. Whereas when we look around, we see one and the same principle, running through a vast variety of forms, from the Pope down to the ranting preacher. All have got their self-devised methods by which none can be a minister in the denomination, unless he go through their own human process. But such a routine is wholly unsound and contradicts the word of God, and every Christian person is bound to give effect to this by renouncing in every way what is contrary to the word of God.

Do you think and say that this is too hard? Then it is you who are too bold, not I. For am I not asserting what I can prove? You have your Bibles, and can search for yourselves. But it may be said, was there no such thing as ordaining? Certainly there was when apostles or apostolic men constituted elders, etc. But our Lord still sends, as He used to send, men out to preach the gospel. But I contend that a human rite, before they permit souls to preach to the world or teach the church, is a tradition of men and contrary to Scripture. You will find in Scripture that there were persons appointed by the apostles to take care of tables; persons chosen by the apostles or their envoys to a certain work of supervision. Some were called elders and others deacons; but neither the one nor the other was necessarily a preacher or teacher. It is nothing but a blunder to confound elders and deacons with ministers of the word as such. Those who were evangelists, or pastors and teachers, exercised their gifts, not because they were made elders or deacons, which they might not be, but because they had a capacity from God to preach, teach, or rule. To confound these gifts with eldership is a great mistake. When once the difference is seen, it clears the way and brings one either outside the traditional paths of Christendom, or, if disobedient, within the range of our Lord's rebuke.

May we all bear in mind how deeply we need to watch against the spirit of tradition! Wherever we impose with absolute authority a thing that does not proceed from God Himself, it is a tradition. It is all very well to take counsel of one another, and it is not a happy feature to oppose others needlessly; but it is of all consequence that we should strengthen each other in this that nothing but the word of God is entitled or ought to govern the conscience. It will be found that, when we let go this principle and allow a rule to come in and become binding, so that what is not done according to that rule is regarded as a sin, we are gone from the authority of the word of God to that of tradition, perhaps without knowing it ourselves.

The Lord here shows convincingly where these Pharisees and scribes were. They had never considered that their principle of Corban made void the word of God. But let us, too, bear in mind that after we have had any divine truth pressed upon us, we are never the same as before.

We may have been simply and honestly ignorant then; but we are henceforth under the increased yoke of God's known mind, which we either receive in faith or reject, and harden ourselves by rejecting in unbelief. Therefore, let us look to the Lord that we may cherish a good conscience. This supposes that we have nothing before us, which we cleave to or allow inconsistent with God's will. Let us desire and value nothing but what is according to His word, lest peradventure any of us be left where Christ leaves these Pharisees, under the terrible censure that they made void the word of God through their tradition. If but one example was taken up, it was a sufficient sample of the things they were doing continually.

Now we turn to another subject -- the condition of man. We are first shown that religion without Christ is but hypocrisy, and that man's interference in divine things ends in setting God's word aside to keep his own tradition. The next thing we see is what man really is, religious or not.

> When He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, Hearken unto Me every one of you, and understand {Mark 7:14}.

The Lord here brings to light the broad principle which of itself would account for His sentence on all tradition. Does it come from man? It is enough. How is it that what springs from such a source is bad and untrustworthy? It concerns every soul; for it is no question of controversial strife. Protestant and Papist, beware of slighting the admonition of the Judge of quick and dead!

> There is nothing from without a man that, entering into him, can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man {Mark 7:15}.

This, if we apply the principle in all its extent, involves the character of tradition; for tradition comes out *from* man -- not a word *to* man with the authority of God, but a human word that beggarly pride would fain invest with purple and gold to cover its nakedness. This may show the connection; for undoubtedly the Lord here judges the moral issues of the heart and all the ways of man.

> If any man have ears to hear, let him hear {Mark 7:16}.

The disciples could not understand Him. What a lesson for us! Christ's servants could not understand Him. The very apostles were slow to believe that man was utterly corrupt. Is there anyone here that doubts the thorough evil, not merely to be found among men, but of *man*? Does anyone think that human nature can be trusted? Listen to the Savior -- the Savior of the lost. "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."

> **When He was entered into the house from the people**, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. And He saith unto them, Are ye so without

> understanding also? Do ye not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, **purging all meats**? And He said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, **covetousness**, wickedness, **deceit**, **lasciviousness**, **an evil eye**, blasphemy, **pride**, **foolishness**: **all** these **evil things come from within**, and defile the man {Mark 7:17-23}.

There is nothing in the heart of man that so hinders his intelligence as the influence of religious tradition; not only this, but tradition darkens a disciple wherever it works; and one effect and invariable accompaniment of it is, specially, in subjection to the humbling truth that there is no good thing in man. I do not deny that God can bring everything that is good into the heart. For He gives His Son, and in Him eternal life; He washes the believer in the precious blood of Christ and gives the Holy Ghost to dwell in him. Neither do I speak of what is the fruit of divine grace working in man; but I maintain that what comes out of man as such is invariably bad. As to this the disciples were dull of understanding; yet there was not one obscure word in what Christ uttered.

Why is it that divine truth seems and is so difficult to apprehend? Our obstacle chiefly lies not in the head, but in the heart and conscience. It is not the bright or the powerful intellect that understands the word of God best; it is the man whose purpose of heart is to serve the Lord. Wherever there is a simple-hearted *desire* to do His will,

> he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.
>
> If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

It is not, If thine eye be keen or far-seeing; but, "If thine eye be single." What a comfort to a poor soul that is consciously weak, ignorant, foolish, it may be! Such an one, nevertheless, may have a single eye, and consequently see farther, spiritually, than the brightest of men, whose heart is not unreservedly towards the Lord. What in this case hindered singleness of eye? Why were the disciples so undiscerning? Because they did not like to receive such a tremendous sentence on man. They had been accustomed to make conventional differences.

The Pharisees and scribes, the great men of Jerusalem, were still of a certain value in their eyes, just as you find the vulgar crowd gaping after the sounding titles of the religious world. How little are the mass of God's children emancipated from the delusion that there is something in these names that guarantees or presupposes real intelligence! Never was it so, and never less than now. Can you point out a time, since Christendom began, when there was such a complete giving up of the mind of God in the places of highest pretension? There have been seasons when the world was more hostile and the form of hatred more formidable, as far as persecution goes; but never was there an hour, when Christendom, aye, Protestant Christendom, had so many swamps of indifference to God's authority, with here and there a standard of rebellion against the truth of Christ. This may seem strong, no doubt; but I have made the assertion according to God's word, and, as far as that may go, with a closer study of Christendom in its various phases than many persons.

I am not afraid, then, to re-assert my conviction, that there never has been a display of man's evil heart of unbelief in the shape of indifference, on one side, and, on the other, of enmity against the truth, equal to the present aspect of the age. Even when Christendom mumbled over their devotions, saturated with religious fable, and thoroughly subject to a crafty and ignorant priesthood, the word of God was less known and less slighted than now. The dungeon-wall of superstition is partially fallen, the light of God's testimony has been seen enough to provoke the malice of men. People are energetic enough in these days, but their energy is against the gospel. It is not so with all, thank God; but the peculiar feature of the present age is that the active aggression is against Scripture, an organized rebellion proceeding from professors in the high seats of human learning. Not only daring individuals here and there attack Scripture, but the nominal teachers and heads of the clergy combine to do it with comparative impunity, as if they were determined to concentrate the whole weight of their personal and official influence.

This has a voice for us; if we have understanding of the times, let us take care that we stand firmly, conscientiously, and uncompromisingly, though humbly, on the foundation of Divine truth, caring for nothing else. We shall be counted harsh: this is always the portion of faithfulness. But the name of the Lord is our tower of strength for the last days, as from the beginning. So Paul warns Timothy in his last Epistle, as he looked at the perils of these days (which are still more emphatically true now than they were then); and what is the resource for them? Not tradition, but the written word of God.

> All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, etc.

It is not teachers, nor godly men raised up, however precious both may be: nothing but Scripture can be a permanent standard of truth.

As to things that defile, they come out of the man. This is true in all things, and of all acts of evil; they invariably spring from within, from the corrupt will of man. Thus, for instance, it is plain that if the law execute the capital sentence on a criminal, it is not murder, but, contrariwise, the vindication of God's authority in the earth. It is not a question of evil feeling against the culprit, and there is nothing defiling in it. But if you were so much as to injure a man in deed, word, or thought, there you have what defiles. The moment there is that which is a part of your self-will, without God, which comes out of you, and you yielding to it, there is the taint of defilement.

> Murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within and defile the man {Mark 7:21}.

In a word, we have the doctrine most plainly laid down here, that man, i.e., man in his present state, is only the source of

that which is evil. I require another absolutely perfect One, Who is outside me, to be my life; and such an one I have in Christ. If I am a Christian at all, Christ is my life; and the business for me thenceforth is to live on and according to that good which I have found in Christ. Therefore, the happy man is he who is always thinking of and delighting himself in Christ. The man, on the contrary, who is striving to find some good in himself is under the error of the disciples before they learned to bow to the word of the Lord. His light was too bright, too searching, too severe, too unsparing for the will of the disciples; they did not accept the truth with simplicity, and therefore they found it a hard saying.

Mark 7: 24-30. We have seen that which cometh out of man, and how defiling it all is. We are now to learn what comes from God, and how full of mercy and goodness this is, delivering those oppressed by the devil. But there was, I am persuaded, a significant previous act in our Lord's going from the scene where He had rebuked the traditions of earthly religion, and the universal sink of corruption in the heart and its issues, which they but conceal. The only real remedy is the deliverance of sovereign grace in Christ Who arose from thence, and

> went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon [those world-renowned monuments of God's sure judgment], **and entered into an house and would have no man know it**; **but He could not be hid**. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet {Mark 7:24, 25}.

What claim had she? Not the smallest;

> the woman was **a Greek** [or Gentile], **a Syrophenician by nation**.

She was from the fertile stock of Israel's enemies, the corrupt and idolatrous despisers of the true God. But if Jesus desired an opportunity to show the grace of God, above all question of right, desert, or any conceivable plea, save that of utter misery cast on divine mercy in Him, never was there a more needy suitor.

> **And she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter** {Mark 7:26}.

Yet if the faith of the woman was to triumph, none the less was it tried. And I consider that it is morally instructive to observe that the richest grace on the part of Christ does not make the trial of faith less but more. The soul that is little exercised never eats the kernel of the blessing, never proves the depths that are in God and His grace.

Mark, precise as his Gospel usually is in details, does not give us the particulars of her first appeal to the Savior as "Son of David," the propriety of which in Matthew is evident. Neither does our Gospel bring out His unwonted silence, and the disciples' entreaty, and the firm statement of His mission as minister of the circumcision, for which also we must turn to Matthew.

Nevertheless, even here, our Lord does maintain the principle of "the Jew first"; as the simplicity of faith (what is so genuinely intelligent?) in her urges, "and also the Gentile." But there is more. Grace speaks out the whole truth, and strengthens its object to bear it, confess it, and delight in it. So here the Lord adds in Mark 7:27,

> it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.
>
> And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

She is taught of the Lord to take *her* true place; but she cleaves with undoubting assurance to the certainty that He will not deny *His*. She was no better than a dog; but is not God full of bounty and goodness even to the dogs?

> And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way: the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

It was the blessed and holy ministry of grace to desperate need.

The scene that follows illustrates still further the Savior's grace; only it is in the ordinary domain of His labors.

> **And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto Him, one that was deaf, and had an impediment in speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him** {Mark 7:31, 32}.

What a picture of the impotence to which sin has reduced man -- inability to hear the Lord's voice, incapacity to tell Him his need! Such are those whom the Savior heals among the despised Galileans, or anywhere else.

> **And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And He charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak** {Mark 7:33-37}.

It is still the service of love, the heart and the hand of the only perfect Servant. "He hath done all things well," was their astonished testimony. May we ever and for all confide in Him! His right hand has not forgotten; His heart is unchanged; He Himself is the "same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

May we treasure up the look to heaven, the sigh over the earth, the gracious, interested handling of the sufferer, the word of delivering power, the manner and the measure of the cure. Truly,

> He hath done all things well. [87]

87. {This is, so to speak, a key text in the Gospel setting forth the Lord Jesus as the perfect Servant.}

Mark 8

In the second miracle of the feeding of the multitude we have, of course, a repeated testimony to Christ as the Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel, viewed in the beneficence of His power. It was, indeed, no more than what is predicted of Him:

> I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.

This was a very significant token to Israel.

In the case of other rulers there is a natural necessity in general that their people should contribute to their sustenance and grandeur; but the Messiah would be the source of nourishment to His subjects. This privilege appertained to and was revealed of Him alone. There never has been, never can be any other ruler with such a sign attached to his person and with such a character belonging to his rule as this gracious source of supplies to His people. Elsewhere it was the fruit of rapine, robbing the distant to lavish on those at home. The Messiah will act out of His own almighty power and love to Israel. This is the plain meaning of Psa. 132:15.

The force of scripture has been greatly weakened through the bad habit of spiritualizing it; in point of fact, it is losing the interpretation of scripture when we limit it to such applications. Undoubtedly, one is entitled to take the spirit of such a word as this, and one may see from it how Christ cares for those who believe in Him, and that He now displays more than ever this characteristic goodness in His loving provision for their need.

But to the great mass of God's children at present on the earth, what idea does the promise of Psa. 132 present? and what meaning except a passing exercise of compassionate power do they find in these miracles? It is evident that the Spirit of God attached great importance to the fact; for the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels is the feeding of the multitude, at least the earlier case where the Lord fed the five thousand. This then remains true, that in these miracles the Lord was giving the twofold witness of His being the Messiah, competent and willing to carry out all that was most characteristic of Himself, and what no other prince or king could possibly effect, because even for his own state ordinarily dependent upon revenue derived from his lieges.

But the Lord Jesus has this singular source and supply of grace in Him, and His kingdom will be marked by it, so that instead of His burdening Israel or draining the world of its wealth to sustain Him, the Lord Jesus Christ will ever retain the place of the blessed and only Potentate, even when the earth owns Him as King. It will be a day when all burdens shall be taken away, and the earth yield her increase. No doubt, man's heart will be opened and

> the multitude of camels shall cover (Zion), the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee; they shall come up with acceptance on Mine altar, and I will glorify the house of My glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee . . . The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious . . . For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron; I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness (Isa. 60:6-17).

But the great distinguishing feature of the earthly kingdom of the Messiah as compared with all others will be this affluence of goodness when the divine power undertakes all for man in the great day when the Lord's victory over Satan is made good here below. The millennium will not be man brought into the eternal state, but as yet with a body liable to death. There will still be the possibility- of evil in the world; but the peculiar feature will be that, while the evil is not rooted out and sin is still in the nature of man and the power of death may be used in particular cases as a judgment on flagrant sin, yet will the power of good by Christ, the great King, prevail over evil; not the struggle of evil with good, but the supremacy of blessing flowing from Jehovah-Messiah throughout the whole earth. If there were a single spot of the earth apart, a solitary nook of nature unvisited by the stream of blessing in "that day," it would be, so far, the triumph of evil over good.

We know from Rev. 20 that, after the millennium, the nations will rebel; no beneficence on the part of the Lord, no feeding His poor with bread will change the heart of fallen man; nay, nor will His displayed glory deter him from mad opposition. The sad proof will be patent that all who are not born of God in the millennium will furnish fresh fuel for Satan to kindle the last rebellion against the Lord; but fire will come down out of heaven and dispose of them judicially, caught in the very act. How overwhelming the evidence of man's good-for-nothingness when glory dawns on the earth, just as much as the present evil age is proving man's good-for-nothingness in despising or abusing grace!

The Lord showed that there was no deficiency in power, even while He was here, for the purpose of displaying the power of His kingdom. He that could feed five thousand could have as easily fed five millions. He was pleased to use the commonest material on the spot: it was the Lord of all taking what was there, and so it will be in the millennium, the Lord making all things new, not absolutely, but in a measure, and the figure of the complete work which will close all.

The Christians who only think of heaven blot out the testimony of a vast range of Scripture, whereby the future scene is not merely rendered vague, but gravely falsified, and in the weightiest and most momentous traits too. For the age

to come will he for the most part unprecedented. The habit of thus making everything bend to the present moment is most injurious to our faith, because it dishonors Scripture. It springs from and feeds the spirit of infidelity, perhaps as much as any other bias.

The next point I would desire to notice is the special teaching of the two miracles. Why are two facts given us so nearly of the same kind? Is there anything to be gleaned from the circumstances that, on one occasion, the Lord feeds five thousand, and twelve baskets of fragments were taken up: and on the other, four thousand were fed, and seven baskets were taken up? There are those who are quick to say that such an inquiry is to be too curious, that it is indulging fancy if we attempt to gather a precise meaning; but I hope that few of my readers have such low thoughts of the word of God as to suppose that, besides the mere facts, we have not a display of Christ in moral principle or in a dispensational point of view, in what is recorded of Him. We do need to weigh and prize the simplest incidents related: only do not confine Scripture to your horizon or mine. Let us value every fact; but do not let us despise any lesson God may convey thereby. Let us leave room for all He meant to be enjoyed. Little as we may, any of us, know, we know enough to stand for the truth that all Scripture is not only given by inspiration of God, but profitable; and it is the business of the Christian to beware of indulging in his favorite points or doctrines, and to seek spiritual understanding of all the word and revealed mind of God.

We may inquire, then, besides the confirmation of the Messiah's place in earthly glory and His care for His people, what we have to learn from these miracles. Upon the earlier occasion, the Lord gives us the feeding of the multitude first of all, and then His dismissing them and leaving the disciples, as far as His bodily presence is concerned, sending them under a contrary wind, across a troubled sea, where they tack all night and make little or no progress, while He is upon a mountain in prayer to God. Is not this an evident picture of what has taken place since the Lord dismissed Israel, as it were, for a time, and left the disciples, as far as His bodily presence is concerned? He is above interceding; He has taken a new position altogether; and here are the disciples during His absence on high, exposed to conflicting elements here below. What could more justly portray the actual dispensation -- Israel dismissed after His testimony to them, the disciples as now left by our Lord in this stormy world, and Himself ever living to intercede for them? Moreover, when all seems to be vain, the Lord appears unexpectedly, goes on board along with them, and

> immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

What could indicate, as a type, more clearly that, as the effect of the unbelief of Israel, He would leave this world to go on high and take the place, not of King over the earth to supply His people's necessities (for they indeed were not ready for Him), but of priestly Advocate in heaven, till He descends and rejoins His tempest-tossed disciples, and brings in healing power and blessing everywhere? (cf. Mark 6:34-56.) Along with this we see, in the earlier miracle, "twelve baskets." This, I think, refers to the way in which man becomes prominent. He is made to be the means of carrying out the mind of the Lord. So it will be by and by.

But here in the story before us (Mark 8) of feeding the multitude, where we have the four thousand men fed and the seven baskets left, there is a notable difference. It has nothing to do with any figure of the Lord's ways dispensationally. We see here the Lord taking care of a certain remnant of His people out of His own pure grace. It is not the testimony to the order of events from His rejection by Israel till His return in power and glory. He is the Messiah, of course; but it is the beneficent goodness of His heart that He is showing, spite of His rejection. The Lord will take up a remnant by and by in the last days, when the mass are apostates, and He will care for them and supply their need. Meanwhile, He turns to us of the Gentiles, in His grace; and what lack we? But whether taken as an earthly or a heavenly remnant, the scene illustrates the fact and certainty of the Lord's tender care of His people, now that He had been rejected. There is no leaving them here; He is with His disciples all through.

> **In those days, the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat**, Jesus called His disciples unto Him {Mark 8:1}.

Now it is not as in the last that the disciples come to Him, anxious about the multitude. This was His own doing out of His own loving thought. He said unto them,

> I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away, fasting, to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far {Mark 8:2}.

One gathers hence that the object of the scene is not to furnish a type of the ways of the Lord when He presented Himself to Israel and Israel would not have Him. Here it is simply His provision for the remnant of His people, for the poor that go after Him. They might have little perception of His glory, yet He cares for them. It is entirely a question of Christ's goodness in this case, watching over them and providing for them more than enough, though nothing would be lost. It -was their wretchedness that appealed to His heart; and the Lord took the whole thing in hand Himself, though He privileged the disciples to be channels of His bounty.

Accordingly, even when the disciples ask Him,

> From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

He inquires,

> How many loaves have ye? and they said, Seven {Mark 8:5}.

The "seven" at the beginning and the end of this case refers, it would seem, not to the question of man's instrumentality (for which "twelve" is the regular symbol in Scripture), but simply to the fullness of provision, scanty in man's eyes, but complete in His eye of grace and power, as well as of that beyond the mere meeting of their present need. It is the Lord's perfect care and compassion for His people. Not only did He satisfy them, but there is completeness stamped upon the whole transaction, to the praise of His goodness and power.

> They did eat and were filled, and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand; and He sent them away. And straightway He entered into a ship **with His disciples**, and came into **the parts of Dalmanutha** {Mark 8:8, 10}.

This is another point of distinction I wished to notice. On the former occasion He left His disciples and went alone; at this time He accompanies them. It has no reference to what is going on with the present dispensation, nor to His ascension in order to the exercise of priestly functions in heaven. What we here behold is the Lord's perfect care for His people, and then His presence with the disciples, watching over them and guarding them in the midst of the difficulties of a perverse generation, superstitious or skeptical, but equally unbelieving before God. For the Pharisees came forth and began to argue with Him, "seeking of Him a sign from heaven" {Mark 8:11}. This is most painful, for the fact of asking for the sign shows that they had no serious thought about, and no heart for, the remarkable miracles that had been wrought by the Lord. Yet they must have produced a deep and wide impression; for it was impossible that first five thousand men, beside women and children, and then four thousand, could be thus fed without the thing being noised abroad throughout the country. The question of the Pharisees, I presume, grew out of the speculation, set afloat by the Lord's having wrought these miracles. At any rate, they wanted a sign from One Who had provided the greatest in quantity and quality before their eyes. Could they have given a more awful proof of man's unbelief? A sign! Why, what had all the Lord's ministry been? A sign from heaven! Why the Lord was Himself the bread of God which cometh down from heaven; and He had been showing what He was in the fullness of His love to His people upon the earth. It is the capricious, rebellious heart of man, discontented with all that God gives. If God gives the fullest earthly sign, according to His word, for an earthly people, they want a sign from heaven.

The Lord treats this demand with unwonted sharpness. He says, and "sighed deeply in His spirit" as He says,

> Why does this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given to this generation. And He left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side {Mark 8:12, 13}.

The Lord's refusal is very striking to my own mind. We know that their demand was not from felt sense of need, nor from desire to have that need supplied; the Lord never refused such an appeal. It was not because they were miserable sinners, not because they drew too largely upon Him. They were only changing the form of their unbelief, persistently and ingeniously perverse in refusing all that God's wisdom presented. There was such a multitude and variety of signs as had never before been seen; there was the very substance of every sign in His own person; but there was neither eye to see, nor ear to hear, nor heart to receive what God gives in Christ. He, therefore, abruptly turns from them, enters a ship, and departs to the other side. The truth is, the time for signs was nearly over. There had been abundance given; but it was never the way of God to multiply signs beyond the occasion for which they are introduced; because, although they may rouse persons at the beginning of a testimony from God, if continued afterwards, they would frustrate the moral object He has in view, if they would not lose their very character of signs. A miracle would cease to be a miracle, if continually going on.

But deeper than any such question was this fact: the truth of God had been presented in every possible form, with all possible outward vouchers and tokens and seals to awaken, arrest, and attract the chosen people. There was no lack of signs; it was faith they wanted. Accordingly the Lord, when He goes to the other side, charges the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of **the leaven of Herod** {Mark 8:15}. The omission of the Sadducees is to be noticed in this place. Sadduceeism, no doubt, is a withering evil, but it is not the most dangerous. The leaven of the Pharisees, if not that of Herod also, may have a worse character and be a greater hindrance in the confession of Christ. For what is the leaven of the Pharisees? It is the cleaving to outward religious forms of any kind, which practically hide the Lord and His Christ. It is the effect of traditional influence, and may be orthodox in much; but it is religion -- self -- that is worshiped, rather than the true and living God known in His Son. The next is the leaven of Herod; that is, worldliness, the desire of what will give present reputation or keep up conformity to this world. These are two of the great perils Christians have to watch against. The disciples did not understand the Lord. They thought it was a question of loaves!

> They reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread {Mark 8:18}.

Sometimes we wonder at such stupidity in the disciples; but if we reflect on our own history, can we not discern our own dullness in understanding the word of God, our own slowness in following and walking in His will?

Alas, it is too true a picture of our own hitches and difficulties. It all arises from a want of perception of the truth, and grace, and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; and this again is because we walk in such feeble self-judgment.

It is our own undiscerned will that makes His mind in scripture dark to us. If our eye were but single, if we walked in a spirit of lowly dependence, to do nothing but follow the Lord, we should find nine-tenths of our difficulties at an end. But we have an old as well as a new nature, which we do well to judge unsparingly. Through the mercy of God we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; but the old man seeks to intrude and get the upper hand, and so hinder the believer from following Christ simply and fully.

This was at work among the disciples. They thought the Pharisees a respectable sort of people, and they were not prepared for their Master's sweeping condemnation. There is no deliverance from any of these obstacles and snares but in Christ; and there is no possibility of practically walking in the power of Christ unless the flesh is judged. Our Lord rebukes the disciples very decidedly:

> Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? **have ye your heart**

yet hardened? {Mark 8:17}.

It was really so. Our Lord all through treats it as an affair of the heart and not as an intellectual mistake. It is important that we should accustom ourselves to judge things from their moral roots. If we pursue a wrong course, let us beware of excusing ourselves: if we do, we never get either profit by the way or victory in the end. We must discover that which caused the mistake. What was its source? What exposed us to it? Christ was not our only motive.

I believe we never do a wrong thing where Christ is the one object *before us*. It is not that the flesh is not in us; but it is the Holy Ghost, and not the flesh that has power in us where Christ is the single actuating spring of the heart. What is self-indulgence or the world's esteem to a man who is filled with Christ? This is what the apostle so earnestly sought for the Ephesian saints -- "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." It was not that they might merely have Christ as their Savior, nor only even that they might obey Christ as their Lord, but that they might have Him dwelling in their hearts by faith. It is the soul occupied with Christ to the exclusion of other objects Christ abiding, as the treasure of the heart; and what power to discern and to act according to Christ where this is so! And what is the effect of an unjudged will? Children of light though we be, light now in the Lord, yet the light is only in Him for us, and we see it not, if we think, or speak, or act far from the Lord practically. Thus it is we neither remember His ways nor understand Himself.

The cure of **the blind man of Bethsaida** is not only a striking but a sweetly instructive lesson. Our blessed Lord shows, if I may so say, all possible interest in the case, both before the miracle was wrought and in the mode of cure.

> **He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town, and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw aught** {Mark 8:23}.

He acts as one would who was deeply concerned, heartily entering into every detail. It is the only instance recorded in Mark of a gradual character; indeed, as far as I know, it is the great standing witness of distinct stages in curing blindness. We have in John 9 an illustrious miracle where sight was given, and not all at once, to the man blind from his birth. But there is a marked peculiarity in the case before us. The fact is that there are two things needful where a person has not seen at all. One is the faculty of seeing, the other is the power of applying that faculty. Supposing a blind man had visual capacity conveyed to him, it does not follow that he could see thereon. He would not be able to measure distances or to judge with accuracy of the various objects before his eyes. In order to estimate aright any such object the habit of seeing, comparing, etc., is indispensable. Not only is this true of other creatures, but of man also. We all acquire this gradually; but, growing up as it does from our infancy, it is apt to be overlooked. So true and important, however, is the practice of seeing, that if a person who had never seen, suddenly received his sight, he would not be able at first to discern whether a thing were round or square by barely looking at it; and this, though he might have been accustomed to judge of the very same things by touch. It is a fact of much interest which seems to me to be intimated in the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida. Though the same conclusion was the deduction of human science scarce two hundred years ago, [88] here you have it quietly assumed in the word of God these eighteen centuries. [89]

First of all, the Lord took the man by the hand, and led him out of the town; next, He applied to his eyes that which came from His own mouth, and put His hands upon him. For here He is all through the true Servant. It is not enough that the task is done, but the manner of doing it must be that which should glorify God and win the heart of him who is healed. What consideration! what condescension! what taking of trouble, so to speak! A word had been enough. "But the Servant-Son of God enters into the case fully, and asks the patient (though He only, He perfectly well, knew all about it) "if he saw aught" (ver. 23). Even in John ix., where the eyes were anointed with a plaster of clay, and the blind man then went and washed in the pool of Siloam, the full cure followed immediately. In the case before us there was a special reason for dividing, not the miraculous remedy so much as the effect. The Lord was showing an exercise of divine power, which at first sight seems to be not so striking as those more commonly healed by a word or a touch. The man looked up and said, he beheld men; for he saw persons walking about, like trees.

---

88. I shall here insert a problem of that very ingenious and studious promoter of real knowledge, the learned and worthy Mr. Molineaux, which he was pleased to send me in a letter some months since; it is this: Suppose a man born blind, and now an adult, and taught by his touch to distinguish between a cube and a sphere of the same metal, and nighly {nearly} of the same bigness, so as to tell, when he felt the one and the other, which is the cube, which the sphere. Suppose, then, the cube and sphere placed on a table, and the blind man be made to see: quere, 'Whether by his sight, before he touched them, he could now distinguish and tell which is the globe, which the cube?' to which the acute and judicious proposer answers: 'No. For though he has the experience of how a globe, how a cube affects his touch; yet he has not yet obtained the experience, that what affects his touch so or so, must affect his sight so or so: or that a protuberant angle in the cube, that pressed his hand unequally, shall appear to his eye as it does in the cube.' I agree with this gentleman in his answer to this his problem; I am of opinion, that the blind man at first sight would not be able with certainty to say which was the globe, which the cube, while he only saw them; though he could unerringly name them by his touch, and certainly distinguish them by the difference of their figures felt. This I have set down, and leave with my reader, as an occasion for him to consider how much he may be beholden to experience, improvement, and acquired notions, where he thinks he had not the least use of or help from them: and the rather, because this observing gentleman further adds, that having, upon the occasion of my book, proposed this to divers very ingenious men, he hardly ever met with one that at first gave the answer to it which he thinks true, till by hearing his reasons they were convinced." -- Locke's Works, vol. i., p. 124, Ed. 10. {sic}.

89. An interesting confirmation of this "deduction of human science" to which W. K. refers in the text and in his note is afforded by the case, recently reported, of a patient in a London Ophthalmic Hospital. After thirty years' blindness from birth, this patient, who had undergone certain delicate and difficult operations upon the organs of vision, received sight. The case is said to be the first known in ophthalmic surgery.

As in the imaginary case cited by Locke, the act of seeing was found strange and puzzling to the patient, hitherto accustomed to "see" with the fingers. Though possessing active mental powers and a trained intelligence, the process of distinguishing various material objects, such as faces, flowers, furniture, letters, and the like, was found to require a gradual education. This transitional stage illustrates the man's sight of "men as trees walking," of which we read in the Gospel.—W.J.H., 1934.

There is no little difference between a man and a tree, but he could not yet distinguish them (especially if, as I presume, born blind.) [90] All was vague before him. He might, and no doubt did, in his blind estate readily discern between a tree and a man by touch. But he had not yet learned to apply his new-born vision, and the miracle purposely halved the cure. His mind could hardly confound the men who moved with trees, but his faculty of vision only showed that the two things were somewhat alike: they were as trees walking. It was all as yet confusion to him. There was naturally no aptitude in using with clearness the faculty he had just acquired.

> **After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly** {Mark 8:25}. [91]
>
> He doeth all things well.

As that is a saying peculiar to Mark, so it is everywhere a truth illustrated in it; and it is the great point we have brought out here. It was not only that He did what He did with unfailing energy, but the manner in which He wrought was no less admirable.

> He doeth all things *well*.

And never was this more conspicuously shown than in the second application of the Lord's hands to the half-opened eyes, by which the blind man of Bethsaida was made to see all men clearly.

> **And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.** {Mark 8:26}.

Next (Mark 8:27 *et seq*.), we have the good confession, not of the Lord before Pontius Pilate, but of Peter before the Lord, against an unbelieving generation. The Lord puts the question to His disciples:

> Who do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

All was uncertainty, and that is all that man ever, and in spite of busy and laborious efforts, arrives at. The painful, toilsome searching of the creature into things too high for it only ends in perplexity and bitter disappointment. It leaves a man totally short of, and utterly in the dark about, that which, after all, is the only thing of prime importance. Some say one thing, some another; but who, of all the Sons of men, does or can say the right thing?

> And He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ {Mark 8:29}.

Now we have not here, as in Matthew, the Lord pronouncing, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona." How comes that? Neither have we here, as there, the Lord's remarkable address to Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church." Why is all this difference? Because Peter is represented as simply saying here, "Thou art the Christ." Where it is added that he confessed the Lord to be "the Son of the living God," there the special notice was also given that he was blessed, "For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." A confession so singularly rich drew out the Savior's recognition of His *Father's* grace to Simon Barjona. Thereon the Lord also exercises His rights, and gives him the new name of "Peter," and adds, "Upon this rock I will build My church." He was the Son of the living God. If He had been only the Christ, the Messiah of Israel, it would not have been a sufficient basis for the church. His Messianic dignity (in which He is also spoken of as Son of God, Psa. 2) might have been a sufficient rock for Israel, as it was their faith and hope; but "the Son of the living God" was a revelation of His glory that went far beyond it.

The moment you have the Lord known and confessed in this His highest glory, He for the first time begins to announce His building of His church. That new edifice, which takes the place of Christ-rejecting Israel, is founded upon Him Who is not only the Christ but the Son of the living God. Accordingly, death and resurrection follow as that which not only determined Him to be the Son of God with power, but gives the Christian and the church their proper character (2 Cor. 5:15-19; Eph. 1, 2). It is upon this rock the church is builded. What could show more clearly that the church is an absolutely new thing? The attempt to make out this sense of the church in the Old Testament times proves that the true nature of God's present temple is unknown.

The important thing is to see the points of distinction and contrast. Those who confound Jewish duties, and experience, and hopes with the revelation of our Lord when the people rejected Him, with the fully developed display of Him in the New Testament and the consequently new responsibilities and joys of the Christian, blot out, not all truth, but every feature that is essentially characteristic of the "one new man" (Eph. 2), and take away what is specially incumbent on the Christian and the church of God. This, if true, demonstrates the importance for our souls of taking heed to scripture. There are those who are so steeped in human tradition, and so unversed in the dispensational ways of God, that to tell them the church was part of the mystery hidden from ages and only revealed since Pentecost would be to their minds a revival of the monstrous and wicked error of the Manichees. But the word of God is none the less positive and perfectly plain about it. And Christian men would do well to search the Scriptures, and spare their reproaches, lest haply they be found to fight against God.

Such, then, was the wide scope, answering to Peter's high confession, in Matthew. The Spirit of God in Mark merely records a part of that confession, and as He designedly leaves out the most peculiar portion of it ("the Son of the living God"), so we have only, and with equal design, our Lord's

90. I do not think the comparison of men, indistinctly seen, with trees at all disproves his being born blind, as some infer.

91. {This clearly illustrates how the Lord's healings might have several parts to them. In this case, not only was the optic-brain problem corrected, but the man's brain was adjusted to interpret what he was seeing. It appears to be the only case were the parts were separated. Spiritually speaking, the Lord not only gives us sight, but also understanding.

Moreover, the Lord's healings were all instantaneous -- except this one was completed in two steps to teach us a spiritual lesson as well as showing the multi-aspect of His healings.}

answer in part. His being the Son of the living God, though owned, we have seen, was not, and could not be, set forth freely and fully, until our Lord, by dying and rising again, put the seal, as it were, to this grand truth and hence the apostle Paul was the great witness of it. The first testimony that he renders in the synagogue after his conversion is, according to Acts 9:20, that Christ is (not only made Lord, but) the Son of God." Accordingly, also, he brings out the calling, and nature, and hopes of the church of God, in a way beyond all the others.

But I would call your attention to the fact, that though here Peter only says, "Thou art the Christ," our Lord charges them that they should tell no man this thing {Mark 8:30}. This He does in all the three Synoptic Gospels. It is a point of instruction much to be heeded. For first He had asked them, "Who say ye that I am?" Then, after He had heard the confession of His person from Peter, He binds them to tell none about it. How comes this? It was too late. Full proofs had been vouchsafed. The time was past for presenting Him longer as the Jewish Messiah. It had been fully told the people; and who did they say He was? But now another thing is not before Him alone, but also set before the disciples -- His friends. He is going away; He falls, therefore, back upon another glory that belongs to Him. Rejected as "David's Son," He is owned by faith as "the Son of the living God"; but He is also "the Son of man." He was about to be humbled even unto death, and this could only be in His human nature; even He shall once more return to earth, as the Son of man, in His glory (cp. v. 31 with 38).

> He charged them that they should tell no man of Him. And He began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again {Mark 8:30, 31}.

Thus He drops the title of "Christ," and insists upon His place as Son of man -- as the suffering One first, and this from the heads of Israel. He should be killed, and after three days rise again.

> And He spake that saying openly {Mark 8:32}.

He forbids them to make known His being the Messiah: that testimony was closed now; there was no good in talking about it; the Jews had refused Him, and would definitely, as the Messiah. He had given them every possible form and degree of testimony; and the effect was that they rejected Him, more especially their religious leaders, more and more bitterly and unbelievingly. The consequence would be His death, as He shows His disciples openly. As Son of man, He was going to suffer, and, as Son of man, to be raised the third day, the real condition of His glory by and by. Accordingly, we shall find, at the end of the chapter, the coming again of the Son of man in glory, with His holy angels, when despisers and all unbelievers shall be made the objects of His shame: just recompense of being ashamed of Him and His words before He thus comes.

But there is another thing of vast moment to notice before we close. We have not only a proof of what man is, in the Jews, the most favored of men; in the elders, and priests, and scribes, who only become the most active in the scorn and refusal of the Son of man; but His disciples relish not His shame.

> And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned about, and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men {Mark 8:32, 33}.

What a solemn lesson, that the Lord should find it needful at such a time, when, as Matthew shows, He pronounces Simon blessed and puts special honor on him, to rebuke him thus sternly! How worthless is the fleshly mind even in the chief of the twelve apostles! In rebuking Peter, because of his carnal dislike of the cross of Christ, He could say,

> Get thee behind Me, Satan,

because it was flesh's unbelief, selfishness, and presumption, and not the less because veiled under a pious form. He never said to a saint, Get thee hence, as He said to the devil when he arrogated the worship due to God (cf. Matt. 4:10). [92]

What was it that so roused our Lord? The very snare to which we are all so exposed: the desire of saving self; the preference of an easy path to the cross. Is it not true that we naturally like to escape trial, shame, and rejection; that we shrink from the suffering which doing God's will, if in such a world as this, must ever entail; that we prefer to have a quiet, respectable path in the earth -- in short, the best of both worlds? How easily one may be ensnared into this! Peter could not understand why the Messiah should go through all this path of sorrow. Had we been there, we might have said or thought yet worse. Peter's remonstrance was not without strong human affection. He heartily loved the Savior too. But, unknown to himself, there was the unjudged spirit of the world. He could not bear that *their* Master should be so dishonored and so suffer. There was some unbelief of human iniquity: could the elders, chief priests, and scribes be so wicked, after all? Moreover, there was a want of understanding that there was no other way to deliver man: that this was the only means of glorifying God about man's sin (John 13:31). Suffer the Lord must unto death, and this under *God's* hand as well as man's; there could be no salvation without it. And God forbid that we should glory save in the cross, whereby the world is crucified to us and we to the world.

Let all know this, the people, the crowd, as well as the disciples: so said Jesus: Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake **and the gospel's**, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

92. In Luke 4:8, "Get thee behind Me, for" is a mere interpolation.

Mark 9

The verse which opens our chapter clearly belongs to the discourse at the end of Mark 8. Our Lord's promise was fulfilled on "the holy mount." Some of those who stood as He spoke were permitted to see "the kingdom of God come with power." The reference to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem is arbitrary and incongruous. The special form of the promise is worthy of note. In Matthew it is "the Son of man coming in His kingdom"; in Luke it is simply "the kingdom of God." In the former, the personal title of the Lord, as the rejected but glorious Man, and so coming in His kingdom, is made prominent; in the latter, it is the moral character, as usual, of that display which the chosen witnesses were privileged to behold -- the kingdom of *God*, not of man. Mark, on the other hand, was led to speak of the kingdom of God coming **with power**. The same substantial truth appears in all; each presents it so as to suit the divine design of the Gospels respectively. In our Gospel the blessed Lord is ever the administrator in power of God's kingdom, and even here, in giving expression to this promised sample of the kingdom, hides His glory as much as possible, though in truth He could not be hid.

Let us remark, too, that those self-same witnesses He takes (Mark 9:2) and leads up "into an high **mountain apart by themselves**," whom afterwards (Mark 14) He takes with Him to Gethsemane. What a change from the glories of the one scene to the exceeding sorrow unto death of the other! Yet was the connection close, and the end of the Lord full of tenderness to His own: even as the mention of His rejection and death leads the way to the transfiguration in the three early Gospels. What is there, indeed, so real as His sufferings and His glories? How blessed to know and rest on them both in the midst of the vain show of men!

Again, let it be observed that Mark says less of the personal change, and more as to His raiment, than either Matthew or Luke.

> And He was transfigured before them; and His raiment **became shining**, **exceeding white as snow**; **so as no fuller on earth can white them** {Mark 9:2}.

He is ever the Servant-Son. As profound in His lowliness as He accepts with dignity what comes from above -- dignity which manifests its source by a splendor which stains the pride of earthly glory. In Matthew there is no contrast with fuller on earth, but it is added most characteristically, that

> His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light;

a most suited image of supreme glory for the great King. In Luke how wonderfully adapted is the description! "And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering." None but he mentions the Lord thus bowing down before His Father at this very moment; even as he directs us to that which was more personal than any other in the mighty change that thereon ensued.

> And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, **Master**, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. **For he wist not what to say**; **for they were sore afraid**. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only **with themselves** {Mark 9:4-8}.

Having already treated of the scene in Matthew, I will not dwell on the astonishing circumstance further than to remark, that the Lord discloses in this type of God's kingdom what popular theologians so dislike -- earthly things mingled, though in no wise confounded, with heavenly things (John 3). There are the glorified, in the persons of Moses and Elias; there are the men in their still unchanged natural bodies, Peter, James, and John; there is the central figure of the Lord, the Head of all things above and below. So it will be when the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is not any more a testimony of word from those who were eye-witnesses of His majesty, but made good and displayed in the day of the Lord.

It is mere irreverence to deride what will be by and by, or what was then beheld anticipatively, as "a mongrel state of things," "an abhorred mixture of things totally inconsistent with each other." If transient glimpses of glory, if passing visits of glorious beings have been vouchsafed from the beginning down to our Savior's days, is it that man can read in these no more than a tale that is told? Is there to them no confirmation from the holy mount of the prophetic word which declares that Jehovah's feet shall stand on Mount Olivet, not to dissolve all things as yet, but to be King over all the earth in that day when He shall come and all His saints with Him? (cf. Zech. 14).

> And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto Me in the earth: and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God (Hos. 2).

> Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him (Eph. 1:10).

It is in vain to pervert this to the eternal state; it is as distinct from that final condition as from the present ways of God. For as the gathering of the church is essentially eclectic, and

in no sense a gathering of all things in heaven and earth into one, so eternity is after all dispensation (*οἰκονομία*), administration, or stewardship, is over. The millennial reign, the kingdom of Christ, is the sole answer to this even as to the other scriptures: "Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth, as in heaven."

To resume. In reporting to us the voice that spake from the cloud (v. 7), Mark, like Luke, was led of the Spirit to omit the middle clause which Matthew gives us, the expression of the Father's complacency in the Son. But this really imparts special emphasis to Christ's title as Son, and the Father's will that they should hear *Him*; not now Moses and Elias, whom Peter's unintelligent haste had put on a level with Him. The divine utterance, too, is sealed by the sudden disappearance of those who represented the law and the prophets, Jesus only being left with the disciples.

> And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. **And they kept that saying with themselves**, **questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean** {Mark 9:9,10}.

If they knew the scriptures and God's power of resurrection, as the Sadducees did not, certainly the rising from among the dead was as new to them as it is little understood yet by many disciples.

Hence the difficulties of learned men perplexed them.

> And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must **first** come? And He answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and **how it is written** of the Son of man, that He must suffer **many things, and be set at naught**. But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him {Mark 9:11-13}.

Our Lord does not dispute the truth pressed by the scribes; but as He points out His own approaching shame and suffering before He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels, so He shows a similar application of Elias' case in the person of John the Baptist, while the strict coming of Elias or Elijah awaits its fulfilment in the latter day. To faith the fore-runner is already come, as well as the Lord Himself. Unbelief must feel both by and by.

The foot of the mountain presented a far different scene from the transfiguration glimpse of the kingdom, the disciples encircled by a vast multitude, **the scribes questioning with them**, and the power of Satan in man unremoved. Christ comes down, and all the people in amazement saluted Him. Christ challenges the scribes; but what will He answer him who appealed in vain to the disciples for his son with the dumb spirit, his tormentor?

> He answereth him and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto Me {Mark 9:19}.

Blessed Lord Jesus, perfect are Thy ways! No love, no tenderness, no long-suffering like Thine: yet didst Thou feel the faithlessness which knew not how by dependence on God and denial of self to draw on that energy which casts out Satan from his strongholds! Yet even in Thy presence, when deliverance is nigh, how dost thou try the faith and patience of those who learn all in Thee!

> **And they brought him unto Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming.**

Not even yet came the rebuke of power.

> **And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child: and ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him; but if Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief.**

It was certainly but a feeble confession yet was it true, and the heart was to Him only.

> When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And [the spirit] cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him, and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead**. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when He was come into the house**, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out? **And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting** {Mark 9:25-29}.

It is an admirable picture of the ways of gracious power in the deliverance of man, Israel especially, from the well-nigh fatal possession of the enemy, with a serious intimation to the disciples wherein lay the secret of their weakness (Mark 9:14-29).

Alas, it is not lack of power we have to own, but scanty entrance into His mind. The fleshly mind can think and talk of glory here below, but the cross breaks in neither understood nor welcome.

> **And they departed thence, and passed through** Galilee; **and He would not that any man should know it.** For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him (Mark 9:30-32).

The truth is that other thoughts preoccupied them, which hindered the inshining of God's grace displayed in the cross, as well as the terrible evidence it gave to the alienation of man from God. The carnal mind which would so end in man was actively at work in themselves; and He knew it, and laid it bare before their eyes.

> And He came to Capernaum; and being in the house **He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among**

> **themselves who should be the greatest.**

And how gracious and faithful the lesson!

> **And He sat down and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be** first, the same shall he last of all and servant of all. And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them; and **when He had taken him in His arms**, He said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me (Mark 9:33-37).

Nor is it only the disciples as a whole who need reproof and correction from the Master. As Peter on the mount of glory, at the beginning, so, ere the chapter closes, John betrays the spirit of egoism which shrouds the proper glory of Christ in the very effort of nature to exalt Him.

> And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: **for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me.** For he that is not against us is on our part (Mark 9:38-40).

It is not as in Matt. 12 where Christ is rejected by the power of unbelief under Satan's instigation, which is blind to the testimony of the Spirit of God that it hates and blasphemes. There compromise is impossible, halfheartedness perilous and fatal.

> He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth {Matt. 12:30}.

When it is a question between Christ and the darkening, blaspheming power of the devil, the only safety is in *being with Christ*, the only service is *gathering with Him*. But where no such question is raised, but on the contrary some one, little known and little knowing it may be, is true to the Lord's name as far as he knows it, let us rejoice to own him and the Lord's evident honor put on him, though "he followeth not us." He is no enemy but a friend of that name which he owns as best he knows. "He that is not against us," says the Lord in such a case, "is on our part." So to honor that name in the least thing shall not be forgotten, as also the slighting it, so as to stumble the least believer, is ruinous to him who is guilty (Mark 9:41, 42).

This leads the Lord into a warning of searching solemnity.

> And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into **hell**, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and their fire **is not quenched**. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into **the kingdom of God** with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: **where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched** (Mark 9:43-48).

The thrice-repeated burden, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," falls on the conscience-stricken like the bell that tolls the felon to his doom. Would that it might kindle our hearts who believe into an unwonted earnestness on behalf of perishing souls! (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10, 11).

But there is direct profit for the disciples also. For if "**every one shall be salted with fire**," it is also true that "**every sacrifice shall be salted with salt**" {Mark 9:49}; the former statement, in my opinion, being as large towards man as such, as the latter emphatically and exclusively regards the saints set apart to God. "Salt is good," concludes our Lord,

> but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith shall ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another {Mark 9:50}. [93]

How precious and practical the exhortation! The first requisite is this holy preservative energy in our own souls; and then for one with another a spirit of peace. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace," adds the apostle James (James 3:18).

---

93. ◆ . . . Gen. 19:26 is clearly not the consecrating principle but judicial infliction. For Lot's wife disobeying at such a time became an abiding monument of divine judgment. So too, if Israel rebelled and fell under the curse, Jehovah declared that their whole ground should be brimstone and salt, like the overthrow of Sodom (Deut. 29:23). The NT adds the awful figure of salt losing its savor, and hence, as proper neither for land nor for dung, but to be cast out. Grace does effect not only love but separateness to God in the believer. Easy-going unbelief destroys all savor in those that bear the Lord's name without self-judgment. What must the end of this be? Not only unrighteousness but apostasy. (*The Bible Treasury* NS 2:320.) ◆

Mark 10

Our Lord now starts on His last journey, leaving Galilee for the borders of Judea, by the other side of the Jordan. When crowds resort to Him, He, as He was wont, again taught. And full of moral value and divine light His teaching is. May our souls weigh it well! We are apt to be one-sided. If we seize the special manifestation of God's grace, we are apt to overlook, neglect, or enfeeble the great and unchanging principles of good and evil; if we keep hold of that which abides from first to last, the danger is that we leave not adequate room for His sovereign action at particular times. In Christ, the truth, this was never so. All the ways of God had their place: no one thing was sacrificed to another, yet this, too, without a leveling sameness; for even in God, while all is perfect and all harmonious, each attribute has not equal place, but there is that which is pre-eminent. Jesus, the Son and Servant of God, maintains on every side the truth of God in the face of sin and confusion.

First, He vindicates, according to the unstained light and tender goodness of God, the marriage relation. It is the most momentous step of human life, and the pillar of the social fabric. How thankful should we be to have the Lord of glory pronouncing on it in His passage through this world! The need was great. For even in the holy land, and among those who stood high for their sanctity, with the law of God before their eyes and its precepts, rightly or wrongly interpreted, continually on their tongues, how low and loose was the theory, how basely selfish the practice! He was here on His errand of love with its eternal issues; yet would He stop in His course and cause the light of heaven to shine even across the path of dark designing men, recalling them to hear how God made man to live, as well as removing the veil which hindered disciples from seeing how He Who was God would die.

> And the Pharisees came to Him, and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting Him. And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, **Moses suffered to write** a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he **wrote** you **this precept**. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mark 10:2-9).

It is only the facts recorded by historians or the researches of, men of learning into the Rabbinical remains which betray the excessive levity of the Jews as to marriage. The true obligations of the tie were unknown; and a wife's place had no more stability than a servant's, if so much indeed. He asks what Moses *commanded*; they answer what Moses *allowed*; whereas our Lord shows how evidently it was in respect of their hard-heartedness he so wrote.

In truth the law made nothing perfect. Not the gospel only, but the beginning of creation bore its witness to the true thought of God, Who made them male and female. How admirably the Lord applies, not only the fact of Gen. 1, but the words of Gen. 2:24! All other obligations of nature, even the filial, must give place, as their own Pentateuch proved in principle as well as history; and the new relationship from the first was abstractedly indissoluble. They were no longer two, but one flesh, even if not kindred in spirit. This was not merely Adam's language, but God's deed; and if *He* united, let not man put asunder. Such was the Lord's bright and beautiful unfolding of the law to those who took advantage of what was permitted fora season. Grace and truth ever adorn what the legal spirit perverts to self-righteousness on the one hand, or self-indulgence on the other.

To the disciples (in the house, as Mark only here tells us) the Lord gives the stringent reply that,

> Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another committeth adultery **against her**; **and if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery** (Mark 10:10-12).

Here is the dark converse of sin in this relationship: no licence of man can consecrate the annulling that tie while in the flesh.

The next incident is equally full of moral loveliness and divine grace; full of instruction, too, as here we have not Pharisees but disciples in painful collision with the mind of the Master.

> And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:13-16).

Our evangelist specially marks the deep displeasure of the Lord. And no wonder. Indeed it was part of His perfectness. For it was not only that they betrayed their own Rabbi-like self-importance, which makes much of ceremony, much also of knowledge, and overlooks the power of grace and the manifestation of divine affections; but besides, they took His place, falsified Him and the God of all grace that sent Him and the essential character of that kingdom which He was about to establish. Suffer not little children, babes, to come to Him! hinder them! Why, not only of such is the kingdom of God, but whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a babe shall not enter therein. Such is the Lord's solemn sentence. To be nothing for Jesus to receive is just the condition of entrance. May we too have faith to put our babes with ourselves before Him, and count on His sure blessing!

The Lord had vindicated marriage according to its beginning from God against the Pharisees. He had blessed babes in spite of rebuking but now rebuked disciples. We have Him next eagerly sought out by the rich young ruler.

> And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? {Mark 10:17}.

There was, no lack of moral integrity here, no failure in reverence to one who was. instinctively felt to be superior, no indolence that avoided trouble; but earnestness was there, honest respect for that righteous man, and a sincere desire to learn a new lesson and take a fresh step in well-doing. It was nature doing its best, yet fundamentally at fault; for his question assumed that man was good and could do good -- man as he is. His very salutation of honor to. Jesus proved that His person was unknown, and therefore the truth unknown both as to God and man.

Had the young ruler believed Him to be the Son of the living God, he would not have accosted Him with "Good Master" -- a style suitable enough to a respected and honored teacher, but both needless and improper in addressing One Who was equal with God and was God. But the evil of man he had never realized, the total, hopeless sin and ruin of the heart in God's sight. Hence the need of such an One as Jesus was unfelt, of One Who, God and man, came down to the depths of sin in divine love and is raised up to the throne of God in divine righteousness, Who suffered all on earth from God on behalf of guilty man, that He might have man redeemed, reconciled, justified, glorified, by and with Himself in heaven, and in both, as in all things, God glorified through Jesus Christ.

Our blessed Lord therefore refuses the honor which ignored the only just foundation for it, jealous for the truth as well as for God's glory, as indeed it is the only real love to man. If not God, Christ was not good; if good, He is God.

> And Jesus said unto Him, Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him (Mark 10:18-21).

It is striking to observe these two things following -- the comparative severity of our Lord's answer and the express assertion that He looked upon him and loved him. The one showed how He dealt with amiable nature, intruding into what it knows not; the other, how no curtness of rebuke for spiritual kindness, no consciousness that the young man was faithless and would depart sorrowful at His word, hindered the Savior's love for that which was sweet and attractive in human nature.

Our Lord gave its full value to his honoring of the commandments, which He does not contradict; but He meets him on the ground he had chosen, not of a brokenhearted convicted sinner asking what he must do to be saved, but of a blameless man who was conscious of nothing wrong in his life, but who felt desires after a more excellent way from One so pre-eminently excellent in his eyes as Jesus, Who accordingly

> said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me {Mark 10:21}.

Jesus had done infinitely more; for though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. But this ruler knew not the grace of our Lord, though he could not but see His ineffable moral beauty; he knew not His grace, for His glory was unknown to him. Little did he think even when he kneeled to Jesus, that there stood before him One Who, subsisting in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a bondman and was made in the likeness of men, and having been found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

It was not then that He Who repudiated all good save in One, save God, shrank from that test which He represented to the good-seeking ruler: yet the one thing the young and ardent Jew lacked was oh, how incomparably short of the path of Jesus both in life and death. Still it was far too great a demand on the loveliest sample of humanity which, as far as we read, crossed the path of the Lord; and it made plain in his sad departing footsteps to others, if it did not discover to his own conscience, the covetousness of his heart, the value he set upon his possessions, the trust he had in riches, the little heart he had for treasure in heaven, care for himself rather than for others, even for the poor, of whom the Lord ever thought much, and above all, that so taking up the cross and following Christ was harder measure than he was prepared for. What is man? wherein is he to be accounted of? Well may we worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

> There is none good but one, that is, God {Mark 10:18}.

How true, and how blessed for us that so it is! "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." Jesus had but disclosed the shadow, and not the very image, of divine goodness in Himself; yet did the beauty of the amiable devotee consume away like a moth.

> And he **was sad at that saying**, and went away grieved; *for* he had great possessions (Mark 10:17-22).

Surely every man is vanity.

The great Prophet, the perfect Minister of grace and truth, turns the incident to the good of His own.

> And Jesus **looked round about**, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! {Mark 10:23}.

Even **the disciples** understood not, but **were astonished at His words**. They, too, knew not there is no good thing in man, or in the advantages of the world, for the kingdom of

God.

> **But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible {Mark 10:24-27}.

Thus Jesus softens in no respect the rigor of the truth. The very blessings, as men speak, of the flesh and of the world turn out hindrances in divine things. With men, then, salvation is impossible. It is a question here, too, *of God*; but blessed be His name, all things are possible with Him (Mark 10:23-27).

What hearts are ours that even the solemn circumstance of the ruler, and the still more solemn sentence of the Lord which fell upon the amazed ears of the disciples, drew forth a self-complacent inquiry from him who seemed to be somewhat, yea, a pillar among those nearest to Jesus!

> Then Peter **began** to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, **and the gospel's**, but he shall **receive an hundredfold now** in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, **with persecutions**; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first (Mark 10:28-31).

It is much to be noted that the Lord speaks but of abandoning nature for His own sake (and the gospel's, as is added most appropriately in this Gospel only), even as Peter speaks of their leaving all and following Him. To leave for the reward would be worthless, and moreover never stands. *Christ* is the only efficacious attraction, the motive that governs a renewed heart. There is pasture for the sheep, there is the flock also; but the sheep follow Christ, for they know His voice. Rewards will follow by and by, but saints follow not the rewards but the Lord. As our evangelist speaks of the gospel's sake, so he shows that the faithful sufferer receives a hundredfold now in this time for what he has left, *with persecutions*, and in the age to come eternal life. But, says the Lord (and if it was a significant word to Peter, is it not for us all?), many first shall be last, and the last first. Righteous judgment will in the long run reverse many a thought founded on that which meets the eye. It is the end of the race that tells, not the start, though God is unrighteous to no person and to no act. It is well therefore here, as before, to trust in God and His grace. "There is none good but One, that is, God."

They were now on the road to Jerusalem, where the disciples well knew enmity to their Master was most deadly. Hence when Jesus went before them, "**they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid**" {Mark 10:32}. They were not more astonished at His calm facing the danger than they shrank from their own exposure to it. They were still attached to earthly life, though they would have liked to have spent it under Messiah's reign, sitting every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, with none to make them afraid. But to follow the path which led through persecution to death was far as yet from being a privilege and honor in their eyes. Even Christ they knew after the flesh: the glory of His death and resurrection was wholly unfelt as yet. Hence the Lord Jesus

> took again the twelve, and **began to tell them what things should happen unto Him**, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again (Mark 10:33, 34).

Thus the fullest testimony was given, not indiscriminately, but to chosen witnesses, though complete for the purposes of God among men. Matthew alone singles out, as was suitable, that form of death, the cross, which stumbled the natural mind of the Jew, while Luke (18:31, 34), as his manner is, draws attention to the accomplishment of the scriptures, not in specific detail like Matthew, but as a whole, adding to it the non-intelligence of the disciples.

Then come the sons of Zebedee, **James and John** (with their mother, as we know from Matthew),

> saying, **Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire**. And He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto Him, **Grant** us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left hand, in thy **glory** (Mark 10:35-37).

How often the carnal mind betrays itself in the faithful even in the domain of faith! How weak as yet were those destined to be pillars! How the Master shines in presence even of the most blessed among His servants! They knew not what they asked. This was no question for the suffering Son of man on His way to the cross; but rather could they drink of what it was His to drink? could they be **baptized with the baptism** that was before Him? Alas, ambition even in the things of the kingdom is soon followed by confidence in self: We are able." What an answer! Need we wonder that these two also forsook Jesus and fled in the hour of the cross? Nevertheless, the Lord seals their answer with His promise of His own bitter portion, inward and outward; but lets them know that those high places around Himself in glory were not His to give, but for those for whom it is prepared. He refuses to depart from that morally highest place in such a world as this -- God's servant among men.

But if the two sons of Zebedee thus betrayed their ignorance of Christ's moral glory, how did the rest carry themselves? Not with sorrow of heart for their brethren.

> When the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John {Mark 10:41}.

How often our fleshly resentment at the pride of another makes manifest the pride which dwells in our own hearts, and breaks out in an indignation as unseemly as the evil which

provokes it!

> But Jesus called them unto Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45).

This is love which serves, not flesh which seeks to be served. It is the animating motive and spirit, and not a question of position, ecclesiastic or ministerial; for I doubt not he who was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles was the one who was most of all imbued with the mind which was in Christ Jesus, and this not only in his own soul, but also in his service. Paul was bondsman of all.

> His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.
>
> Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant,:in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? (2 Cor. 11:23-29).

It was for the Son of man alone not only to minister but to give His life a ransom for many.

A new division of our Gospel here opens. It is the Lord's final presentation of Himself to the nation as Messiah. His ministerial work was closed. Here He is viewed as Son of David (Mark 10:46-52).

"And they came to Jericho." That city which first opposed itself to the entrance of Israel into the land of promise, but fell by the mighty power of God, when His people submitted themselves to His word by Joshua: that city which brought the predicted curse on him and his sons who reared it again; that city whose waters were healed, and from whose land barrenness was taken away in grace by the prophet, is the scene of a remarkable display of beneficent power, in answer to the faith that owned the promised Seed and King.

> And as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind **Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus**, sat by the wayside begging {Mark 10:46}.

I do not doubt that it is the same incident which is recorded in Matt. 20 and in Luke 18. But the differences are so great as to have occasioned doubts of this in some. The truth is that each is perfect. Matthew gives the double cure -- true to his habit (see Matt. 8) and the exigency of Jewish witness. Luke so states it that the careless might infer that the cure took place as the Lord went into (instead of as He came out of) Jericho. His moral order required the juxtaposition of the tale of Zaccheus and the parable of the nobleman, as illustrating the scope of the two advents, and hence displaced of necessity the story of the blind man. But Luke takes care to say, not "as He was come nigh unto Jericho" (as the English Bible and others), but, "as He was nigh to Jericho," *ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱεριχώ*, without saying whether it was His coming or His going. He was in that neighborhood. Some MSS. give, "the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, sat," etc. The Sinai copy has "blind and a beggar." As usual, our evangelist relates the facts and even names with characteristic precision.

> And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, **he began** to cry out, and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me {Mark 10:47}.

No expression of unbelief on the part of others could stifle his own cry of faith. It was, no doubt, in keeping with his wants to call on Him to Whom Isaiah of old testified, "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened." Others knew this scripture as well as Bartimaeus, but he claimed the blessing from the despised Nazarene. They said they saw, and therefore their sin remained. As for him he was confessedly miserable, poor, and blind; naked, too, he was content to be, if he might the more readily cast himself on the Lord. The multitude, not feeling their own need, had no sympathy with one who felt his, and sought to drown his importunity. But it was God Who had laid it on the heart of the blind beggar -- God, Who, in his appeal to the rejected Messiah, rebuked the incredulity of His people as miserable, and poor, and blind as he, yea, more so, incomparably more, because they felt it not, and owned not their King. For them He was but Jesus of Nazareth.

> And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me {Mark 10:48}.

The application of this title is the more strikingly in place and season here, because it is the first occurrence and, one may say, the only instance in Mark, common as it is from the first to the corresponding chapter of Matthew. The nearest approach is in the Lord's reference to Psa. 110 in ch. 12:36. This, as well as ch. 11:9, 10, may show how truly guided of God Bartimaeus was -- the type, doubtless, of the remnant of the latter day, whose eyes will be opened of the Messiah before He is in publicly-recognized relationship with Jerusalem.

But let us turn to the foreshadowing of the "mercy that endureth for ever." No rebuke came from Jesus. On the contrary, He stood still and said, Call him. [94]

94. This is, I doubt not, the true reading, which bears the graphic stamp of Mark's style. The vulgar {i.e., common} text is here, as elsewhere, due to

> **And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee.** And he, casting away his garment, **rose and came** to Jesus {Mark 10:49}.

Mark, not Matthew, mentions the cloak cast off in the alacrity that hastened at the invitation of Jesus; yet Matthew, not Mark, was an eye-witness.

> And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do for thee? The blind man said to Him, Rabboni [My Master], that I may recover sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go, thy faith hath healed thee. And immediately he recovered sight, and was following Jesus **in the way** {Mark 10:51, 52}.

Luke alone adds the expressed moral effect on the part both of the blind man and of all the people that saw the miracle: he glorified God, as they gave Him praise. But this is thoroughly the province of Luke, as must have been observed, in fact, by every reader of ordinary attention.

---

that love of assimilating the Gospels, which in the copyists answers to the love of harmonies among divines -- both to the no small marring of the divine perfection of the Gospels. Compare Luke 18:40, where " He commanded," etc., is right.

Mark 11

The Savior now proceeds on His last journey to Jerusalem -- His final presentation of Himself, so far as testimony went, as the Messiah. His prophetic task had been accomplished and refused; the great work of atonement lay yet before Him. Between the two comes His royal progress, we may call it, to the city of the Great King. Nevertheless, as He was the predicted Prophet like unto Moses, and yet never man spake like this man; as He was the antitype of all the sacrifices, and yet they were but the shadow, not the very image, of the coming good; so there was a character wholly diverse from the manner of kings in the King of kings and Lord of lords, as He came to His own possession here below, His *peculium*, raising and settling the question whether His own people would receive Him.

> And when they came nigh to Jerusalem [unto Bethphage], and unto Bethany, to the Mount of Olives He sendeth two of His disciples, and saith to them, Go into the village that is over against you; and immediately on entering into it, ye will find a colt tied, upon which none of men hath sat: loose and bring it. And if any one say to you, **Why do ye this?** say, The Lord hath need of it; and immediately he sends it here [95] (Mark 11:1-3).

It is pre-eminently a scene under the governing hand of God. He would and did control the feelings of such as witnessed the colt taken; even as He afterwards directed the deeds and acclamations of the multitude by the way. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." Indeed this is so much the case that I suspect "the Lord" is here, as in Mark 5:19, left purposely vague. The Lord had need of the ass's colt, whether they referred the title to Jehovah or to the King Who thus came in His name. If their faith really recognized the Messiah in Jehovah, it was most true, and so much the better for these who did; but I am not sure that it could be asserted as the intention of the Spirit to imply that so much was meant in either of these cases. It is only in the two closing verses of this Gospel that we can certainly gather that He is designated "the Lord." The suitableness of this reserve till the statement of His final triumph by our evangelist who devotes himself to His service here below is strikingly beautiful, and equally so in its absence before, and in its presence then.

> And they went away and found a colt **tied to the door without at the crossway**; and they loose it. **And some of those standing there said to them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said to them even as Jesus said: and they suffered them.** And they bring the colt to Jesus and cast their garments on it; and He sat upon it. And many strewed their garments on the way, and others beds of twigs, having cut them from the fields. [96] And those that went before and those that followed cried out saying, Hosanna! blessed [be] He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed [be] the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest (Mark 11:4-10).

It was a singularly bright testimony to the ways of God; and this not alone in the ever-adorable One Who thus deigned to offer Himself to the acceptance of His people, but in the suited cries of the multitude, little as they realized the truth of their own words or the gravity of the situation for their nation and city from that day to this. God, I repeat, was moving in the midst. He would have a testimony, true but despised, to the King, humble Himself as He might. Matthew points out the fulfilment of the prophetic oracle in the strange sight of that day. Luke adds "peace in heaven and glory in the highest" in the praise to God which filled the mouths and hearts of the disciples, as well as the blessed Savior's lament and tears over Jerusalem. It fell more within the domain of Mark to say that He

> entered into Jerusalem into the temple; and having looked round on all things, the hour being already late; He went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

Matthew, as often, does not distinguish the stages of the transaction. From his account you could not gather that the Lord merely looked round on all, the first day of his visit, and that not till the following day did He cast out those who desecrated the temple with their buying and selling as he alone describes the approach to Him there of the blind and lame (Matt. 21:14) to be healed. I am aware that some have tried to solve the difficulty by the assumption that Matthew gives us a purging of the temple on the first day, Mark on the second. But this appears to me definitely set aside by the precision of our evangelist's language about this second day, who tells us (Mark 11:15) that then, not on the first day, He began to cast. out those who sold and bought in the temple.

John, on the other hand, entirely omits this cleansing of the temple, but records (John 2) what no one else has done, an early act of similar character before our Lord entered on His public or Galilean ministry. But this is exquisitely in keeping with the whole scope of his Gospel, which starts, as it were, with the point to which the other evangelists gradually conduct us -- the utter rejection of the Lord by His people, who abhorred Him, as He could not but loathe them.

There is a similar merging of a twofold account in one

95. If Lachmann meant by his punctuation or non-punctuation of the two last clauses (for he reads, *'Ο κύριος αὐτοῦ χρείαν ἔχει καὶ εὐτὸν αποστέλλει ὧδε*) that it is the Lord Who was also straightway to send the colt, it seems strange that he did not adopt the addition of *πάλιν*, which occurs in the Sinai, Cambridge (Beza's), Vatican and Paris (L.) Manuscripts, and more than ten cursives. But, in my opinion, *ὧδε* is quite inconsistent with such an interpretation, which would, on the contrary, require *ἐκεῖ* (there, or thither).

96. It appears to me that the best readings here are as I have given above. The common text is owing to the usual habit of assimilating the Gospel to the corresponding passages in Matthew and Luke. The frequency of the present tense in Mark is a feature of his style which gives vividness to what he depicts. The chief departure from the common text is in the last clause, where we have the shorter phrase κόψαντες εκ τῶν ἀγρῶν in the Sinai, Vatican, Rescript of Ephrem S. and L. of Paris, Graeco-Lat. of St. Gall (Δ), besides versions.

view, if we compare Matthew's description of the cursed fig-tree with Mark's.

> And on the morrow, **when they came out from Bethany**, He was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree **from afar having leaves**, **He came, if perhaps He might find something** on it; and **having come up** to it, He found nothing but leaves**: for it was not the time of figs**. And, answering, He said to it**, Let none eat fruit of thee** any more for ever**. And His disciples heard** (Mark 11:12-14).

Had it been fig-season, the fruit might have been already gathered; but as it was not, fruit ought to have been found there, unless the tree were barren. Thus it was the emblem of the Jew, fruitless to God, however abounding in the semblance of life before men. Leaves the tree had, but no fruit. Hence the doom was pronounced, not more surely verified in the fig-tree then than ever since in the empty profession of the Jews.

After hearing the doom of the barren fig-tree, they **come to Jerusalem** and enter the temple, whence the Lord began to cast out those who sold and bought therein, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers and the seats of the dove-sellers, and **suffering none to carry a vessel through the temple**. This He followed up by teaching openly what is written in Isa. 56:7 and Jer. 7:11: God's purpose in the temple, and meanwhile man's selfish misuse of it.

> Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers (Mark 11:15-17).

The prophetic reproof was not powerless, but it fell into a soil fruitful only in thorns and briars, worthless, and nigh to that curse, if not under it, which had just lit upon the type of their estate.

> And the chief priests and the scribes *heard* [it], and sought how they might destroy Him**; for they feared Him**, because all **the multitude were astonished at His doctrine**.

Truly their end was to be burned: God was not in their thoughts, but man; and self, not conscience, governed them. But what a picture! The righteous, elect Servant, the Son of God, hated to death -- not of the crowd who, if thoughtless and fickle, at least hung on unwonted words of holy vindication of God, of goodness towards man, of stern rebuke for the proud perverters of sacred things. Alas, it was these, the chiefs of religion, the theologians of that day, who quailed before the light of God and sought only to extinguish it, that they might still preserve their influence among the men they loved not, but despised. And is the world, or its religion, better now?

What could detain Jesus in such a scene, the more revolting because it was in title and responsibility "the holy city?" Nothing but the errand of holy love on which He came. Hence at the approach of night, His work for that day done, He retires once more without the city (Mark 11:19). Who but the enemy could have insinuated the blasphemous thought that it was because that city was too hallowed ground for Him to rest on as yet?

As they **passed next morning**, the sight of the fig-tree dried up **from the roots** recalled the curse of yesterday to **Peter**. The Master's answer was, "Have faith in **God**": a more pointed form of speech than that in the Gospel of Matthew, and of the gravest moment for the servants of God in presence of the guilt and ruin of that which seems fairest, or at least is most esteemed among men. As the fig-tree symbolized the people in their religious pretensions, now manifestly vain and so judged of Him Whose right it was and is, "this mountain" appears to denote rather their "place and nation," which in their unbelief they strove hard to keep under Roman patronage. ("We have no king but Caesar.") Strong as it stood in Jewish eyes, before the faith of the disciples it was doomed and soon about to be violently rooted up and lost in the sea of Gentiles. [97] Such is the declared efficacy of faith; but another requisite is (which faith indeed would effect) the spirit of gracious forgiveness towards any who might have wronged or otherwise offended us (Mark 11:25, 26). In Matthew this has its place in the Sermon on the Mount and especially in the prayer, as the retributive converse appears in the parable of the merciless servant. In Luke the principle comes out in another shape.

The next visit to Jerusalem (Mark 11:27-33) confronts the Lord, as He **walks about** in the temple, with the chief priests and the scribes and the elders, who demand by what authority He was doing these things, and who gave it Him. Jesus pledges Himself to speak as to His authority, if they answer His question as to John's baptism: was it of heaven or men? It was an appeal to conscience; but conscience they had none, save a bad one, which at once shrank into reserve, fearful to commit itself, not afraid to trifle with God and man. For they reasoned with themselves that, allowing John's baptism to be of heaven, they must receive his testimony to Jesus; asserting it to be of men, they must forfeit the people's favor, John being universally held to be in very deed a prophet. They preferred, therefore, to shelter themselves under a seemingly prudent ignorance.

Who were they, then, to question the authority of Jesus? If they could only say" we know not," their incompetency was confessed. Those who could not solve the question of the servant were surely not qualified to judge of the Master. In truth, their incapacity was, if possible, less than their hypocritical wickedness: the will was at fault yet more than the understanding. The Lord might well be excused answering such a question to such men. What a position for those who examined His authority to find themselves in! Left under the shadow and shame of their own avowed ignorance in the presence of the gravest religious problem then before them, they are obliged to bow to Him Who closes the inquiry with unspeakable dignity, and with the most befitting wisdom, "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Lord, Thou knewest all things; Thou knewest that these men hated Thee!

---

97. The Received Text is far from correct. The Sinai and other MSS. give, "If ye have faith in God, verily," etc. But apart from this, the close of v. 23, I think, should be, "but believe that what he speaks comes to pass, he shall have [it]." So in Mark 11:24, "For this reason I say to you, All things, whatsoever ye shall pray and beg, believe that ye have received, and ye shall have [them]."

Mark 12

The parable with which this chapter opens sets forth in a few plain words, and in highly pregnant touches, the moral history of Israel as under the dealings of God. In what follows we have the various classes of Israel successively exposing themselves, while they were attempting to perplex the Lord. They thought to judge Him; the result was, they' were themselves judged. But in the parable with which the chapter begins, the Lord sets forth God's dealings with the nation as a whole.

> A certain man planted a vineyard and set a hedge about it {Mark 12:1}.

There was everything done on God's part both to give them what was of Himself, and to separate them from the rest of sinful men. They were duly warned against contamination by heathen corruptions. He "digged a place for the winefat." There was every suited preparation for the full results of their work, and there was also full protection, for He "built a tower." Thus the owner let it out to husbandmen, and "went into a far country." This set forth their responsibility. The Jewish system in the past is man under probation.

> At the season He sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard {Mark 12:2}.

It is the moral trial of man exemplified in Israel's conduct. Man is bound to make returns to God, according to the position in which God has set him. Israel had every possible advantage given them by God. They had priests, religious ordinances, fast-days, feast-days, every help of an outward kind, and even miraculous testimony from time to time. There was nothing wanting that man could have, short of Christ Himself; and even of Him they had the promise, and were after a sort, we know, waiting for Him as their King. They had promises held out to them, and a covenant made with them. In short, there was nothing they had not that could be of any avail, had it been possible to have got any good thing out of man. .

But can any good thing come out of the heart? Is not man a sinner? Is he not utterly defiled and unclean? Can you get a clean thing out of an unclean? It is impossible by any means used to act upon man. You may bring a clean thing among unclean, but if a creature merely, it becomes defiled. If it be the Creator, He can deliver, but not even so by merely coming down into the midst of men. It requires more than this -- His death. Death is the only door of life and redemption for the lost.

The Lord then gives the history of what they did render to God. The servant being sent,

> they caught him and beat him and sent him away empty.

There was no fruit to God -- nothing but evil. There was insult to Himself and injury to His servants.

> And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and **wounded him in the head**, and sent him away (not only empty, but) shamefully handled.

One sin leads to a greater sin where it is not judged.

> And again he sent another; and him they **killed**; and many others, **beating** some and killing some.

They are rapidly sliding down the descent to destruction. There remained only one possible motive to act upon the heart of man.

> Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son {Mark 12:6}.

Would not One be acceptable Who was infinitely greater in dignity and absolutely without a fault? For even prophets had faults; though there was great power of God in and by them, they were encompassed with infirmities, like other men. But the Son was perfection: what if He were to come? Surely they must feel that the Son of God had an incomparably higher claim upon their affections and their reverence. And so it would have been, had not man been utterly lost. And that was the moral lesson as to man brought out in the cross. Man was then proved to be utterly corrupt. God allowed it to be shown to the uttermost practically by the people of Israel. Nothing proved it so completely as the mission of the Son of God. The trial then closed in His rejection: but His rejection was their rejection before God.

Man, no matter how tried or how greatly privileged, ends in proving his total opposition to God, his hopeless ruin in His sight. "But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." It was an opportunity for the will of man not to be lost. Satan led them on to wish to have the world to themselves. This is what man most values -- to shut God out of His own world: and it was consummated by no act so much as by their killing the Lord Jesus -- by His cross. It was man's rejection of God in the person of His Son. Henceforth he was shown to be evidently not only weak and sinful, but God's enemy. Even when He was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, man not only preferred but was determined to have the world without God. In fact this manifests that the world lies in the wicked one; and Satan, who was really the prince of the world before, became, on the casting out of Him Who was God, the god of the world then. Man must have some god over him; if he rejects the true God in the person of Christ, Satan becomes his god not really alone, but in this case manifestly.

> And they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.

This closes the probationary measures.

> What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others {Mark 12:9}.

Nothing is said here of their rendering Him the fruits in their seasons, as we have in Matthew. It is the breaking of the old

links with Israel (indeed with man), and the giving the place of privilege to others. But more than that; the destruction of the old husbandmen follows. This has already taken place in part in the downfall of the Jewish people and of Jerusalem.

Nor is this all.

> Have ye not read this scripture, The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? {Mark 12:10}.

The Spirit does not here introduce the further fact related in Matthew. Not only is the stone to be exalted, the rejected Prophet to become the exalted Lord (that is quite in keeping with Mark's object), but in Matthew the other positions of the stone are developed more. First of all, He is a stone of stumbling on the earth; and next the stone, after His exaltation, falls upon its enemies at the close and grinds them to powder. This is connected with the prophecies and their accomplishment for both the Jews and the world. The Jews did trip upon Him in His humiliation when He was upon the earth; but when they finally take the place of adversaries, not only in unbelief, but in deadly opposition, forming indeed the chosen party of His great enemy, the Antichrist -- upon them He will fall destructively at the end of the age. In Mark, however, it is simply that the rejected stone is exalted. This at once was felt by the hearers.

> They sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people: for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them: and **they left Him and went their way** {Mark 12:12}.

Now comes the trial of the different classes into which the Jews were divided.

> They send unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to catch Him in His words {Mark 12:13}:

ominous alliance! for ordinarily the Pharisees and Herodians were bitterly hostile to each other. The Pharisees were the great sticklers for religious forms; the Herodians were more the courtier party, the men who cultivated every means of advancing their interests in the world, as the others did for securing a religious reputation. But where Christ is concerned, the most opposed can unite against Him or His truth.

> And when they were come, they say unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art true, and carest for no man: for Thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth {Mark 12:14}.

They stooped to flattery and falsehood to effect their malicious end. What they said was, no doubt, true in itself, but it was utterly false as the expression of their feelings and judgment about Him

> Is it lawful to give tribute to Cesar, or not? **Shall we give, or shall we not give?**

They wished to involve the Lord in a Yea or Nay that would compromise Him either with the Jews or with the Romans. If He said, Yes, then He was giving up the hopes of Israel apparently; He was but sealing them up in their bondage to the Romans. How could He be a truehearted Jew or still more the Messiah, their expected Deliverer, if He left them as much as ever slaves of the Roman power? If He said, No, then He would make Himself obnoxious to that jealous government, and give them a handle against Him as a setter-up of seditious claims for the throne of Palestine.

But the Lord replies with consummate and divine wisdom; and

> knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? Bring Me a penny that I may see it. And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's {Mark 12:15}.

This answer was complete and absolutely perfect: for in truth there was no conscience in them. Had they felt aright they would have been ashamed of the fact that the money current in their land was Roman money. It was their sin: and man, while he rejects Christ, refuses to look at his own sin. The Lord Jesus leaves them where their sin had brought them, makes them feel that it was their own fault and sin that had put them under the Roman authority. He simply says, "Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and to God the things that are God's." If you are here by your own fault, subject to Caesar for your sins, own the truth of your state and its cause, and pay what is due to Caesar; but forget not that God never ceases to be God, and see that you render to Him the things that are His. They were neither honest subjects of Caesar, nor were they, still less, faithful to God. Had they been true to Him, they would have received the Lord Jesus. But there was neither conscience nor faith.

> Then come unto Him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked Him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed; and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed; last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife (Mark 12:18-23).

Here again it was merely a difficulty. The Sadducees were the infidel party; and all the apparent strength of infidelity lies in putting difficulties, in raising up imaginary cases which do not apply, in reasoning from the things of men to the things of God. The whole basis is false assumption. The Lord says to them,

> Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures neither the power of God {Mark 12:24}.

They betrayed, as usual, their ignorance of the Scriptures, spite of much pretentiousness: else they would not have put such a case. As for difficulties, what are they to the power of God, supposing there were difficulties to man? But what is beyond the power and conception of man is very possible to God: all things are possible even to him that believeth. But the truth is that it was total ignorance to suppose that in the

resurrection state such a contingency could arise.

The question, besides, took for granted the resurrection, which was exactly what they denied. Scepticism is habitually crooked -- not less false than superstition. Whose would this woman be who had the seven husbands successively? The answer is, she would belong to none then. There is no such thing as a resumption of earthly ties in the resurrection. People do not rise from the dead as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters or servants.

Next, the Lord meets the question, not on the ground of their difficulty or mistake, but on its own merits according to the word of God.

> When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise, have ye not read in the book of Moses, how, in the bush, God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living (Mark 12:25-27).

This portion He takes not because it is the clearest scripture in the Old Testament, but because it is in the books of Moses, which these Sadducees chiefly valued. God never gave the land of Israel in actual possession to Abraham or Isaac or Jacob when they were alive in their natural bodies; yet He did promise them the land, not merely to their children but to themselves. Therefore they must rise in order to have that land so promised to them. God gave them the land in promise; but they never possessed it: they must therefore possess it another day. And as this possession cannot be in their dead state, they must live again in order actually to have the promised land. The resurrection, therefore, is proved from God's declaring Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. It is impossible that the promise He made them should not be fulfilled.

Then come the scribes. One of them

> having heard them reasoning together and **perceiving that He had answered them well**, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, **Hear, O Israel**; **The Lord our God is one Lord**: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these {Mark 12:28-31}.

The scribe was obliged to acknowledge the Lord's wisdom.

He comprises the pith of the law of God in these two extracts -- the love of God which is unlimited, the love of one's neighbor, not with all the soul and strength, but "as thyself." The first is loving God more than oneself to the exclusion of every other object as a competitor: the second is loving one's neighbor as oneself. In effect he that loves God and his neighbor has fulfilled the law, as the apostle says. Grace goes further than that, even to the total renunciation of self. The grace of God which assimilates the Christian's spirit, according to the power of his faith, to the revelation which He has made of Christ, leads a person even to death for his brother's sake;

> we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,

still more for God and the truth.

> **And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but He; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices** {Mark 12:32-33}.

He owns in his conscience that thus to love God and one's neighbor is far better than all upon which the Jews put such stress and value -- the outward forms and ceremonies of the law. But there he ended: he saw not Christ; grace therefore was unknown to this man. So that all the Lord could say to him was,

> **Thou art not far from the kingdom of God** {Mark 12:34}.

Still he was outside; for grace alone brings into the kingdom of God through the knowledge of Christ. And whether a person is near or far off from the kingdom of God, it is equally destruction if he does not enter it. This scribe owned what was in the law; but he did not know what was in Christ. The grace of God that brings salvation he knew nothing of. Duty to God and to his neighbor he owned. He set to his seal that the law was just and good (and so it is); not that God is true as revealed in Christ. After this no man dared ask Him anything more. They were answered and silenced in everything.

The Lord now puts His question. It was a brief one and totally different from the points raised by men. Man's questions were founded either upon present things, or upon improbabilities to his mind, or upon the casuistry of rival duties. Christ's question is founded directly on the Scriptures, and more than that, on the mystery of His own Person, that only link of souls with God. Christ's question had nothing of curiosity in it, nor was it merely one for conscience, but for searching into God's ways and implicit submission to the revelation of Himself.

> How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? {Mark 12:35}.

It was true the Lord did not deny that the scribes saw the truth; but He raised a question which, if answered truly, holding fast the Scriptures, would have led them to the truth about His own Person. In a word, it was this: How is Christ David's Lord as well as David's Son? The scribes saw truly enough that He was David's Son; but David writing by the Holy Ghost said that He was his Lord. How are these two things to be put together, the lower truth with which the scribes were occupied, and the higher one on which the Holy Ghost specially insists? How was Christ David's Son and David's Lord? The link and foundation of it was this, that while He was man, and as man David's Son, He was much

more. In order to be David's Lord, He must be a divine Person, but more than that, He is exalted into that place. The Lordship of Christ rests not alone on His being a divine Person; but because He was rejected as Son of David. God has exalted Him to be both Lord and Christ.

This opens the whole question of Israel's treatment of Christ, as well as of Jehovah's attitude towards Him. In Psa. 110 we read,

> Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.

Here it is not God sending His well-beloved Son down to the vineyard of Israel; but, when He was cast out, raising Him to His own right hand in heaven. Thus it involves their owning that Israel must have rejected their Messiah, and that when rejected, God sets Him at His own right hand in heaven. This, evidently, is the key to the present position of Israel, and leaves room for the calling of the church in a word, it is the mystery of the Person of Christ and the counsels of God, that follows upon His rejection.

But He does more than this.

> He said unto them in His doctrine, Beware of the scribes which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market-places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts {Mark 12:38-39}.

It is not only that the doctrine of the scribes is utterly imperfect, but even in their ways there was much that was morally low and bad. They loved the honor of men, religious honor peculiarly, and therefore the chief seats in the synagogues, besides the uppermost rooms at feasts. Everything that would contribute to their ease and honor in this world was eagerly sought. More than this, they devour widows' houses; that is, they take advantage even of the sorrows of people that would expose them to be more entirely under their influence. Along with this there was great religious ostentation, for a pretense making long prayers. "These shall receive greater damnation."

But now the Lord singles out those with whom He had sympathy on the earth.

> Jesus **sat over against the treasury**, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much: and there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two **mites which make a farthing**; and He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury {Mark 12:41-43}.

The reason He gives:

> for all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

God does not go by the amount given; He judges not by what is contributed, but by what is kept behind for self. In this case it was nothing: all was given. Those who gave of their abundance reserved the greater part for themselves; but the test of liberality is not what is given, but what is left. The much that is kept for self-enjoyment is the proof of how little is given. But when there is nothing left, but all is cast into the treasury of God, there is the true working of divine love and faith.

There is what God values, because it is the expression not only of generous giving, but of entire confidence in Himself. This poor woman was a widow, and it might have seemed that she of all others was entitled to keep what little she had; but no, little as it was, all is for God. The dealing with such a small sum might have been a trouble to those who would have to count it, but it was noticed of God, valued by Him, and recorded for us, that we may confide in God, and may give whatever is according to His mind.

Mark 13

In the succinct account which Mark gives us of the prophetic discourse of our Lord on the Mount of Olives, and of the questions that led to it, we have the favored hearers specified more particularly than elsewhere**: Peter, James, John, and Andrew**. Mark is characterized by this minuteness of detail, although his is much the shortest of the Gospels.

The Lord, in answer to their question to tell them when these things should be (that is, the overthrow of the great buildings of the temple) and what the sign should be when all these things should be fulfilled, warns them to beware lest any man should deceive them. This admonition is common to all three Evangelists who give the discourse. But here we shall find that the Lord's warnings and instructions are very evidently in view of their service. This has been all through the character of Mark. Christ Himself is the perfect Servant of God, the Prophet here below preaching the gospel and doing works according to its spirit. So, accordingly, even in His prophecy, He is the Servant still, giving them that which would be of such high importance, not only for their souls but in their work. It is not only prediction of coming judgments, but forewarning and admonishing them in their testimony. They were to beware of deceit. Next, they were not to be troubled by external appearances, such as wars and rumors of wars, etc.; but in presence of either one or the other, they were to know that the end should not be yet.

In addressing the church there is great stress laid on an attitude entirely reversed: to it the end is at hand. The language is quite different from this, and it is the more remarkable because the Christian knows that these troublous times of the end are to fall upon the Jewish people, not upon the church. They are retributive because of the rejection of the true Christ by the Jews; whereas the church has received the true Christ, and therefore does not come under these judgments. Hence the Christian is always impressed in the word of God with the assurance that the end of all things is at hand. The night is far spent, the day is at hand.

The point for the disciples at the Mount of Olives (inasmuch as they were representing not Christians but the remnant of Jewish disciples in the last days) is, that, although these distresses and troubles that precede the catastrophe of this age would come, the end is not yet. The Lord was providing doubly for them. He was giving instruction that would be true even then and up to the fall of Jerusalem; and He was making that instruction to suit the latter days also when Jerusalem should be besieged a second time, and fall in a great part at least, the scourge being sent of God, the great Assyrian power, who will come down upon Jerusalem, because of the abomination that maketh desolate.

> For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles; these are the beginnings of sorrows (Mark 13:8).

The end, therefore, was not yet. But now He turns aside to introduce an instruction that is not given in the other Gospels in this connection. Even where there is anything similar, it is found at an anterior time and for a mission on which they had been sent out and from which they had returned. Not that I for a moment doubt that the Lord did give it here also. The fact simply is that Matthew and Luke were led of God to convey similar language to us elsewhere; whereas Mark was inspired to give it here: the Lord no doubt gave this instruction on both occasions at least.

> Take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues **ye shall be beaten**: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they **shall lead** you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but **whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost**. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death: And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (Mark 13:9-13).

This is clearly a guidance for their service in the midst of these prophetic events. It is evident also that it suits Mark in a way that is peculiar to himself.

Then we come upon the final scene.

> But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, **standing where it ought not** (let him that readeth understand), then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains (Mark 13:14).

It is plain that this is the general truth that is found elsewhere.

> And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, **neither enter therein**, to take anything out of his house. And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that **the Lord** had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days (Mark 13:15-20).

Then we find an outburst of warning, not merely as before, but even more determined.

> And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or lo, He is there: believe him not: for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders.

It is evident that there is a final appearance, a fresh cloud of these deceivers in the latter days, as there was at the earliest application of this prophecy; and this to seduce if it were possible even the elect. But they were warned,

> **Take ye heed**: behold, I have **foretold you all things** (Mark 13:23).

Then comes the power of God interfering to cut short the wickedness of man as well as the tribulation.

> But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light.

Figures may be used; but it is clear that it is God Who interposes in power; for man cannot accomplish all that is meant, neither can Satan. God alone can change or deal with the sources of power.

> And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken (Mark 13:25).

The sense is plain, although in figurative language, showing a total revolution and overthrow of governmental powers

> And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; and then shall He send His angels and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven (Mark 13:26, 27).

It is still the Jewish people, or rather the remnant of the nation, the elect of Israel. Accordingly, the parable of the fig-tree is appended.

> Now learn a parable of the fig-tree. When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near.

The fig-tree is the acknowledged symbol of the people of God.

> So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away (Mark 13:28-31).

But the Lord also tells us in language peculiar to this Gospel,

> of that day and that hour, knoweth no man, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father {Mark 13:32}.

He had thoroughly taken the place of Son upon earth. I do not think that it refers to Him, viewed in His highest character, as one with the Father, but as Son and Prophet upon earth. The title of Son applies to Christ in more ways than one. It is true of Him in the Deity, true of Him as born into the world, and true of Him also in resurrection. It is the second of these that we find here; as in the very first verse of this Gospel we find it said, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." I do not doubt that refers to His being Son of God here below, begotten in time, not the only-begotten of the Father, as we find so often in John.

Looking at it in this way, there is little difficulty in understanding that He should speak as not knowing that hour, because He is speaking in His capacity of Minister in the place that He took here below, the Prophet that was serving God upon earth. So He did not know that hour. We read of Him in Luke as growing in knowledge as well as in stature.

> Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

He was always perfect, perfect as a child, perfect as a young man, perfect as a servant; but nevertheless all these were quite distinct to Him from what pertained to Him as the Son, one with the Father in Godhead. So here, without derogating from His own intrinsic glory, He could say that "neither the Son, but the Father" knew of that hour. [98]

> Take ye heed, watch and pray

is the application (Mark 13:33). And then He gives a parabolic instruction in the next two verses, admirably adapted to this Gospel.

> The Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house and gave authority to his *servants* (Mark 13:34).

Again, it does not say that He gives authority to every man, but "to every man *his work*." This entirely harmonizes with Mark. Christ Himself was the great Servant. But now His service was past; He was going away and taking the place of Lord on high. So He gives authority to His servants, and to every man his work, to each and all their due place: Remark, it is here not so much gifts as "work."

> Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, **at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch** (Mark 13:35-37).

This is decidedly a suited word for a servant watching in the absence of One who was gone, who left His house, but who was coming back again. Thus, from first to last, Mark is true to the great tone, and character, and object of his Gospel. It is to show the perfect Servant even in His prophetic testimony, and to maintain those in a spirit of service who are waiting and watching for Him here below. The disciples in their then state represented, not Christians, but the remnant in the latter day, who will be substantially in the same position.

---

98. {Comment by J. G. Bellett on Matt. 13:32 may be helpful to the reader. We need to be aware that in Mark the Lord is presented as the perfect Servant. (Let us reject the textual criticisms which has placed this statement also in Matthew.)

He was speaking of knowledge of times and seasons, and He disclaims such knowledge Himself. And this quite became Him as a servant. To a servant the confidence or committal of secrets does not belong. The Lord Himself tells us so in another place (John 15:15); and accordingly, He disclaims the knowledge of such secrets here.

He had taken on Him the form of a servant, and with that form, the qualities and attributes that attached to it; and among them, this disclaimer of the knowledge of details and counsels, such as the Father would put in His own power.

And beside, the kingdom to which He was referring, while He thus spoke, He is to receive by and bye *as a servant*. It is not to be His, simply by divine right; {but additionally} it is the reward of the toil of Him who was obedient even unto death. Hence all the circumstances of it wait, not on His, but on the Father's, pleasure. The right hand and the left hand honors of it thus wait, as He tells us in another place (Matt. 20:23); and the time of its manifestation waits, in like manner, as He tells us in this place; "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels, neither the Son, but my Father only." Christ takes the kingdom as the Son, and Heir of David, the kinsman of men, and the servant of God; not by divine but by human title; and therefore most fitly does He say, "neither the Son," words which do not qualify *the person of the Son,* but *the character of the kingdom,* as indeed we ought to apprehend at once; because it is not about Himself the Lord is speaking at the time, but about the introduction or beginning of the kingdom. (*The Evangelists*, *in loco*.)}

Mark 14

We have here a supper at Bethany and a supper at Jerusalem: one of them simply a supper in the house of those whom Jesus loved; the other a new thing instituted at the paschal feast which it was to set aside, while for the church it was to be the standing memorial of the Lord Jesus that should follow.

But these two suppers have a weighty place, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ being not only the great truth of the latter, but also in the former, what the Spirit of God brought before the spiritual instincts of Mary. She felt it, though not from any positive communication to her, but from that love to the Savior which the Spirit made sensitive of the danger hanging over Him in a way she could not express. The Lord, Who knew her love and all that was at hand, interpreted her act as done with a view to His burying. On both occasions the disciples enter most feebly into the good and the evil, but God Himself made manifest His own hand and mind as that which governed all.

This is the more striking, because on the occasion of the supper at Bethany, or rather connected with it, the chief priests and scribes, though they sought how they might take Jesus "by craft and put Him to death," had fully determined that it should not be "on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar of the people." God, however, had already from of old decided that it was to be that day and no other -- on the foundation feast of all the feasts, on the passover, which was, in fact, the type of the death of Christ.

Thus we have God and man at issue; but I need not say God carries out His own will, though He does it through the wicked instrumentality of the very men who had resolved it was not so to be. Indeed it is always thus. God does not govern only His own children; even the destruction of wicked men is not the carrying out of their own will but of God's will. Therefore it is written, "who were of old ordained to this condemnation." Again, they were appointed to stumble at the word, being disobedient.

It is not that God makes any man to be wicked. But when man, fallen into sin, goes on in his own self-will, loving darkness rather than light and enslaved to Satan, God nevertheless proves that He always holds the reins, and keeps the upper hand, and even in the path their lust or passion chooses to take, fails not to accomplish His own will. It is like a man who, under intoxication, thinks to carry out some purpose of his, seeks, for instance, to steer to some place on the right hand, but really tumbles into a ditch on the left.

So man after all cannot but do what God has determined beforehand. His will is powerless save to evince his sin. God's will always governs, though men prove themselves inexcusably wicked in the way it is brought about. Just so here. Man resolved to kill Jesus, but made up his mind that it should not be on the feast-day. God had arranged long before they were born that on the feast-day their deed was to take place. And so it did.

As we have seen, also, the supper at Bethany gave occasion to the first conception of the treachery of Judas. Satan put it into his heart. It was a scene of love, but such a scene draws quickly out the hatred of those that have no love. Mary's worshiping affection for the person of the Lord and her sense of His danger led her on till the house of Bethany was filled with the sweet odor of the ointment she poured forth. But Judas roused the carnal mind of the other disciples; he had no communion with her: Jesus was not precious in his eyes. He, therefore, was carping where Jesus was the adored object of Mary. It was so much taken from his own ill-gotten gains. He only pleaded the cause of the poor, and stirred up the other disciples about it; so that

> there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? {Mark 14:5}.

But love, while it would lavish all, never wastes anything; self does, idle folly does, but love never.

The Lord pleaded her cause.

> Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on Me {Mark 14:6}.

There is no work so good as that done on Jesus. Works done for Jesus' sake are good, but what was done to Himself was far better. She had done not the least of what grace had wrought up to that day.

> She hath done **what she could**: [99] she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her (Mark 14:8, 9).

Most fitly though of grace is this woman's good deed bound up with the name of Jesus, wherever He is preached here below. We have not her name here; we learn it was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and this from John who appropriately lets us know, because he tells us of Jesus calling His own sheep by name. Here the point was not so much who had done it, but that it was done: the ministry, so to speak, of a woman at such a time who loved the Lord Jesus, in view of His burial.

Further, we gather from this how one corrupt person can defile even those who have true hearts for Christ. The disciples were quickly caught by Judas's fair pretenses on behalf of the poor and allowed his insinuation to lead themselves into murmurings which reflected on Christ, as much as they slighted the devotedness of Mary.

In contrast with the love of Mary, Judas goes forth

> to the chief priests, to betray Him unto them.

But now comes the supper of the paschal feast at Jerusalem, where the Lord acts as master of that institution and creator of a greater one. As on His entrance into

99. {This is remarkable as appearing in the gospel of the Lord's service. The Lord asks none for more than that? Does He deserve less than that?}

Jerusalem, they had demanded in the name of the Lord the ass's colt, saying that the Lord had need of him, so here,

> He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us (Mark 14:13-15).

It was One Who, though He was going to die, still went there with royal, divine rights; He had not forfeited His place as Messiah, though going to suffer as Son of man on the cross. He, therefore, takes possession as the Master, and the goodman of the house at once acquiesces in His claim. All was before His eyes. There was no lack of power to act upon the conscience and affections of men. He could have turned all others as He bowed this man's heart. But how, then, should the scriptures have been accomplished, and sin blotted out, and God glorified? It was necessary, therefore, that He should go to the cross, not as any victim of necessity, but as One Whose will was only to do the will of His Father, accepting all His humiliation from Him.

> And in the evening He cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? {Mark 14:17-19}.

There was conscious integrity in the disciples, weak as they might be, and fleshly as we know from Luke they were, even in this very scene.

But the Lord answers,

> It is one of the twelve that dippeth with Me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed {Mark 14:20}.

It was man's sin, Satan's guile, God's counsel, and Christ's love. But none of these things altered the wickedness of Judas:

> Good were it for that man if he had never been born {Mark 14:21}.

He was ordained, we may say, for this condemnation: he was not made wicked by God, but his wickedness was made to take this shape in order to fulfil the counsels of God. One of that company which was chosen to be with Jesus here below was to prove this awful truth; that the nearer a man is externally to blessing, if he does not receive it into his heart, the more distant he is morally from it. There was but one Judas in Israel, and he was nearest to Jesus; there was but one who united all the privileges of such companionship with Jesus to all the guilt of betraying Him.

Then in Mark 14:22-25, He institutes the supper, His own supper. [100] It was not the paschal feast; and we learn from Luke that He would not touch the paschal cup. He would drink no more of the fruit of the vine until He drank it new with them in the kingdom of God. He refused that which was the sign of communion in things here below. His Father, God, was before Him, and *suffering* His will rather than *doing* it. But meanwhile, before that kingdom come, founded on His suffering unto death, there is the remembrance of a totally different thing; not of a kingdom, power, and glory, but of crucifixion in weakness; His body (as He says, "This is My body"), and His blood, the blood of the new covenant, shed for many. It was not for the Jew only, but shed for many.

Nothing can be simpler than the terms in which He institutes the supper, as given in Mark. It was, I do not doubt, intended both to refer to the passover as accomplished now, and also to bring in the power of the new covenant for the soul before it comes in for the people of Israel.

The Lord now warns the disciples not only of what was about to befall Him, but how it would affect them.

> All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered {Mark 14:27}.

The cross has its side of shame and pain and danger for us, as well as of salvation through Him Who bore our sins there. But here it is the way in which it would prove, not deliver them, of which the Savior speaks. Does that mighty work of suffering for our sins, does the atonement "scatter" the sheep? Is it not on the contrary the only righteous foundation on which they are gathered? In virtue of Christ's death for our sins, the sheep, instead of being dispersed, are gathered together into one, even other sheep beyond those which Christ had in the Jewish fold; so that there might be one flock and one Shepherd (John 10, 11).

But the smiting of the Shepherd expresses His utter humiliation as Messiah, cut off and having nothing. "I will smite," etc., refers to God's giving the Lord up to feel the reality of His rejection and death. No doubt atonement was therein wrought out. Smiting is a more general term; and though Christ takes it from God, it was literally His enemies who did the deed, and so became objects of divine vengeance, as in Psa. 79. Smiting was the loss, so to speak; atonement was the gain of all. Now that which was properly expiation or atonement was not the pure, however precious, act of Christ's death. [101] Of course death was necessary for this as for other

---

100. ◆ Q. -- Matt. 26:26, 27; Mark 14:22, 23; Luke 22:19, 20. Is it not clear that thanks should be given *separately* for the bread and the cup? and that reverence is due by doing so at the table?

T. M.

A. -- Though spirit is far beyond letter, it is sad to allow a slipshod way with the Lord's Supper. Even the Lord Himself, as all three Synoptic Gospels show, teaches by His action what is comely on our part. Nothing can justify irreverence or self will. We have only to follow Him. As He took bread and gave thanks before breaking it, so He did with the cup. Why should any one depart from His example? Is it not habit, or carelessness?

The Bible Treasury NS 3:15.) ◆

101. In reply to a criticism made on this remark that expiation properly is "not the pure, however precious, act of Christ's death," Mr. Kelly wrote afterwards, "this [passage] has been tortured to mean a denial that Christ suffered for our sins, or that such suffering up to death is atonement!

"Can perversity go further? One main point of the passage, which

objects in the counsels of God; but it is what Jesus went through from and with God, when made sin, it is what He suffered for our sins not only in body but in soul under divine wrath, that the atonement depends on.

Many beside Jesus have been crucified; but atonement was in no way wrought there. Many have suffered horrors of torment for the truth's sake in life and up to death; but they would have been the first to abhor the falsehood that *their* sufferings atoned for themselves any more than for others. Many saints have known what it was to be "smitten," and wounded of God, as the same Psalm testifies. In fact, this was more or less the place of God's servants, the prophets, and of righteous men from time to time in Israel, who accepted their affliction and persecution, whatever it was, from God and not man. This place the Lord Himself tested to the full; for in all things He must have the pre-eminence. He only wrought atonement; but He knew every sorrow which it was possible for man perfect, the Son of God, to take. The smiting of Him Who was the Shepherd, chief not only of the sheep but of the very prophets whom the Lord had raised up for Israel, refers to that utter cutting off which befell Him on the cross, but the sense of this not only He felt anticipatively, but it was that which was called forth before the cross. There was far more than atonement there. He realized in His soul all the condition in which God's people were, and His own total rejection, through man's sin and folly and Satan's maliciousness.

The effect, then, of all this humiliation of the Savior, even before it was complete on the cross, was the scattering of the disciples; "the sheep shall be scattered." They stumbled and fled the night before the blow actually fell on their Master. They did not understand the thing, any more than some do now the scriptures which speak of it, though the ground of the difficulty be wholly different. They could not make out why the Messiah should be thus treated, and how God should allow it. For it is plain that Christ took all from God (not man), and imputed all to Him. Faith never considers that afflictions spring out of the dust, but owns our Father's hand in everything, however in itself shameful and cruel if one looks at the secondary agents.

> But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee {Mark 14:28}.

The Lord assumes in resurrection His place of lowly service with the disciples. Peter, however, confident in his own strength and love to Christ, assures the Lord that although all should be stumbled, not so with him.

Alas, in divine things there is no more certain forerunner of a fall than self-reliance. And our Lord tells him,

> Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice {Mark 14:30}.

So careful and minute is the record of the Lord's warning given in Mark -- much more so than anywhere else.

> But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise {Mark 14:31}.

However, it was not Peter alone who pledged his faithfulness thus vainly; for it is added, "Likewise also said they all." They knew not their weakness; they knew not what it was to have the power of death pressing upon them. They had not faced the sense of total rejection by the world. Whatever there is of nature yet alive in our hearts is brought out by this. Man as such winces, and refuses the trial. It is ever so till by the power of the Holy Ghost we realize our total separation from the world by and in the death of Christ. But to be dead with Him was not yet the known portion of the disciples; consequently, not one of them was able to stand. Afterwards it was their privilege; but they had not gone that way heretofore. Jesus must go first. The sheep might follow after His cross in the Spirit. But Jesus must needs be the first. In due time, strengthened of His grace through His death, they too might glorify God by their death -- death really for the sake of Christ.

The Lord, having all the closing scene before His soul, gives Himself to prayer. Now the effect of prayer is, in the face of deep trial, to make the trial more acutely felt. The presence of God does not make us feel less the wickedness of man; and certainly it does not make us feel less the failures, dangers, and ruin of His people. There could be no question of the smallest shortcoming, no grief on any such score as this in the case of the Lord Jesus; but He realized the more the condition in which those were who belonged to God.

Did He not feel the treachery of Judas, the denials of Peter, the flight of all? Even with the apostates in Israel there was no hard indifference: how much more for the saints, the disciples, so shrinking at such a time? He realized the awful crisis that awaited the people of God; He felt, too, what it was for Him the Messiah to be utterly refused by the people to their own hurt and destruction; what it was not only for Him Who was life to go through death, and such a death, as could be known adequately only by Him! When the One that loved Him best hid His face from Him, when He was the object of divine judgment, when all that was in God of indignation and horror against evil concentrated itself against Christ! Then, again, what feelings of pity for the people who were forsaking their own mercies and the light of God for thick darkness and sorrow, through which they must pass retributively for that which they were about to perpetrate against Himself!

All this, yea, infinitely more, was before the Lord, felt and weighed by Him as One Whose grace associated Him with the conditions of God's people, not substitutionally alone but in association of heart and in all affliction with them. In atonement He is absolutely alone. He asks no one to pray then, looks then for no comfort from them; nor does an angel

---

extends over a long paragraph, is that while His death was necessary for expiation, His endurance of divine wrath, forsaken of God for our sins, was the essential thing (not *without this* the act of dissolution).

"Possibly those who found fault here are not aware how far enemies of the truth go in destroying the atonement by making it consist in the bare death and blood of Christ without the bearing of God's judgment of sin -- a fatal error. None but the divine Person of the Son, become man, can meet the case; without the shedding of His blood was no remission; His death was absolutely requisite to free us from sin: but all this availed only *because He endured the forsaking of God for sin*" (*Bible Treasury*, Dec., 1866, page 192). {W. J. H.}

come to strengthen Him then. He says, "My God" then, because it was what God felt against sin that He was enduring. He might and did say "Father" too, because He did not cease to be the Son, any more than He ceased to be the blessed and perfect and obedient Man. Thus He said "Father" both before and after that upon the cross. But He cried, "My God, My God" alone that time, as far as New Testament scripture speaks of His addressing Him: because then for the first time all that God was in hatred of evil burst upon Him without the slightest mitigation or consideration of weakness. Nothing blunted its force. He was competent to bear, and He alone bore, the whole unbroken and unsparing judgment of God, and that without looking for the sympathy of the creature, whether of man or angel.

It is a question between God and Him alone when, on the cross made sin and retrieving the glory of God that had been compromised by all the world, He alone endured all in His own person. This is the difference between the cross and Gethsemane. At Gethsemane our Lord was, as it is written, sore amazed and very heavy. He had taken with Him three chosen witnesses, and He

> saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here, and watch {Mark 14:34}.

So even these chosen ones He leaves behind;

> He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him {Mark 14:35}.

It would not have been perfection if He had not thus felt it. It was impossible that He Who was life could desire such a death from His Father -- from God in wrath against Him. It would have been hardness, not love; but although He felt it perfectly according to God His Father, yet He entirely submits His human will to the Father's. "Abba, Father," He says,

> all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt {Mark 14:36}.

He had a real soul, what is dogmatically called a reasonable soul, not a mere principle of vitality. He could not have said this had it been true, as some have asserted, that the divine nature in our Lord took the place of a soul. He would not have been perfect man, had He not taken a soul as well as a body. Therefore could He say, "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

There was the most entire subjection to the Father, even in the bitterest possible trial that could be conceived. This cup was the cup of wrath on account of sin; not to say, "let this cup pass from Me," would have shown insensibility to its character. But our Lord was perfect in everything. He therefore said, "Take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will but what Thou wilt."

He comes and finds the disciples sleeping instead of watching. It grieved Him; and it was right that it should. He warned them, however, for their own sake: "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." They did enter into it and they fell, Peter especially, to whom indeed it was that our Lord uttered it. He called them all to watch and pray; but Peter was the one to whom He said,

> Sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour?

He had particularly warned Peter before. He adds,

> The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak; and again He went away and prayed and spake the same words, and when He returned,, He found them asleep again (for their eyes were heavy), neither wist they what to answer Him. And He cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest; it is enough. The hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners {Mark 14:38-41}.

He was as one given up to be cut off from the last passover. From that the hour was come. "Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand." It was not atonement only, but the Shepherd was about to be smitten, and the sheep felt it, and shrank away before the actual blow fell.

> And immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders {Mark 14:43}.

The traitor had given the sign of a kiss, and told them to apprehend Him whom he kissed. And he went straight up to Jesus, and saith,

> Master, master; and kissed Him; and they laid their hands on Him and took Him {Mark 14:45}.

Peter, ready enough to fight though not to pray, draws his sword and smites the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear. The healing is not mentioned in this Gospel; for here the Lord is simply the suffering Son of man, the rejected Prophet of Israel, the smitten Shepherd. What proves His unabated power is not the point here; but His bowing to all shame, and the key is, "the scripture must be fulfilled." He had never been one to call for such treatment from their hands -- coming out against Him as against a thief, but the scripture must be fulfilled.

"And they all forsook Him and fled." Power would have kept them, but to yield to suffering began to take effect upon; them. "The sheep were scattered."

> And there followed Him a certain young man having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, and the young men laid hold on him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked {Mark 14:51}.

Vigor fails: so does shame. The first assault was enough to drive him away. Man is powerless to face death. The only reason why believers are able to face it, nay, even to welcome it and rejoice in it, is because of Christ Himself and His death. He has taken out the sting; but it was not yet done. Consequently, the disciples forsook Him and fled, young man and all. In Christ alone Who suffered for us we stand.

> And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes {Mark 14:53}.

There we find a fresh trial. Peter follows, afar off it is true, into the palace of the high priest and seats himself with the servants.

> And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none {Mark 14:55}.

They found the will, but not the power readiness to testify, but even in that they could not succeed. Man fails in everything except in malice against Jesus. Even with all the suborned testimony on the part of the witnesses, and all the readiness to condemn on the part of the judges, everything failed. The testimony did not agree. As required by law, there must be two or three witnesses agreed; but these agreed not.

The consequence was that Jesus was rejected not for the false testimony of man but on the true testimony of God. It was for His own testimony that they condemned Him. He came witnessing to the truth, and He witnessed to it unto death. The high priest astonished, perplexed, and failing to condemn Him on the witness of others, demands,

> Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? {Mark 14:61}

We are told elsewhere that he puts the oath to Him or adjures Him; but here it is simply the question without the oath Mark names. The Lord answers "I am": He witnesses a good confession, not only before Pontius Pilate, but before the high priest.

> And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven {Mark 14:62}.

He could not, would not deny the truth about Himself. He might refrain from noticing the false charges of others; but He would not, when challenged, shut up in His own breast the truth of His personal glory. He was the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed. But He was the Son of man also, and was going to take His place above, as well as to come in the clouds of heaven, according to the sure oracles of God.

> Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy {Mark 14:63}.

To him the truth was no better; so completely sealed in darkness was the head of religion among the Jews.

> What think ye? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands {Mark 14:64, 65}.

The Shepherd thus must be smitten every way

> I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

And so we find that Peter, having ventured thus far into the palace of the high priest, yet more feels the effect immediately.

> As Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest {Mark 14:66, 67}.

Still he could not remain in presence of his own falsehood, he goes out into the porch:

> and the cock crew,

this was the Lord's warning to him. A maid sees him again. It must be so. There was nothing apparently to cause terror; but so utterly powerless was even this most devoted of the disciples, at least most ardent in his love and most energetic in his demonstrations, so powerless was he to face even the nearness of death, that it suffices for a servant maid's word to bring out his denial of the Lord!

> A little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto {Mark 14:70}.

But the more they pressed the truth upon him, the more he retreated and, in his abject fear, began to curse and to swear.

Such was Peter, and such was the process through which he was soon to come out the chief of the apostles. He had to be broken down to learn the good-for-nothingness of flesh. How entirely thenceforth it must be Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost!

> I know not this Man of Whom ye speak {Mark 14:71}.

Yet "this Man" was his Savior; and he knew it -- too well -- too ill. "Thou art the Christ," he had said before. What a contrast now! "Who say ye that I am?" Jesus had said to him long before: and his answer was, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "We believe and are sure." Now he says, "I know not this Man." Jesus to him now was a mere man, unknown of Peter. Yet flesh and blood had not revealed the truth about Christ to him, but the Father which was in heaven. Peter, therefore, was near enough, when the rest were scattered, to add a sharper blow to the many which fell upon Jesus. One of the little number of disciples was a traitor -- another, and he the chief of the apostles, a denier of his Lord.

> And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon he wept {Mark 14:72}.

I do not say that his repentance was complete: you will find that the Lord touched him to the quick some time after. Nevertheless there was genuine feeling of his sin, shame, and anguish of spirit, though he had not yet been probed to the bottom. He wept as he thought thereon. It is always the word of the Lord that produces real repentance whether in a saint or a sinner. It is not human feeling, nor shame, nor the fear of being found out; the word that Jesus spake wrought within. It is the washing of water by the word. The word of the Lord does two things; it convicts and it heals; it cleanses as well as detects our evil after a divine sort. Had Peter believed Christ's word as to his own entire weakness, he would have been kept. But he believed it not. "Though all," he said, "shall be offended, yet will not I." He was ready to die with Him. Whereas in truth the mere surface of the scene of Christ's death frightened him so that the more urgently the truth of his relation to Jesus was brought before him, the more he swore that he knew Him not. Such is flesh even in the saint of God -- good for nothing everywhere.

Mark 15

Next follows the consultation in the morning, after the Lord had been already condemned "to be guilty of death. The result is that the chief priests, the elders, the scribes, the whole council, and indeed the whole people consenting, agreed to deliver Jesus to Pilate, the representative of the civil power. Jesus must be condemned by man in every capacity-the religious and civil, the Jews under the name of _religion having the chief guilt and being the instigators of the civil authorities, morally compelling them to yield contrary to conscience, as we find in the mock trial before Pilate. Thus we see He was "despised and rejected of men." It was not only by one, but by every class of men. We shall find that as the priests, so the people, and as the governor, so the governed, down to the basest of them, all joined in vilifying the Son of God.

> And Pilate asked Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He answering said unto him, Thou sayest it {Mark 15:2}.

It was His good confession. It was the truth; and He came to bear witness of the truth, which is particularly mentioned in the Gospel of John, where we have not merely what Christ was according to prophecy, nor even what He was as the Servant and Great Prophet, doing the will of God and ministering to the need of man, but what He was in His own personal glory. Christ alone is the truth in the fullest sense, save that the Holy Ghost is also called "truth" (1 John 5:6), as being the inward power in him that believes for laying hold of the revelation of God and realizing it.

But God as such is never called the truth. Jesus is the truth. The truth is the expression of what God is and what man is. He who is the truth objectively must be both God and man to make known the truth about them. Neither is the Father ever said to be the truth, but Christ, the Son, the Word. He is not only God, but the special One Who makes known God; and, being man, He could make known man; yea, being both, He could make known everything. Thus we never know what life is fully, save in Christ, and we never know what death is, save in Christ. Again, who ever knows the meaning of judgment aright save in Christ? Who can estimate what the wrath of God is, save in Christ? Who can tell what communion with God is, save in Christ? It is Christ Who shows us what the world is; it is Christ Who shows us what heaven is, and by contrast what hell must be. He is the Deliverer from perdition; and He it is Who casts away from His own presence into it.

Thus He brings out everything as it is -- even that which is most opposed to Himself -- Satan's power and character, even up to its last form -- Antichrist. He is the measure of what Jews and Gentiles are in every respect. This is what some ancient philosophers used to think of man. They said, though falsely, that man is the measure of all things. It is exactly true of Christ, the God-man. He is the measure of all things, though most immeasurably above them, as being supremely God, even as the Father and the Holy Ghost also.

Here, however, before Pilate, our Lord simply owns the truth of what He was according to Jewish expectation. "Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He answering said unto him, Thou sayest it." This was all; He had no more to say here. The chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. He was not there to defend Himself, but to confess who and what He was.

> And Pilate asked Him again, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against Thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled {Mark 15:4}.

His silence produced a far graver effect than anything that could be uttered. There is a time to be silent as there is to speak; and silence now was the more convincing to the conscience. He was manifestly superior, morally, to His judge. He was manifesting them all, whatever they might say or judge of Him. But in truth they judged nothing but whit was utterly false, and they condemned Him for the truth. Whether it was before the high priest or before Pontius Pilate, it was the truth He confessed, and for the truth He was condemned by man. All their lies availed nothing. Hence it was not on the ground of what they brought forth, but of what He said, that Jesus was condemned. Only in John's Gospel the Lord states the terrible fact that it was not Pilate himself, but what he was put up to by the Jews. We learn further in John that what frightened Pilate specially was that the Jews told him that they had a law, and that by this law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. His Sonship is affirmed, and Pilate feared it was true. His wife, too, had a dream which added to his alarm, so that God took care there should be a double testimony -- the great moral testimony of Christ Himself, and also a sign and token, which suited the Gospel of Matthew, an outward mark given to Pilate's wife in a dream. Our Gospel is much more succinct, and keeps to the order of facts without detail.

The iniquity of the Jews, however, appears everywhere.

> Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they pleased. And there was one named Barabbas, **which lay bound with them that had made insurrection** with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. **And the multitude, crying aloud, began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them** {Mark 15:6-8}.

So it was the multitude that wished to mark still more their complete subjection to the wicked priests by preferring Barabbas and sealing the death of Jesus. He might still have been delivered, but the infatuated multitude would not hear of it.

> But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you **the King of the Jews**? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people that he should rather release Barabbas unto them {Mark 15:9-11},

or, as John's Gospel puts it, "Not this man, but Barabbas.

Now Barabbas was a robber." He was a robber and a murderer -- yet such was man's preference to Jesus.

> And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto Him Whom ye call **the King of the Jews**? And they cried out again, Crucify Him {Mark 15:12}.

Pilate, cruel and hardened as he was, still remonstrates:

> Why, what evil hath He done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify Him {Mark 15:14}.

They could find no evil, they only imagined it out of the murderous evil of their own hearts. Pilate, utterly without the fear of God, but

> **willing to content the people**, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified {Mark 15:15}.

So true it was that, even in this last scene, Jesus delivers others at His own cost and in every sense. He had just before delivered the disciples from being taken; He is now the means of delivering Barabbas himself, wicked as he was; He never saved Himself; He could have done it, of course, but it was the very perfection of the moral glory of Christ to deliver, bless, save, and in all at the expense of Himself.

But further, every indignity upon the way was heaped upon Him.

> The soldiers **led Him away** into the hall called Praetorium, and they call together the whole band. And they clothed Him **with purple**, and platted a crown of thorns and put it about His head**, and began to salute Him**, Hail, King of the Jews! {Mark 15:16-19}.

There was no contempt too gross for Him.

> They smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and, bowing their knees, **worshipped** Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him {Mark 15:19, 20}.

And now, in the spirit of the wickedness of the whole scene,

> they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, **who passed by**, coming out of the country, **the father of Alexander and Rufus** (cf. Rom. 16:13), to bear His cross {Mark 15:21}.

It would appear that these two sons were afterwards well-known converts brought into the church. Hence the interest of the fact mentioned. God's goodness, I suppose, used this very circumstance, wicked as it was on man's part. He would not allow that even His Son's indignity should not turn to the blessing of man. Simon, the father of these two, then, was compelled to bear His cross by those who held the truth, if at all, in unrighteousness.

> And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, **being interpreted**, The place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine **mingled with myrrh**: but He received it not {Mark 15:22, 23}.

The object of giving this was to deaden anguish, the excessive lingering pain of the cross, but He refused.

> And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them**, what every man should take** {Mark 15:24}.

This, we know from elsewhere, was the distinct accomplishment of divine prediction, as it was the human sign of one given up to capital punishment.

> **It was the third hour, and they crucified Him.** And the superscription of His accusation was written over, The King of the Jews {Mark 15:25}.

The terms are exceedingly brief in Mark's Gospel. He only mentions the charge or accusation, not (as I conceive) all the formula. The other Gospels give different forms, and it is possible they were written in various languages -- one in one language and one in another. If this be the case, Mark only gives the substance. Matthew would naturally give the Hebrew form, Luke the Greek (his Gospel being for Gentiles, as Matthew's was for Jews), while John would give the Latin, the form of that empire under which he himself suffered later on. As that kingdom smote the servant, he records what it had done to the Master, and this in the language of the empire. There is a slight difference in each, which may thus arise from the different languages in which the accusation was written. At any rate, we know that we have the full divine truth in the compared matter; and of all ways of accounting for their shades of distinction, none more unworthy of God, nor less reasonable for man, than the notion that they are to be imputed to ignorance or negligence. Each wrote, but under the power of the Spirit; and the result of all is the perfect truth of God.

Mark, like Matthew, mentions the thieves (indeed all do) as a testimony to the complete humiliation of God's Servant and Son on the cross. Men would not even give Him that place singularly. He was indeed alone in the grace and moral glory of the cross; but to increase the shame of it these two thieves were crucified with Him, one on His right hand and the other on His left.

> And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors. [102] {Mark 15:28}.

Such was its outward appearance; but next, also, His words were turned against Him, not merely on His trial but in His dying moments.

> And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads and saying, **Ah**, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the cross {Mark 15:29, 30}.

How little did they know that His very words were now on the point of being completely accomplished!

But the chief priests carried it out further, as usual. Mocking, they

102. As the best Uncials (Alexandrian, Vatican, Sinai, Rescript of Paris, Beza's Cambridge, and one now in Munich), with more than forty cursive manuscripts, etc., omit v. 28, I do not think any cautious mind can urge its genuineness here. It was probably borrowed from the citation of Isa. 53:12 in Luke 22:37.

> said **among themselves** with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save {Mark 15:31}.

A great truth, though not in the sense in which they meant it. Both its parts, rightly applied, are most true; of course, not that He could not, but that He did not save Himself -- yea, could not, if grace were to triumph in redemption. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." It is the history of Christ upon earth; it is the history above all of His cross, where the whole truth of Christ comes out more fully though under the absolute infliction of divine wrath for our sins as well as the greatest strain of outward circumstances, but all borne in perfection. The holiness of Christ that at all cost would put away sin to the glory of God, the love of Christ that at all cost to Himself would bring eternal deliverance to others, the grace of God, were fully seen in Him; the righteous judgment, the truth, and the majesty of God. There was nothing that did not stand vindicated on the cross as nowhere else. It was the resurrection, however, that displayed all, publishing what God felt. He was raised from the dead, as it is said, by the glory of the Father. What was done upon the cross was for others; but what was towards Himself, as well as towards others, appeared in the resurrection and setting of Jesus at God's right hand.

But in the mouth of unbelief, the very same expressions bear a totally different character from what they have in the lips of faith. So it is that a worldly man may show that appearance of calm in the presence of death which faith really gives him whose eye is on Jesus: in this one it is peace, in that no better than insensibility. But with ordinary believers, who do not understand the fullness of grace, there are mental anxieties beyond what the unbeliever knows, because the latter does not feel what sin is and what becomes the glory of God. When a soul believes and yet is not established in grace, it is in trial and trepidation of spirit as to the result; and it ought to be so till the heart is at rest through Christ Jesus.

How little these chief priests knew the secret of grace! He saved others, said they, and they could not but know it. Himself He would not -- did not -- save. Nay, in the sense of love and divine counsel, Himself He could not save. He laid down His life for us: no other wise could we be saved; and more than this, obedient to the Father at all cost, determined to carry out His will, even our sanctification. In that sense only He could not save Himself.

There was no necessity of death in the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. All other men had the necessity of death through Adam; Christ had not, though He, the last Adam, Christ, sprang from him through His mother; He did not in Himself underlie the consequences of the first Adam at all, though He in grace bore all the consequences on the cross, but not as one under them; He only bore them for others by God's will and in His own sovereign love. Therefore very expressly, as to His death, He says,

> I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again {John 10:18}.

He alone of all men could say so, since the world began. Adam in Paradise could not speak thus; Christ alone had the title according. to the rights of His person. His becoming man did not compromise His divine glory. His being God did not enfeeble His suffering as man. There was no lowering of deity; but, in result, a very real exalting of humanity.

Nevertheless, the scriptures must be fulfilled: the Anointed One must die -- God's glory must be vindicated -- death must be encountered by dying, and its power broken not by victory but by righteousness. For this is the wonderful fruit of the death of Christ: the power of death is exhausted by righteousness, He having taken upon Himself the curse, the judgment of sin, so that God might be glorified even herein. Hence the fullness of blessing and peace to the believer. This gives the atonement its wonderful place in all the truth of God. Nothing can be substituted for it. He in atonement is the substitute for all others, and everything else as claiming to do with offering for sin is vanished away.

But as to these chief priests, they mockingly cried,

> Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross **that we may see** and believe {Mark 15:32}.

Yea, so complete was the spirit of unbelief that they who were crucified, even in the midst of their dying agonies, had time to turn round and add to His sufferings. Mark does not mention the conversion of one of these thieves. Luke does, and we know that afterwards the one who was converted, instead of asking Him to come down from the cross, owned Him to be the King before the kingdom comes, believing thus without seeing. The poor soul therefore shone through the grace of God, the more because of his own previous darkness: and the darkness of the chief priests who mocked formed the somber background which made this thief so conspicuous. In the very circumstances, over which the chief priests gloried as the defeat of Jesus, the thief gloried as deliverance for his own soul. But this falls to the province of Luke, who shows us the mercy of God that visits a sinner in his lowest estate -- the Son of man coming to seek and to save that which was lost. This runs through Luke more than through any other Gospel. Consequently also, he shows us the blessedness of the soul in its separate state. This dying thief, when his soul left the cross, would be at once with Jesus in Paradise.

Mark, however, mentions the indignity heaped upon Jesus by the thieves, along with their companions, the chief priests, and others.

> And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour {Mark 15:33}.

It was more than human -- God caused a witness of that hour that stood out from all before and after. There was darkness; the very world felt it. As the Lord told the Jews, the stones would cry out unless there were a voice from babes and sucklings. As John the Baptist told them, of these stones God could raise up children to Abraham. So here, the insensibility of men, the revilings and scoffings from chief priests down to thieves, against the Son of God, were answered on God's part by the veiling of all nature in presence of the death of Him Who created all; there was darkness over the whole land. Above, below, what a scene!

> And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God., why hast Thou forsaken Me? {Mark 15:34}.

It was no exhaustion of nature. Jesus did not die because He could not live, as all others do. He had still the full energy of life. He died not only in atonement, but to take His life again. How else could He have proved the superiority of His life to death, if He had not died? Still less could He have delivered us. "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son."

But more than that. His living again, His raising Himself from the grave, His taking life again, proved that He had conquered death, to which He had so entirely submitted for God's glory. He was put to death. By wicked hands He was crucified and slain; yet it was also entirely voluntary. In every other person death is involuntary; So absolutely is Jesus above mere nature whether in birth or in death, or all through.

Besides, the cry was most peculiar, such as had never been heard from a blessed holy man as He was. That which drew it forth was God's forsaking Him there. It was not a mere manifestation of love, though there never was a time when the Father saw more to love in His Son than at that moment; yea, never did He see before then such moral beauty, even in Him. But if He was bearing sin, He must really endure its judgment. The consequence was to be forsaken of God. God must abandon Him Who had taken sin upon Him. And He did take our sins and endured that forsaking which is the inevitable consequence of sin imputed. He Who knew no sin knew the cost to the uttermost when made sin for us.

> And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calleth for Elias {Mark 15:35}.

This seems to be mere scoffing again. There is no reason to suppose they did not know that He said, "My God, My God," not Elias.

> And one ran, and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone, let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost {Mark 15:36, 37}.

Now that death was consummated, the only righteous ground of life and redemption, the

> veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom {Mark 15:38}.

The Jewish system was doomed, and sentence executed upon its characteristic and central feature. The veil was that which separated the holy place from the holy of holies there was no single point in the Jewish system more emphatic than the veil. For what the veil indicated as a figure was God present, but man standing outside; God dealing with the people, but the people unable to draw near to God, having Him with them in the world, but nevertheless not brought to Himself, not able to look upon His glory, kept at a distance from Him under the law (cf. Heb. 9:8; 10:19, 20). The rending of the veil, on the contrary, at once pronounced that all was over with Judaism.

As the darkness supernatural was one testimony before His death, so this at His death declared the power of Christ's blood. It was not only God come down to man, but man now by the blood of Christ entitled to draw near to God, yea, all who know the value of that blood into the holiest of all.

But as far as the Jewish economy was concerned, here was the abolition of it come in principle. The tearing down this chief sign and token was the virtual profaning of the sanctuary; so that now any one could look into the holiest. It was no longer the high priest alone venturing within once a year, and that not without blood; but now, because of His blood which they had spilt, little knowing its infinite value, the veil was rent from top to bottom. This was in the first month of the year. The feast in which the high priest entered was in the seventh month. Thus the destruction of the veil was the more marked now. The truth is that the real application of the day of atonement and the following feast of tabernacles will be when God begins to take up the Jewish people. We are said to have Christ as our passover; but the day of atonement, viewed as a prophetic type, awaits Israel by and by.

Nor was this all. There was a testimony not only in nature as opposed to the scorn of men and the revilings of the crucified ones that were with Him: not only was there this darkness of nature and rending of the veil for Judaism, but a Gentile was brought forward, compelled of God to acknowledge the wonder that was there and then being enacted. "Truly this man was the Son of God" {Mark 15:39}.

In all likelihood he was a heathen, and did not mean more than to own that Christ was not a mere man, that He was somehow or other what the Chaldean monarch heard and spoke of in Dan. 2, 4. Now the centurion went further than they of Babylon. He felt that, though His dwelling was in flesh, yet He was a divine being, and not the Son of man merely. I do not think that when Nebuchadnezzar says that he saw one like the Son of God, he meant the full truth that we know; for the doctrine of the eternal Sonship was not then revealed, and it could not be supposed that Nebuchadnezzar entered into it, for he was an idolater at that very time. But it was a testimony of his full confidence that it was a supernatural being of some kind, "the Son of God." At the same time the Spirit of God could well give the centurion's, or the king's, words a shape beyond what either knew. "Truly this man was the Son of God."

The disciples were not there. They, alas, forsook Him and fled; at any rate, they are not mentioned. They were so out of their true place that God could say nothing about them. Yet one who up to this time had shrunk back from the due confession of Jesus was now brought forward.

> And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, **that is, the day before the** {a} **sabbath**, Joseph of Arimathea, **an honourable counsellor**, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus {Mark 15:42:43}.

The very circumstances that might have been supposed naturally to have filled him with fear of and shrinking from

the consequences, were, on the contrary, used of God to bring out a boldness that never had visited Joseph's heart before. He identified himself with Jesus. He had not the precious place of following Him while He was alive, but the death of Jesus brought him to a point, commanded his affections, and made him, therefore, to enter courageously and demand the body of his Master.

Pilate, astonished, asks if Jesus was already dead. Naturally, crucifixion is a slow death: people linger sometimes even for days when a person is in ordinary health. But in the case of Jesus it was but for a few hours. There was nothing further to do. It was not, therefore, a question of mere lingering. Besides, it was the accomplishment of prophecy that not a bone should be broken, which John tells us, who is always occupied with the person of the Lord. It was according to the scriptures that He should be pierced, but not a bone should be broken, and this most remarkable circumstance John witnessed and tells us of. Mark does not notice it. Pilate

> marvelled if He were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him if He had been any while dead {Mark 15:44}.

It was the rapid death of Jesus, accompanied by the loud voice, that filled the centurion with amazement. This showed that it was not the death of a mere man. He had power to lay down His life. So when He was certified by the centurion Pilate gives leave.

And Joseph

> bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre {Mark 15:46}.

And two of the Marys beheld where He was laid. Here at least then we have genuine affection. If there was not the intelligence of faith, there was the love that lingered over the Lord they adored with true feeling -- the fruit of faith which thus honored Jesus even in His death.

Mark 16

The resurrection not only witnesses the power of death overcome and the perfect condition of man before God, suitable to heaven, but, as regards things here below, it is for him that believes the true solvent of all difficulties. Jesus never was vindicated thoroughly till the resurrection. There was, of course, a rich and mighty testimony before; but it was one which might be gainsaid even by those who saw the miracles -- not rightly, but through the power of Satan. Even the practical infidel, the sensual man, could say that his brethren would believe if one came to them from the dead. But we shall find that the unbelief of men is beyond even resurrection unless there be the grace of God giving it effect.

In this chapter we have the women coming to the grave of Jesus with love but no intelligence of resurrection, and consequently in grievous perplexity. They had "bought sweet spices" that they might come and anoint Him. The Lord had told the disciples distinctly that He was about to rise from the dead. So small was the faith even of these saints of God that on the very day He had prepared them to expect His rising, they were occupied with that which was only suitable to a dead Christ, not the risen and living One.

> Very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone **from the door** of the sepulchre? {Mark 16:3}.

But it was done already.

> **When they looked**, they saw that **the stone was rolled away: for it was very great** {Mark 16:4}.

Such is the virtue of resurrection, such the power which accompanies it. The hindrance was beyond their capacity to remove; the stone that blocked up the grave was very great. But this made no difference to God; and it was now rolled away.

> And entering **into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted**. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified; He is risen; He is not here. Behold the place **where they laid Him** {Mark 16:5, 6}.

Thus their terror vanishes: such is the use the angels make of the resurrection of Christ. Fear is natural to man in a ruined world where sin reigns. Adam had no reason for fear till the fall: what just ground has a believer now for fear, since Christ Who died for him is risen? He has ample grounds to judge self and its ways, but none to doubt the triumphant results of Christ's work.

The whole substance of a believer's blessing consists of and depends on Christ, and in proportion as you mix up self in any way with Him, it is unbelief. If I allow the sense God gives me of my own badness to hinder my peace in Him, it is almost as wrong as the vain dream of my own goodness. It is all a mistake to think Christ can ever mix with the first Adam. It must be either Christ or self, both can never be an object of trust. When we have found Christ, there are certain effects produced by Him through the Holy Ghost; but they are effects, not a cause. Unbelief makes things done by us a cause, but this is invariably false Mark 16:1-6).

Now the resurrection proclaims the victory. Although these women were there in presence of angels, they were really in presence of a greater than angels, Whom they saw not -- of Jesus risen from the dead. Even the saints are called to blessing greater than angels. Why should they be

affrighted? The saints are brought into nearness to God that angels never did or can possess. The saints will reign with Christ: angels never do. Thus Satan has been totally defeated in all his thoughts and plans. If his pride was wounded at the divine purpose of raising man above the angels, God nevertheless has raised man (already in Christ, soon in His body, the church), not only above angels, but so high as to unite him who believes now with Christ, the Head of all principalities and powers. Even the world will shortly see the saints glorified with Christ and sharing the same glory with Him. "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them."

The millennium will be the display of all this, which makes the idea of such an era brought in by the gospel so monstrously false as well as defective. It makes the glory of the bride to consist in what she is and does in the absence of the Bridegroom, instead of holding out God's glory displayed in Christ, and the church glorified and reigning with Him. If it was, therefore, a sight painful and unsuitable that these women, heirs of such glory, should be affrighted in presence of an angel, let us bear in mind that, though converted then, they had not yet received the spirit of adoption; and what power can there be without that? There may be the instincts of a new life; but no peace nor spiritual energy. "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth." He knew that their heart was right.

It is beautiful to see that, as in Mark where we have the fall of Peter more fully than elsewhere, so we have the Lord's special consideration of Peter.

> Go your way, tell His disciples **and Peter** that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: **neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid**.

They little knew the power of resurrection yet: they knew the fact, but not the power (Mark 16:7, 8).

But now we have the scene looked at from another point of view, that is, of service: all is ruled by this great truth.

> Now when Jesus was risen early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils (Mark 16:9).

It is not only the angelic message and the proofs of His being risen; but now it is Himself seen as risen first by Mary Magdalene.

There is a remarkable putting of circumstances together here. Mary Magdalene had been mentioned before; but here only it is added to her name, "Out of whom He had cast seven devils." These two things are mentioned together. The Son of God comes, as we know, to destroy the works of the devil: He was manifested for that purpose. The defeat of Satan's power, even before this in the case of Mary Magdalene, was yet more confirmed by this, that the risen conqueror of Satan appeared first to her. The great fact is all that is given us here.

In John's Gospel there is the beautiful unfolding of the way in which He takes her out of Judaism. "Touch Me not," He says to her, "for I am not yet ascended to My Father." Thus henceforth the disciples were going to know Him -- no more after the flesh.

> But go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God {John 20:17}.

Do not be looking at Me now as a visible Messiah, destined King over all the earth. I am going to take another place in heaven and to put you in My relationship on earth, as sons of My Father and your Father, as redeemed to My God and your God.

He declares His name unto His brethren; and on that as the basis and form of relationship, He next gathers them together and praises in the midst of His brethren. He comes there and fills them with joy.

> Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

For Christ is not only the Object, but the Leader of praise. He communicates both the material and the strain of praise to the disciples. Christian worship is in truth His worship transferred to us, and so carried on as we worship His and our Father and God in spirit and in truth. But this theme belongs rather to John.

Here it is simply said (Mark 16:10, 11),

> She went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

It is very remarkable the simplicity with which the Evangelists relate the proofs of the incredulity of the disciples: there is no attempt to gloss it over. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, all tell it out plainly. They knew not the scriptures, says John, that He must rise from the dead. They saw the fact, but did not take in its connection with the revealed counsels of God. It was believed on in the intelligence of evidence before their eyes, not yet entered into in faith as it was soon about to be.

> After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them (Mark 16:12, 13).

This is the journey to Emmaus, which is given fully and characteristically in Luke.

> Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen (Mark 16:14).

In their case it is evident that hardness of heart is laid to their door, as the root of their rejecting the testimony concerning Jesus.

Yet it is to them that the Lord shortly after (the evangelist omitting other matters which might distract) says,

> Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature {Mark 16:15}.

What a wonderful process for fitting those men to preach to others! It must be by being made nothing of in their own

eyes. Repentance always goes with faith and humiliation; the finding out what we are, specially towards God and His word, is God's way of making us useful to others. The sense of our own past unbelief is used of God when He sends us out to call others to believe; we can understand their unbelief and feel for them in it, having been so unbelieving ourselves. This is not man's way in what he calls ministry, but it is God's.

> Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature {Mark 16:15}.

After what you have proved of yourselves, be confident in God, not in man, but in the God Who was so patient with you, and sent you testimony after testimony, till you were compelled to come in. That same God deigns to use you in His work on behalf of others, and as you have proved how persistent God has been in His goodness to you in your unbelief, so do you go on patiently in His service.

> Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16, 17).

It is not enough for you and for Christ's glory that you believe:

> he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

Baptism has this importance (not, of course, saving the man before God, for the essential point as to this is believing that which is unseen of men), but baptism is an open sign and witness of this before men. Thus a man stands to what he believes and confesses it publicly. He does not say, My heart believes in Christ, but there is no need that I should say anything about it.

Baptism is the initiatory testimony that one believes in Christ. It is founded upon His death and resurrection.

> So many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ, were baptized unto His death. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3, 4).

Not according to the first Adam, who mistrusted God and sinned and became a dead man; but as Christ was obedient unto death and has brought us life everlasting righteously through His own death. Baptism acknowledges this, and is as good as saying, I renounce all I am, and every hope from man; I know the first Adam, and myself as a child of his, to be dead all my hope is in the last Adam. When a man is really brought to this, he is a true believer, and baptism outwardly sets forth the truth of Christ.

Thus baptism has a decided value as a testimony before God and men. No wonder, therefore, it is said by Peter, that "Baptism [while he carefully eschews any *ex opere operato* efficacy in the same sentence] doth also now save us." If a man refused to be baptized through shrinking from the shame of it, he could not be owned as a Christian at all. Paul, in writing to the Gentiles, shows that the great thing is what has taken place in Christ. Peter insists upon baptism, though he expressly guards them from thinking too much about the outward act: but the grand point is the demand of a good conscience towards God by Christ's resurrection.

Hence it is said here,

> He that believeth not shall be damned.

Unbelief was the fatal evil above all to be dreaded. Whether a man was baptized or not, if he did not believe, he must be condemned. There could be no promise of salvation, spite of baptism, if he did not believe. This makes baptism simply consequent on believing: but when we hear of condemnation, it is on the ground of not believing. Alas, millions will be condemned who have been baptized, yet so much the worse because they do not believe.

> And these signs shall follow them that believe: in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues: they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover (Mark 16:17, 18).

There is not a word here as to time. It is not *all* who believe, but "them that believe": and, further, it is not said of them that believe even to the end of the age. Nothing of the kind is intimated. When, on the contrary, the Lord in Matthew commands them to disciple all nations, baptizing and teaching them, He vouchsafes the assurance of His presence with them to the end of the age. The Lord abides with the disciples till the age is completed -- all implied in

> Lo I am with you all the days.

But it is not so with these signs of Mark. Our Lord's word was fully accomplished to the letter in the particular epoch when these signs were given: but there was no bond of perpetuity. In this way the contrast with Matthew is striking, and the mouth of the objector or deceiver is stopped.

> In My name shall they cast out devils.

He begins with power over Satan. They were to go forth in the power of His resurrection. Although He was going away, so far from thereby losing power, they would rather gain in this respect.

> Greater works than these shall he do, because I go to My Father.

The notion of the Jews was that all the great works were to be done when Messiah was on the earth. Not so. In His name, during His absence, His servants should cast out devils, etc.

> They shall speak with new tongues.

What a wonderful testimony of God's grace towards all men! They were to speak now of His wonderful works (Acts 2) in the tongues wherewith God had confounded men at the tower of Babel. This was fulfilled, first on the day of Pentecost to the Jews, then to the Gentiles in due time.

> They shall take up serpents --

the outward symbol of the power of Satan in this world—that which man instinctively hates since the fall, unless he be so besotted as to worship it.

> And if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.

The power of nature, of things inanimate as well as animate,

could not avail against them; but, contrariwise,

> they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

The beneficial power of good in His name overcomes evil and banishes it. .

> So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God (Mark 16:19).

The work was done: He sat down. With His great earthly work over, He was the great Servant Who could say, "I have finished the work which Thou gayest Me to do." So He sat down at the right hand of God, the place of power.

> And they went forth and preached everywhere (Mark 16:20).

Is the Lord then inactive? Nay,

> the Lord working with them.

So true is it from the first verse of Mark to the last. Jesus is the One that doeth all things well, working for men in His life, or rather working for sinners; suffering for sins in death; even now working with His servants when He is gone up to heaven. He is the Servant of God throughout our Gospel. Even seated at God's right hand, He is the Servant, but

> the Lord, working with them and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

{*The Authenticity of Mark 16:9 - 20*}

Having long since protested against those who treat this most interesting passage and the beginning of John 8 with suspicion, I proceed to state my reasons, passing over the disputed portion in John, which has already been well defended in another place by another hand.

Even Dean Alford, who certainly does not err on the side of credulity, admits that the authority of the close of Mark is hardly to be doubted. Eusebius, and the Vat. and Sin. MSS., omit it; and several others note its absence in certain copies, but generally add, that it appears in the oldest and best. All else of the Greek MSS., all the Evangelistaria, all the Versions (except the Roman edition of the Arabic), and a large proportion of the earliest and most trustworthy Fathers are allowed to be in its favor. Lachmann, in spite of his notorious tendency to follow the very slips of the most ancient copies, edits the entire section without hesitation.

In his notes the Dean urges that the passage is irreconcilable with the other gospels, and is disconnected with what goes before; and that no less than twenty-one words and expressions occur in it (some of them repeatedly) which are never elsewhere used by Mark, whose adherence to his own phrases is remarkable, and that consequently, the internal evidence is very weighty against his authorship. That is, he believes it to be an authentic addition by another hand.

Before examining these criticisms, I must object to a reasoning which affirms or allows that to be scripture which is irreconcilable with other scriptures. If its authority be clear, every believer will feel that, with or without difficulties, all must be really harmonious. For God cannot err.

But, it is said, the diction and construction differ from the rest of the Gospel. Did the Dean or those who think with him adequately weigh the new and extraordinary circumstances which had to be recorded? In such a case strange words and phrases would be natural if Mark wrote (nor does be by any means want *ἅπαξ λεγόμενα* elsewhere); whereas, a supplementer, adding to Mark, would as probably have rigidly copied the language and manner of the Evangelist.

Πρώτῃ σαβ. (Mark 16:9) is alleged to be unusual. Doubtless; yet, of the two, it is less Hebraistic than *τῆς μιᾶς σ.* (v. 2), and each might help the other to a Gentile or a Roman ear. And, so far from being stumbled by the way Mary Magdalene is mentioned here, there seems to me much force in Jesus appearing first to her out of whom he had cast seven devils. Who so suitable first to see Him and hear from Himself the tidings of His resurrection, Who through death annuls him who had the power of death, that is, the devil? As to the absolute use of the pronoun in vv. 11, 12, is it not enough that the occasion here required what was needless elsewhere? -- If *πορεν.* is found only in vv. 10, 12, and 15, it is because the simple word best expressed what the Holy Ghost designed to say, whereas elsewhere the evangelist employed its compounds in order to convey the more graphically what was there wanted. Thus, he uses *εἴσορ.* eight times, while Matthew, in his much larger account, has it but once. Is this the least ground for questioning Matt. 15:17? So, again, Mark has *παραπορ.* in four different chapters, Matt. once only (27:9), Luke and John not at all. -- Leaving these trivial points, the phrase *τοῖς μετ' αὐτοῦ* is to me an argument for, rather than against, Mark's authorship. Compare with it Mark 1:36; 3:14; and 5:40. As to *ἐθεάθη ὑπ' αὐτῆς* and its difference from *τοῖς θ. αὐτόν*, the answer is, that the word is most appropriate here and uncalled for in other places, and if the difference prove anything, it would show two hands instead of one supplementing Mark's narrative! Thus, for instance, the same verb occurs but once in all the Epistles of Paul are we therefore, to suspect Rom 15? Matthew has *θεωρέω* only twice; are we for a score of such reasons as these to speculate that "another hand" added Matt. 27 and 28?

As to reiterated mention of unbelief and the Lord's upbraiding the eleven with it, what more instructive, or in better keeping with the scope of the context and of the Gospel? It was wholesome for those who were about to

preach to others to learn what their own hearts were, and the Lord in His own ministry sets them right before announcing, their great commission. Even if we only look at the word *ἀπιστία*, it occurs in Mark 6:6; 9:24. If the verb is found only in Mark 16:11, 16, what more marvelous than Luke's having it only in his last chapter (vv. 11, 41), and never once using the substantive either in the Gospel or in the Acts of the Apostles? -- It is true that *μετά τ.* and *ὕστερον* are found in no other passage of Mark, but his customary precision may be one reason why the former is not more common; and the latter occurs once only in Luke and John. -- It is confessed that τὸ *εὐαγ. π. τῇ κτίσει* is in Mark's style. The fact is, neither of the later Gospels contains the noun *εὐαγ.* and Matthew always qualifies it as "the gospel of the kingdom," or "this gospel"; whereas, whether or not Mark has the qualified phrases in Mark 1:14 and 16:9 (for MSS. etc. differ), he repeatedly has "the gospel" elsewhere, as Mark 1:15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10. This, then, affords no slight presumption that the passage is the genuine production of Mark, as well as authentic.

Παρακολ. in Mark 16:17, *ἐπακολ.* in Mark 16:20, occur nowhere else in Mark, and that for the best of reasons; the accuracy which the compounded forms impart was demanded here, and not before, where the simple form sufficed. And this is the less surprising, inasmuch as the former appears only in Luke's preface, and the latter nowhere else, as far as the four evangelists are concerned.

As to the singularity of *καλῶς ἔξουσιν*, what simpler, seeing that this promise (as well as that about the new tongues, serpents, etc.) is revealed here only, and was unquestionably verified in the subsequent history? It is. the natural converse of a common scriptural designation for the sick of *κακῶς ἔχοντες*, and if the occurrence of *ἄῤῥωστος* should be here objected to, the reader may find it twice already in Mark 6, while Matthew and Paul use it each only once.

Only one further objection remains worth noticing, the use of *κύριος* in Mark 16:19, 20. In Mark 11:3, I suppose it is equivalent to Jehovah, and at any rate I would not press this as in point. But the absence of such a title before seems to me a beauty, not a blemish, in Mark, whose business was to exhibit the service of Jesus. But now that God had vindicated His rejected Servant by the resurrection, now that He had made Him both "Lord" and Christ, what more natural, or even necessary, than that the same Gospel which had hitherto traced Him as the Servant, Son of God, should make Him now known as "the Lord"? But this is not all. The Lord had uttered His charge to those who were, at His bidding, to replace Him as servants, and in a world-wide sphere; He was received up to heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. Now it was Mark's place, and only Mark's to add that, while they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord was working with them. Jesus, even as the Lord, is, if I may so say, servant still. Glorious truth! And whose hand so suited to record it as his who proved by sad experience how hard it is to be a faithful servant; but who proved also that the grace of the Lord is sufficient to restore and strengthen the feeblest? (Compare Acts 13:13; 15:38; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11.)

There is no doubt of the fact that this section had its present place in the second century, i.e., *before* any existing witness which omits it or questions its authorship.. And even Tregelles, notoriously subservient as he was to favorite voices of antiquity and to points of detail, owns that the very difficulties it contains (exaggerated as I have shown them to be) afford a strong presumption in its favor. Thought and expression point to Mark only. It is therefore genuine, as well as authentic.

(*The Bible Treasury* 16:335-336.)

Appendix 1 for Mark: Miscellaneous Papers on Mark

The Unclean Demon Cast Out

Mark 1:23-28; Luke 4:33-36

This miracle which Mark records as well as Luke ay be noticed as the first wrought publicly on one a demoniac. Indeed it has a striking place the opening of our Lord's service in the second Gospel, which is devoted to that display of its exercise. What truths are more needful for man to hear than that he is in one way or another under the thraldom of Satan? and that the name of Jesus alone avails to deliver him? Only it is as beautiful as it is blessed to see that the third Gospel depicts from the vision of Isaiah the grace and power in which He came, before manifesting man's wretched subjection to the enemy. It was given to Luke only to tell us of that matchless scene in the synagogue at Nazareth, before the solemn lesson that soon followed at Capernaum. How quickly men turn from wonder at grace in God and His Son to the wrath and hatred of their own offended pride! How slow to allow that their own will opens the door for their slavery to Satan!

No doubt this case like others in the Gospels exhibits the aggravated fact of possession. It was not derangement here, but Satan's command of mind and body. Yet it is also observable that what is ordinary and presents none of the humiliating horrors of possession may be really more ruinous eternally. So we may infer from the Gadarenes, who were not drawn to Jesus by the deliverance of him that had the legion, but on the contrary besought Him to depart from their borders. In any way, how awful is the subjection! How gladly should men hail the true tidings God sends of a Deliverer in Jesus! Only believe on Him; believe God about His Son. Do you not need Him desperately? None less, none other, than Jesus can defeat Satan or save your soul.

Think of the fearful identification of the unclean spirit with the man, which his language reveals.

> Eh! what have *we* to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth?
> Didst Thou come to destroy *us*?

There is no creature in the universe which affords a lair so congenial for a demon as a sinful human heart. As long as you are far from the Lord, you are near and open to the power or wiles of the spirit of evil. He is your great enemy; the Lord Jesus is your greater friend. Reject not the Savior to your ruin. Be assured that He will receive you; if you cast your soul on Him, He will in no wise reject you. He came to seek and save the lost. If you own yourself lost, as indeed you are, He is just the Savior for you.

There is another notable word.

> I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God.

Yes, He was and is "holy," even as God is, the Holy One of Israel. And this most appals these unclean spirits, a Man, yet the Holy One of God! No wonder, that they believe and shudder. How portentous that sinful man when he hears neither believes nor shudders! yea, yet worse, that he believes after a sort without a shudder even at his own state and sure doom, if he abides as he is in his sins, neglecting so great salvation.

But "Jesus rebuked him," refusing a demon's testimony; as the apostle did at a later day. God testifies by His word, as He was then testifying in Jesus, His Son and Servant; and the Holy Spirit is now sent forth to bear witness of Jesus, that you may believe on Him and be saved.

Not content with rebuking the demon, He commanded him to hold his peace and come out from the man he had made his prey. And the demon was compelled to obey. If he threw the man in the midst, as evidence of the powerful spirit, he came out from the man without doing him hurt, to the praise of the Lord Jesus. It was not "word" only, to which they were used; but this word was with authority and power in Jehovah's servant, His chosen. Amazement came on all then; but fora sinner to believe is far better still . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:148-149.)

The Jewish Leper

Matt. 8, Mark 1, Luke 5

In the first of the Gospels this is the earliest miracle given in detail: a suited testimony of Messiah to His people, a testimony that He was Jehovah in their midst acting in power and grace. Indeed even here the account is brief. The fact is in some respects all the more significant. The real state spiritually of the chosen people was no better in God's sight. The law had singled out leprosy as the standing sign of uncleanness and exclusion from His presence. Hence the more manifest was grace toward the Gentile in the action of the prophet of old, when Israel was sinking down more and more into apostasy.

But now a greater than Elisha was here. Immanuel was on earth, in the land; and this unhappy Jew prostrates himself before Him, and makes his appeal: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." The chosen people were morally what he was physically; but they knew it no more than they bowed to His glory. But it will dawn on the remnant by-and-by, when they shall say,

> Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.
>
> In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

Far different was it in the day of Messiah's visitation.

Even the leper, who did pay Him homage then, feebly apprehended the grace that was in Him -- "Lord, if Thou wilt." Why question? Why doubt? Wherefore was He come, and come Himself, the Holy One, to dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips? A man, yet the King, Jehovah of Hosts! If the eyes of the blind were to be opened, and the ears of the deaf to be unstopped, and the lame to leap as a hart (and prophecy had bound up this and more with the advent of Messiah) was the leper to be an exception? Was he without the pale of mercy? The leper, abject as he was, acknowledged His power without hesitation.

But grace rises over all difficulty and applies the power to the need, however desperate; and here Luke lets us know, suitably to his own character, that the man was "full of leprosy." But if faith was small, grace comes forth in its own immensity.

> And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him.

It was not always thus that the Lord wrought in cleansing lepers. When the ten met Him, as we hear in Luke17, they stood afar off, and the Lord cleansed all, but touched none of them. Here we have the beautiful sign of His mercy toward Israel another day, when He will bless them with His gracious presence and heal all their diseases, as He will forgive all their iniquities.

Now, present in humiliation, His glory could not be hid. Had He been merely man under the law, there was no license to touch the leper. Jehovah Messiah was there; and however He might stoop in love, He could not deny Himself. He and He alone could touch the leper, not only undefiled, but banishing the leprosy. How manifestly it was God in Christ winning the overwhelmed heart, and blending power with grace in a way beyond all human thought! Mark tells us that He was "moved with compassion"; and indeed the act was exactly suited to express it.

But He added words, recorded in all three Gospels, of the utmost weight --

> I will; be thou clean.

None on earth but He was free so to speak. His Person gave Him the right. He, Who could truly say "I am," was entitled to say "I will." In every other born of woman it would have been not only presumption but sin. He could say these words Who does say in John 8, "Before Abraham was, I am." "Be thou clean" was immediately followed with power that could not be disputed. "Immediately" the man's leprosy was cleansed. The Lord Jesus spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

It was but a sample; and, as the Lord enjoins, "for a testimony unto them." Therefore Jesus said unto the leper,

> See thou tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded.

A greater work was needed for man before God. A deeper want than any created by disease, however fatal, lay upon Israel; but this was "for a testimony unto them." To show himself to the priest ought to have raised the question there, if his lips kept knowledge, or if his heart sought it, Who has healed him? It would have drawn out the answer from faith; Jehovah is here; Jehovah has healed him. For no one knew better than the priest that man is powerless here; and the law has no provision for healing leprosy, only directions for cleansing ritually him who is already healed.

Alas! like people, like priest; all were unbelieving then, save the little remnant which heard the Good Shepherd's voice and followed Him. How is it with my reader? The Gentile professor, though christened, if this be all, is no less a leper in God's sight than the Jew; and the outward bearing of the Lord's name cannot bring to God without living faith. Nay, to possess externally was and is a great danger for the flesh, which goes asleep under privileges now as Israel did of old.

(*The Bible Treasury* 20:141.)

The Paralytic Healed

Matt. 9, Mark 2, Luke 4

The new and precious feature which betrays itself at this point in the narrative of Matthew is the growing opposition and hatred of the religious leaders toward the Lord. It is not, as in Matt. 8, a certain scribe ignorant of himself and self-confident who proposes to follow Him whithersoever He may go. In Matt. 9 the scribes begin with saying within themselves, This man blasphemeth; and the Pharisees end with their own blasphemy -- that it was in virtue of the prince of the demons He was casting out the demons. Through the darkening unbelief the Lord gives His blessed and blessing testimony.

The first incident recorded is the cure of the paralytic as He was speaking the word to a crowd at home in His own city -- Capernaum. This malady aptly sets forth the effect of sin in destroying power; as leprosy in its unclean taint before God or man. The occasion was the house filled even beyond the door, as Mark tells us; which accounts for the difficulty the four bearers had of getting near. Eastern buildings, however, furnished easy access to the roof; and this they uncovered, and let down the sick man on his pallet through the tiles, as Luke tells us. The Lord saw their faith and says to the paralytic "son" (or "child" rather), "Thy sins be forgiven."

It was indeed a startling word; and so it was meant to be. The Lord laid bare the root of the evil, and dealt with it at once fundamentally. He alone could thus speak. Not even an apostle approaches its force. It was proper to Him Who was alike Jehovah and Son of Man. The men learned in the law were shocked. They unbelievingly reasoned in their hearts to His dishonor; but He, the ordained Judge of quick and dead, read their hearts as He does, those of all, and answered their unuttered and evil reasoning by the question: --

> Which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power (or, authority) on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the paralytic), Arise, and take up thy bed, and go to thy house.

And so the man did immediately before them all. And the crowds at least were filled with fear and said, We have seen strange things today. Let me plead with you who have sins and cannot avoid foreboding of judgment. Why should not you take hold of such words of divine grace? They are for every soul of man that believes. They were not limited to that age or race or land. They are written in the imperishable word of God, for guilty men wherever they be who bear, that they may believe and be saved. Therefore did He come not yet to judge, but to say still, Thy sins are forgiven. Miracles may cease; but the love never far and wide. Is God of Jews only? Is He not of Gentiles also? Yea, writes the inspired Hebrew of Hebrews, of Gentiles also. Fear not then, but believe.

> The Son of man hath power *on earth* to forgive sins.

This the scribes, learned in the law, did not believe; for they knew not Him, nor the God Who sent Him. They would not have disputed that God forgive sins. They rebelled against the Lord's exercise of any such authority. He claimed it as Son of man, exercised it on behalf of the paralytic, and gave Him immediate powers to rise take up his couch, and walk, before their eyes, as His disproof of their evil doubts, His witness outwardly of that precious boon. He had overcome Satan for this life and was dividing his spoils.

But more: Christ has accomplished redemption since. He took His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high when He had made purification of sins. Risen from the dead, He has told us that all power (or authority) has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. He has vanquished finally; He has borne God's judgment of sin on the cross; He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. Is there not all the more urgent ground for you to believe, and all the deeper encouragement for you to confide? He has sent out His servants expressly into all the world, and told them to preach the gospel or glad tidings to the whole creation. But He solemnly warns that he that disbelieves shall be condemned (or damned).

Oh, deceive not your soul, nor slight the Savior Who is the Lord of glory. If He humbled Himself to become not only man but a sacrifice to God for sin, is there not the best of all grounds for you to bow, and bless and worship Him, even as the Father Who gave Him? And how many, once unbelievers, have become the most devoted of His servants like Saul of Tarsus, afterwards the great apostle? Be not like the proud scribes or bitter Pharisees, who trusted themselves, rejected Him, and perished everlastingly.

Power to walk aright and glorify God is inseparable from knowing your sins forgiven. Till you believe the gospel, you are as powerless as the paralytic was on his couch. When you have redemption in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of your offences, you can enjoy God's love in Christ, His counsels and His ways; and the Holy Spirit will strengthen you to walk worthily of Him, and of the calling wherewith you were called. Ability to walk as a Christian follows faith in Christ and His grace in forgiveness. They reverse God's way and Christ's word whose effort is so to walk as to be forgiven. It is all vain, because it is self and unbelief: a flame of their own kindling. And this shall they have of God's hand; they shall lie down in sorrow.

See then that ye look to Him, Who, if He is exalted now, is still the Savior. For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. If you believe not, you will assuredly be judged by Him and lost for ever. So His word declares plainly.

(*The Bible Treasury* 20:182-183.)

The Seed Left to Grow

Mark 4:26-29

This is a parable peculiar to the Gospel of Mark, and therefore characteristic of the divine design. It is as far as possible from having any analogy to the leaven in Matt. 13, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened. Christ's service is here set out first and last, marking for the kingdom of God the unexpected fact of His seemingly leaving things to take their course between His action at the beginning and that at the end.

> And he said, Thus is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast the seed upon the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, how he knoweth not himself. Of itself the earth beareth fruit, first a blade, then an ear, then full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is presented, immediately he despatcheth the sickle, because the harvest is arrived (Mark 4:26-29).

Matthew gives a complete view in its seven parables of the varying phases of the kingdom of the heavens, and especially in view of the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews and of its special form, "the mysteries of the kingdom," while the rejected King is on high, before He returns as the glorified Son of Man in possession of the universal inheritance.

Mark was led to dwell on the Sower, as the fullest expression of the Savior's personal ministry, thwarted for the most part, but fulfilling the purpose of grace in such as have ears to hear. Then he records like Luke the solemn admonition that follows. The lamp was not to be put under "the bushel" or under "the bed," but to be put on its stand. God's testimony exposes the true character of things, and tests the witness himself; who, if he makes it his own, has more given, and if not, loses what he has. If the lamp was to shine openly, the truth was to be valued personally.

Then Mark alone adds the beautiful comparison of the Lord's relation to the work which has been cited. He would prepare His servants for the trial of faith that awaited them in His absence. He carefully guards against the difficulty which has often been expressed, and sometimes weakly evaded. For those who know Him reject the unworthy thought that He absolutely abandons all care over His work here below, and yet more, that He Who knows all things knows not how it fares with that of which He labored. Our Lord took pains to say that the kingdom is "as if"; not that He did not watch and work diligently, any more than that the husbandman does no more than sow and reap, without intermediate interest or services. These dealings are through other scriptures fully revealed, which the parable assuredly does not in any way contradict.

The aim was, while affirming His personal work as ushering in God's kingdom and His gathering the fruits at the end of the age, to mark emphatically how it should be left while He is on high; but this with fullest confidence that His sowing would come to the just and expected result. We have, therefore, here no thought of seed destroyed by the enemy's power, nor of failure through the flesh, nor of the choking influence of the world, any more than of darnel foisted into the field unawares and spoiling the crop. All goes well, though the great Servant is hidden in God: just

> as if a man (after sowing) should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knows not how.

Jehovah's messenger had been sent before Messiah's face to prepare His way; but he was imprisoned and slain. Messiah came Himself proclaiming the gospel of God's kingdom, and saying that the time was fulfilled, and the kingdom had drawn nigh. The cross, not the throne, was before Him; and He begins to call servants and to make them fishers of men. For though the unclean spirits obeyed Him, and disease vanished at His touch, even then the men of repute and leading taxed Him with blasphemy, because He forgave sins as God only can. He therefore, knowing all that was to befall Him, provides for the progress of God's work in His rejection unto death, and shows how nothing should hinder its completion.

So, even in Isa. 49:3-6, we have Jehovah saying,

> Thou art my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified. But I said, I have laboured in vain. I have spent my strength for nought and in vain: nevertheless my judgment is with Jehovah, and my work with my God. And now, saith Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant, that I should bring Jacob again to him (though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorified in the eyes of Jehovah, and God shall be my strength); and he saith, It is a small thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I have even given thee for a light of the nations, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Similarly here too nothing shall destroy the gracious purpose of God in Christ; and His humiliation on one side and rejection on the other only give it luster and force.

> Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.

The apparent frustration for a while secures in the end, and glorifies God and Christ all through. It appears as if He who began and will end had no more to do than the man who, having sown his seed, sleeps and rises, yet the seed springs up and grows, he knows not how. God has so ordered this creation that of itself the earth brings forth fruit in the case supposed, first a blade, then an ear, then full corn in the ear. And so it is spiritually, without visible intervention of His righteous Servant on high.

But when the fruit is presented, He despatches the sickle immediately to reap, since harvest is arrived. It is the contrast of His two advents of personal action, with the unseen advance of what He has sown and what He will reap. On this His own can count without hesitation. God's work, of which Christ is the doer, can fail in nothing to glorify Himself.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 1:197-198.)

The Tempest, and Unbelief, Rebuked

Matt. 8, Mark 4, Luke 8

Here is another manifestation of divine power and goodness in the Lord Jesus here below. Matthew wished to take it out of its historic place, after the parables of Matt. 13 were uttered, for that express purpose; or rather the Spirit Who employed him, if one may so say reverently.

> And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was asleep. And the disciples came to him and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish (Matt. 8:23-25).

Thus did the gracious Lord test the faith of His followers, that they might confide in His supremacy over all need, His concern for them in all dangers and difficulties. Was not He with them Whom God had sent to save? Was not the Reconciler not only of all believers but of all the universe, in the ship? He, who was come to lay the basis of the new creation and everlasting glory? If He could not perish Who was here to rescue from everlasting destruction all that look to Him in faith, how weak and unworthy to wrong His love as if He would leave them to perish? Yet appearances were allowed to prove their hearts. The sudden violent squall, the sea raging, the little ship or boat on which they had gone aboard, the waves beating in so that the ship was already filled, the Lord asleep (not on a pillow but the boat-cushion)!

It was assuredly perilous increasingly, with but one ground of confidence: Jesus was there. But this to faith should have been everything; and it would have been, had they looked away from the wind, sea, and all else, to Him. When they woke Him, it was but with the appeal,

> Lord, save us: we perish.

Even on the resurrection day they were yet more sad and despairing, if not blinded by alarm, because He had bowed to death and suffered on the cross; and He had then to reproach them as "senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets spoke. He, despised and rejected of men, had only to speak the word, and the element least controllable by man obeyed His voice, Who stooped so low in love, yet was their Creator.

> And He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still; and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

But He said also,

> Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?

Sinner, or saint, what a word of truth to both No doubt there is a difference immense, between him that believes and the unbeliever, for the one is in the hand of the Father and the Son; the other lies like the whole world in the wicked one. Yet the unbelief which in the latter resists the Holy Spirit fatally, so far as it works, dishonors the Lord and injures the believer; and scripture abounds with proofs of both, that each may respectively be warned. It was certainly fear that prompted the importunate repetition which Luke records (Luke 8:24),

> Master, Master, we perish.

The disciples soon learned the vanity of their alarm when He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; though they to the end of the earthly pilgrimage need to look earnestly to Him, as His love values it, and it is due to His glory. And if a rebuke to unbelief, how strengthening to the heart when we learn afresh His faithful and effectual intervention, whatever the manner of it!

But is this nothing to you, who are perishing in sins and unbelief? The Creator of all things did not become a man save to glorify God and to bless man, as blessing could only be thus; and by nothing short of death, the death of the cross. His incarnation was not only to manifest Him in life, solely doing God's will, as it never had been on earth before, but to suffer for sins in the body God prepared for Him, that sins be taken away by the all-sufficient sacrifice, and that believers might be sanctified, yea, perfected forever. For this Heb. 10 declares to be the fruit of the Savior's work.

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us. Whatever may be the good things in store for Israel when they repent and look in faith unto their pierced Messiah, the good tidings are now sent by God to any sinner, Jew or Gentile. Oh, take the place of truth, and own to God your sins and ruin, that you may not come into judgment. For His judgment (and the Lord Jesus is the Judge) is holy and righteous, and therefore must be utterly destructive of the guilty.

> Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16:31) . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* 20:197-198.)

The Demoniac Delivered

Matt. 8, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8

There are two very different forms in which the enemy of God and man works: one which may be called extraordinary; the other far more common. It is thus for evil with the spirit that operates in the sons of disobedience, as the Holy Spirit does for good in children of obedience. The history in which the demoniac plays so conspicuous a part illustrates both. The second Gospel enters into affecting details of the man's hopeless misery, and of the Savior's gracious power; as the first is more general in the display of a present Jehovah-Messiah, taking notice of a second victim as is usual throughout (Matt. 8:28, 9:27, 20:30), the least adequate testimony to Israel. Mark and Luke graphically bring before us the more notable of the demoniacs. When the Savior was here, it would seem that Satan put forth his malignant power beyond all example. But a stronger than he was here to overcome him, take from him his whole armor wherein he trusted, and divide his spoils.

Immediately, on the Lord's quitting the ship from Capernaum to the other side of the lake, there met Him a man with an unclean spirit who had his dwelling in the tombs. None could bind him, not even with chains. Often as he had been bound with fetters and chains, the chains were rent asunder by him and the fetters shattered; and none had strength to subdue him. Continually by night and day in the tombs and in the mountains was he crying and cutting himself with stones. What a depth of unspeakably wretched and appalling degradation! Matthew adds the fierceness and danger to others; Luke, that for a long time he had worn no clothes.

The sight of the Lord Jesus even from afar arrested him, so that he ran and paid Him homage, and with a loud voice cried, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, torment me not. For the Lord said, Come forth, unclean spirit, out of the man. Nor was this a11: He asked him, What is thy name? and got the answer, My name is Legion, for we are many. There is a fact outside human ken, on the evil side of the spiritual world, beyond measure horrible: a man with such a host of evil spirits in him as could justify the well-known name of a Roman battalion, and a man with a personal consciousness, yet also merging his personality in theirs! -- Legion, for *we* are many!

But mighty as a spirit is, and especially when in such multitudinous and tyrannical force of evil, demons have no skeptical hardihood. They believe and shudder (James 2:19). Therefore did they beseech that He would not command them to depart into the abyss; for their sure doom was before their eyes; and they knew that when He reigns, they will be cast there, which they dreaded even now. Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? is the cry in the first Gospel. So, when they begged to enter a great herd of swine feeding on the mountain side, the Lord gave them leave; and the swine, about two thousand, no sooner received the unclean spirits, than they rushed down the steep and were choked in the sea. It was the witness, to all that believe scripture, of the Lord's delivering power on the one hand and of Satan's destructive energy on the other. It is idle here, as everywhere, to confound possession by demons with either lunacy or disease. Either or both might be also, or neither be, and yet that possession of evil spirits. The reality was thus transparent. The effect on the swine made the objective fact undeniably plain, and the suggestion of a physical or mental derangement inexcusably false.

Nor does the Lord, to Whom all belongs below as on high, need the apology of man to justify His permission, any more than for the sickness and death, the plague and the famine, the tempest and the earthquake, which He employs providentially in this fallen world. To what purposes of grace does He not turn every one of these inflictions for such as hear His word! So doubtless it was then whether Jews or Gentiles owned the swine.

And here we face the more ordinary working of Satan's power. For when the swine-herds reported all, the whole city came to meet the Savior and besought Him to depart out of their borders! They saw the possessed that had the legion sitting, clothed, and sensible; and they were afraid, not of Satan but of the Savior! The witnesses related what explained all as to the demoniac and the swine; but all the people round about began to beseech Him to depart!

Such is man under Satan's power ever at work, if not so terrific in appearance far more dangerous than the maddening possession in its intensest form; and none is recorded beyond Legion's. Yet his presence never so acted on their fears, as the proof of the Savior's beneficent power.

O my readers, are you under the same fatal spell? Do you dread to approach the Lord of all, the Savior for eternity of all who believe? is it Jesus you dread in your soul? Is it from His grace that you shrink back, lest you should be saved now? Consider your most perilous condition. You are slaves of Satan, children of wrath, enemies of God. What must follow as you are? Death, and judgment. So it is laid up for men as they are. Without faith on your part, baptism and the Lord's Supper, blessed as they are to faith, only aggravate your guilt. There is no Savior but the Lord Jesus, Who, once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to those that wait for Him unto salvation (in contrast with judgment, as He died a sacrifice for their sins).

Not such was the state of the delivered demoniac, who besought Him that he might be with Him. But becoming as the desire might be, the Lord had work for him to do, before that first love is gratified as it surely will be in due season:

> Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee and showed thee mercy.

And he went his way and began to publish in Decapolis how great things *Jesus* did for him. And he did right, though all were wondering . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* 20:212-213.)

The Woman Healed, and Sent Away in Peace

Matt. 9, Mark 5, Luke 8

Here we have a living picture of a soul smitten incurably for man, every effort fruitless, all medicine and physicians in vain, her resources spent, herself nothing bettered but rather grown worse.

But faith cometh by hearing; and, having heard of Jesus, she came in the crowd behind, and touched His garment, or; as Matthew and Luke say, its hem. Faith is always sure of the Savior; it may have as feeble knowledge of itself as of Him, but it does not doubt in Whom the virtue lies. Much remains to be learned and corrected, but it goes straight to its object. For she said, If I but touch His clothes, I shall be made whole. And faith does not fail to receive its answer through grace. Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she knew in her body that she was healed of the scourge. But the Lord knew the whole case better still, and meant for her no half blessing. She did not question His power; she seems to have connected it in her mind with His person and surroundings physically. She must learn that His soul acted with it, that His mind and heart were engaged in the blessing. It was not a charm, as heathenism made it in thought; nor was it even dependent on His bodily presence, as Jews were apt to conclude. He Who had deigned to become the Servant of divine love, in a world where sin reigned and had wrought fell ruin, would show her the kindness of God.

Touching the hem of His garment stealthily. she would, if the case had been left there, have ever felt that it was underhand and surreptitious. She did not as yet know God, though availing herself of Messiah's healing energy. The Lord could not in his grace consent to so partial a mercy. He is entitled, and He loves, to bless fully all whom He blesses at all; and "him that cometh to Me," said He elsewhere, "I will in no wise cast out." So fully did He come as a servant, that He was here only to do the Father's will, not His own. Whosoever came, He received. And the full blessing He gave from first to last; He would lose nothing, but raise up at the last day.

So even at this day He not only forgives transgression, and covers sin, and imputes no iniquity, but takes guile from the spirit. This the healed woman needed; this the Lord gave. So immediately perceiving in Himself the power from Himself gone forth, He turned round in the crowd and said, Who touched my clothes? The disciples, as so commonly, misunderstood; and Peter, with the rest, talked of the crowds hemming Him with their pressure. But the Lord alone knew in the highest way, that a certain one did touch Him; and He looked about to see who had done this. It was not that He could not have named her, but to give her opportunity to confess the truth. How little she knew the grace that filled Him! For frightened and trembling, conscious of what had been done upon her, she came, and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. How little she knew that such was the condition of her better blessing! And He said to her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go away in peace, and be well of thy scourge. How transporting to her as yet confused and anxious spirit! What solid abiding comfort for her to be thus in His presence, and to have all out before Him, and to know Him more than confirming all she had got, with a message of peace unfailing for all that is to come! Such is the Lord to every need that is brought to Him; such is He most of all to that deepest need, which demanded not power only but propitiation in His suffering to the uttermost, the death of the cross. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. As He does not change, among human shiftings and men's various and strange doctrines, so neither does His power, nor His love. But to be blessed fully we must meet Him face to face, and know from His own lips grace given to us. It was an immense mercy to have the mischief stayed, the living death arrested; but how much more to bear His voice banishing all fear and sending her forth in peace, as we pass through a world of strife, and spite of a fallen nature which ever tends to. pleasures that war in our members!

There may he crowds around the Lord. He is not occupied with them, but passing through. The touch of faith, however uninformed or feeble, arrests Him at once. But a blessing, though immediate and rich, is not enough to satisfy Him. The Blesser will be known, that faith may have a blessing, good measure, pressed down, shaken up, and running over: so does God give, not man. If it is for His g1ory that all be clear and confessed, it is also the condition of peace by faith. When silence is kept, the bones wax old through roaring all the day long, and the Lord's hand is heavy night as well as day, so that moisture is changed into summer's drought. But peace is known, when one's sin is acknowledged to Him; this cannot be while one's iniquity is hid.

> I said, I will confess my trangressions to the Lord;
> and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

So it was, so it is, so it must be, as long as grace brings sinners to God. Nature is all wrong in fearing that the Lord begrudges blessing, and the fullest, and for ever. It is no question of our merits who have but sins and death and wrath as we are naturally. It is His grace that saves; and His grace would have us to know that He makes salvation assured with all His heart.

(*The Bible Treasury* 20:230-231.)

The Daughter of Jairus Raised

Matt. 9, Mark 5, Luke 8

A great request was now laid at the feet of Jesus. The petitioner was Jairus ruler of the synagogue. His daughter, a maiden of twelve years, was dying. "But come" said her father, "lay Thy hand upon her: and she shall live." Nor did our meek Master turn a deaf ear, but arose and followed him.

The dying maiden was a striking type of the daughter of Zion, for whose sake Messiah was here. And the Jewish ruler expressed his faith in engaging His gracious presence and power to restore his daughter at the last gasp.

On the way the woman with a bloody flux for twelve years touched His garment and was healed. And the Lord not only yielded to her need, but drew her out from her hiding, and sealed her faith and confession with His open approval to her better blessing. It is not otherwise with the Lord now, as we have proved who have gone to Him in our depth of need in this interval, since He came as Messiah to be sought by Israel, and before He reaches the daughter of His people, not sick only but dead. Grace has met us to the uttermost, not merely immediate healing for such as have touched Him on His way, but cleared away of all fear and doubt that we might taste how gracious He is and rest in peace through His word.

Yet this created a delay which must have tried most severely the importunate Jairus. And while the Lord was yet speaking to the healed woman, one comes from the ruler's house saying, Thy daughter is dead: trouble not the teacher. But an answer was given to nourish his drooping faith, Fear not; only believe, and she shall be made well.

So it will be in the day that hastens. Unbelief will do its deadly work among the mass of the Jews. But the desperate condition of the chosen people will draw down the action of grace; and faith will, according to God's word, look to Him that loves to heal, and to Him that smote to bind up; and He will in due time raise them up and cause them to live before Him. Whether it be the long and desperately tried woman or the maid of Israel, faith alone enjoys the blessing. And justly so; for faith renounces all dependence on self and honors God and His Son, giving credit for love as great as the power, and Christ's word as unfailing as either. Faith therefore purifies the heart, as well as relieves and assures it.

Here the Lord, when come to the house, suffered none to enter save chosen witnesses, Peter, James, and John, with the father and mother of the maiden. As for all the rest who were weeping and bewailing, He put them out when they derided His saying, "Weep not: she is not dead but sleepeth." They believed their senses, not His word; and the scornful shall not see the blessing. But He took hold of her hand and called, saying, Maiden, arise. Then her spirit returned (for it was gone), and she rose up immediately; and He directed food to be given her. So in due time will the same Lord raise up the people, from the valley of dry bones, as the prophets assure us, no matter how many say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost: we are clean cut off. As Jehovah hath spoken, He will perform; and in that day shall it be known through all the earth.

Quickening was no strain on the Lord of glory. It belonged to the Son as to the Father; and now that the Son was here a man to do His will, the Father gave Him to have life in Himself, showing Him all things that Himself doeth. Of these none was more characteristic than awakening the dead and quickening them. His dignified calm is remarkable here as on all such occasions. He took the dead child by the hand, and called; and she arose immediately. He graciously thought of her bodily need, which at such a moment even parents might not unnaturally overlook. Truly

> He hath done all things well,

and as none other; though many another did like works or even greater in His name, which exalts Him as much or more than if He had done them all Himself.

And has this tale of the Holy Spirit no bearing on you who read these lines, -- dead to God while you live? Nay, it was written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name (John 20:31). How many have heard His voice, since He was here, in the written word! For the hour now is (John 5:25), as the Lord so solemnly avers, that souls hearing Him may not come into judgment but pass out of death into life. Leave not such an issue uncertain. You might well despair if it turned on you, as men fancy in the pride and impenitence of their hearts. But the life you need is wholly and solely in the Son of God; and God is calling you to believe that Jesus is He, and that He gives eternal life to every believer on Him through His word.

It is "the dead" who are now called to hear; and they that hear, the Savior assures us, shall I live. Clearly they are not dead physically, but in trespasses and sins; and they are called to hear Him and live. For life is not in the first man whether profane or religious; it is in the Second; and faith by grace receives it. For such a boon, morality is as vain as ordinances. Those that live do live to God, and honor His institutions; but believers guided by God's word and Spirit testify to Christ as their life, and reject every other dependence as a destructive error and a cheat. He is the way, the truth, and the life, as He Himself declared; and so it is in John 5 with His "verily, verily." Woe is his who despises Him or sets up a rival in His stead.

> Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father; he that aknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life

It is far better than to be raised to natural life as Jairus' daughter was, though He Who raised her is the same Who quickens those who believe now, and Israel from the dust of death by-and by. Fear not; only believe.

(*The Bible Treasury* 20:245-246.)

The Deaf and Stammering Man

Mark 8:32-37

This is one of the two miracles peculiar to the gospel of Mark, the other being the cure of the blind man of Bethsaida Mark 8:22). They both illustrate the prophetic service of the Son of God. He had come to the lake of Galilee.

> And they bring to him [one] deaf and hardly speaking, and they beseech him to lay his hand on him. And having taken him away from the crowd apart, he put his fingers to his ears; and he spit and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven he groaned, and saith to him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and be spoke aright. And he charged them that they should tell no one; but the more he charged them the more abundantly were they publishing [it]. And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear and the speechless to speak (Mark 8:32-37).

The minute accuracy of the Holy Spirit in recounting Christ's miracles is admirable. This case differs from others, in that the sufferer is not said to have been absolutely mute, but to have had an impediment of speech, or speaking with difficulty, as well as deaf. Nevertheless the Lord takes especial pains with him. The manner reveals the divine Servant's grace. There was no question of His power. Ordinarily He healed all that needed it in a moment, no matter how extreme, as when an unclean spirit was the cause of the dumbness rather than physical inability or defect. Here He was pleased to manifest His tender interest in detail, and His compassionate love no less than His power to heal. He does much more than what those besought who brought the patient to Him. Putting the hand on the needy one was the usual sign of blessing; and less than this, a word, would have been enough, if so the obedient Lord had seen fit to God's glory.

But He took him aside from the crowd apart. For here it is not the crowd He thinks of, any more than the haughty scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem. Just before He had met the desperate need of the Syro-phcenician on behalf of her demoniac daughter on the borders of Tyre and Sidon. Now He had come through the midst of the borders of Decapolis, where, as the prophet had long before predicted, light was to shine for a despised remnant when darkness brooded over the mass with city and temple dead to the rejected Messiah (Isa. 9:1, 2). So apart from the crowd He took the deaf man, and put His fingers unto, if not into (as the preposition may mean according to the sense required), his ears. But more than this; having spit, He touched the tongue of the stammerer.

He marked in both acts how all depended on bringing Himself personally to bear on the actual wants. He who wrought was man, but no less was He God, the Son incarnate and on earth, in His pitiful love serving God and man. It was not only that He applied what came from within Himself to the man's tongue, but looking up to heaven He groaned, and saith to him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. Power truly went out of Him, and love was its spring in devotedness to God Who is as truly light in His nature as love is the character of its energy, which His own service was manifesting. And thus, if He deigned to touch the man so intimately, He looked up to heaven whence He came in a love that abides unchanging and above all evil, yet groaned in deep sense of it, while He said to him, Be opened.

The afflicted man was but an emblem of the state of Israel, unwilling alas! and unable through unbelief to hear God, or to speak out their own misery and His praise. But as brought to Him he set forth the remnant on whom light dawned in a region and shadow of death. And "straightway" (a word so characteristic in the Gospel of His service) his ears were opened, and the bond or tie of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke aright. If the unbelief of the people and its chiefs made their blessing impossible, the poor of the flock prove the all-suffering of His gracious power, and reap the great blessing of faith, be it ever so small. And the love which so wrought will encourage a remnant in a future day, who will re-commence the Jewish history in the land, till it become a strong nation in that faithfulness which is unwearied and will never forget the promise.

For the present all was vain; and He charged them to tell no one, but the more He did, the more a great deal were they its publishers. Yet, true as it might be in word, it was not faith in the heart, but rather extreme astonishment. Even so what a comment on Christ's service!

> He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear and speechless to speak . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:100-101.)

The Blind Man of Bethsaida

Mark 8:22-26

This is the later of the two miracles peculiar to the Gospel of Mark. As in the former the Lord led away the deaf man, who could not speak aright, from the crowd apart, so here He took hold of the blind man's hand and conducted him out of the village. The mass of the Jews had already had ample signs in testimony of Who and what He was. It was but for greater hardening of their hearts to see more. They might get their sick healed, they might eat of the loaves He made and be filled; but even the most orthodox sought from Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him; so that He could only groan in His spirit and say, Why doth this generation seek a sign? Had He not given them countless signs? In the sense of their unbelief, which a Syro-Phoenician woman's faith rebuked, the Lord leads aside from the multitude, though He still acts in compassionate grace. This could not fail where they bring distressful need before Him, the Servant not more righteous than gracious.

> And they bring him a blind man, and beseech him that he might touch him. And taking hold of the blind man's hand, he led him forth out of the village, and having spit on his eyes, he laid his hands on him, and asked him if he beheld anything. And having looked up he said, I behold men, for I see [them] as trees, walking. Then he laid his hands again on his eyes, and he saw distinctly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly. And he sent him to his house, saying, Neither enter into the village, nor tell [it] to any one in the village (Mark 8:22-26).

It is the gospel of His service; and here, as throughout, we are made to behold the perfect manner in which His mighty works were done. It is not only the power of God ever ready to heal the sick and those oppressed by the devil. The way in which He answered every such appeal was worthy of the Son of God become servant to glorify God and win man. He put His fingers to the deaf man's ears, He touched the ill-speaking tongue. He laid His hands upon the blind man outside Bethsaida. There was no necessity for any such actions. He had but to speak, and it was done. But love is far beyond power; and when man has power to wield it in ever so limited a range, how little he thinks of love! Least of all does he, conscious however scantily of his sinfulness, look for love from the God he slights and dreads. The Lord in the way He wields divine power manifests divine love, and as Man in the midst of men. Nor is there the smallest ostentation but its marked absence: all is done in genuine simplicity as well as tenderness.

We may notice too that in the two miracles the Lord uses His own spittle, as He did also in the cure of the man born blind (told us in John 9). Whatever the reality and lowliness of the humanity He had taken up in His grace, there was divine efficacy in His person; and the sign of this He applies in all three cases, each having its own distinction. When He touched the tongue, He looked up to heaven with a groan, and says to the man, Be opened; and immediately the happy result follows. When He mixed clay with what came of Himself and anointed the born-blind man's eyes, He told him to go to Siloam and wash; and only then did he come seeing. Here the very intent was to mark by the twofold act of laying His hands on his eyes that the Lord would not have the cure partial. It was much to behold men, like trees, but walking. Yet the Lord would not let him go thus; He would give him to see distinctly. He therefore laid His hands upon his eyes, so that he was restored and saw all things distinctly. It was simply the way of love that the blind man might know the deep interest of His heart Who might have dispensed with any or all of these circumstances, and have effected the perfect cure with a word. But what a blank for the man and for our hearts, if it had been only so!

Indeed the instruction was great for the disciples who were then in a measure learning of His ways with Whom they were, and learned far more when He was gone and the Holy Spirit come. The former was no unmeet emblem of Israel's state, and had a sample of the powers of the world to come when the weak remnant shall become a strong nation, with ears opened and tongue loosed to speak Jehovah's praise. The latter in the partial cure might well remind the disciples that they during His earthly ministry did not see more clearly than the man when His hands were laid on him once. How different when God raised Him up from the dead whereof they were witnesses! Then, He being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit, how great the blessing! Faith needs to have its perfect work, as well as patience. How often men stop short! . . .

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:117-118.)

The Lunatic Son Healed

Mark 9:17-27

What a contrast with the manifestation of the excellent glory on the mountain was the actual state of man even in the favored people here below! Jesus the Son of God was there; yet that the disciples knew not so by faith, as to avail themselves of His victory over the enemy!

> And one of the crowd answered and said, Teacher, I brought unto thee my son having a dumb spirit; and whensoever it taketh him, it teareth him, and he foameth and gnasheth his teeth, and is withering away. And I spoke to thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able. And answering them He saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto me. And they brought him unto Him; and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tore him, and falling on the ground he wallowed foaming. And He asked his father, How long time is it that this hath come to him? And he said, From a child. And often it cast him both into fire and into waters to destroy him; but if thou hast any power, help us in thy pitifulness toward us. But Jesus said to him, If thou hast power is {sic} to believe: all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out and said, I believe: help mine unbelief. And Jesus, seeing that a crowd was running up together, rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, Dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him and enter no more into him. And having cried out and torn [him] much, it came out, and he became as if dead, so that the most said, He is dead. But Jesus laying hold of him by the hand raised him up; and he stood up (Mark 9:17-27).

It was indeed a mighty deed: and so it fell to our Gospel above the others to give most details. There are differences in the evil spirits; and only to prayer and fasting did the kind in question yield. The lack in that respect was grievous in the Lord's eyes. The distressed parent did not despair, and turned from the failing disciples to Him Who never fails. How humbling when believers thus dishonor their Lord!

> 0 faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?

This was the overwhelming fact. That the crowd, that the scribes, should have no faith, was bad enough after such ample witness of the gracious power of God in His Son, servant of all need in man, marked out from the first in doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. Did He not give the twelve, and more than the twelve, authority over the unclean spirits? How was it then that these put shame on His name by failing to draw on Him? "Bring him unto Me" says the Savior. Even so, He lets all see the depth of the child's need, the malicious power of the enemy. He manifests His interest in all that dismays the heart of man.

He enquires, not as if He did not know the reins and the heart, but that the tried soul may learn the reality of His compassion. He teaches the feeble suppliant that the question of power turns on faith; for faith God will have, whatever may be His own grace. What possible good morally could power insure without believing? On the other hand, all things are possible to him that believes. So even the disciples had to learn; and the father, through his necessities believing the lesson at once, tends to the right way under the Lord's guidance.

> I believe: help mine unbelief.

How wholesome for the believer to feel and own his unbelief!

How is it with you that read these words? Have you found out what a deadly thing is unbelief? Have you received the declaration from God that you till brought to Him live in the lusts of your flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and are by nature children of wrath, even as the rest of mankind? Judaism did not hinder this of old, whatever its great privileges; nor does Christendom now with its still greater advantages. And has Satan no power over such as are dead in trespasses and sins? Do not such walk according to the age of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience? If men but saw by faith, they would discern themselves thus in a plight more appalling than that of the lunatic child under the power of the dumb and deaf spirit. For in itself it was for the life that now is; whereas Eph. 2:1-3 describes for both time and eternity.

But the Lord, as He wrought in power then, is also the Deliverer according to the rich mercy of God and the great love wherewith He loves. God is now showing the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, as He assures us He will in the ages to come. Let me, following the apostle, entreat that you receive not the grace of God in vain; for vain it undoubtedly is, if you have not faith in God through our Lord Jesus for your own soul as a guilty sinner, powerless in yourself before Him. But He hearkens to the cry of need and distress; yea He sends His word and works in manifold ways to make souls sensible of their ruin, that they may cry and He may answer in the glad tidings of His gospel. Now too it is a day of salvation; and the casting away of Israel is the world's reconciliation. For their fall is our wealth, their loss is our rich gain.

How awful then for men in Christendom to live only for present enjoyment, money, ease, honor, power, like the heathen who know not God! He Who for sins suffered unutterably, not from man only, but from God's judgment on the cross, is the Author of everlasting salvation to all those that obey Him; and faith in God's testimony to Him is the beginning of that blessing which shall never end. Oh, take heed, and put not off the call of grace, which you may not

hear again! The spirits, now in prison and awaiting, not another deluge, but everlasting judgment in the resurrection of the unjust, once heard the Spirit of Christ in Noah's preaching while the ark was in preparation. Beware lest you, who have heard a far fuller expression of divine mercy in the gospel of Christ, frustrate the counsel of God against yourselves. For God is not mocked in the end, however men cheat themselves in thinking that He heeds not their words and ways now. Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, throughout the day of the temptation in the wilderness.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:69-70.)

Blind Bartimaeus

Mark 10:46-52

No sight was more characteristic of our Lord's ministry than His grace to the blind. It has the first place given to it in the answer to John the Baptist's message. A special case is presented in Matt. 9:27, another in Mark 8:22, and the more general fact in Luke 7:21 with other cures, but the most marked of all in John 9. Yet there is this striking circumstance common to the three earlier Gospels, that the final testimony which the Lord offers to the Jews in or near Jerusalem opens with the healing of the blind man near Jericho. Only Matthew, as his manner is, tells us of two (compare Matt. 8:28, 9:27). Mark and Luke were led to dwell on what was for other reasons the more remarkable of them. It is idle to conceive separate occasions, one on entering and the other in quitting Jericho. For Matthew and Mark are express that the miracle was wrought on going out from the town. The phrase of Luke is so indeterminate as to fall in with that statement. He does *not* say, "as he drew nigh" or "when he came near" to Jericho; but while in the neighborhood. This was as true when He went out as when He came in. [103]

> And they come to Jericho, and as he was going out from Jericho and his disciples and a considerable crowd, the son of Temaeus, Bartimaeus the blind, was sitting by the wayside begging. And having heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, O Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me. And many were rebuking him that he might be silent, but he cried out so much the more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still and said that he should be called. And they call the blind, saying to him, Be of good courage, rise: he calleth thee. And, throwing away his garment, he sprang up and came unto Jesus. And Jesus in answer said to him, What wilt thou that I should do to thee? And the blind said, Teacher (Rabboni), that I may receive sight. And Jesus said to him, Go thy way; thy faith hath healed (saved) thee. And immediately he received sight, and followed him in the way (Mark 10:46-52).

Observe how the blind Israelites at the beginning of our Lord's ministry appeal to Him as Son of David. It was a matter of revealed promise that Messiah should open their eyes; and as they believed with their heart, they confessed with their mouth, and got the blessing. It was not so with the Canaanite, though she too believed, and with rare faith. But like many a believer, she at first applied on a wrong ground; from which the Lord led her into the right and true, that she might all the better enjoy the grace that awaited her. Here the call on the Son of David exactly suits the ways of God, when Christ finally presented Himself to the people, about to consummate His rejection to their own utter ruin for the present. It is the starting point for His last Messianic offer to Jerusalem, where the blind that cried in faith were made to see, and those who said they saw were made blind for their unbelief and enmity.

O my reader, call on the Lord, like the once blind Bartimaeus. Hitherto you have been blind, and have followed blind leaders into the ditch. But Jesus still waits to heal and extricate you. Fear not. Be of good courage, if now you feel your need, and believe that all authority and power are His. Does He not call you as truly as He did the son of Timaeus? Read not His words so unbelievingly. These things are written that you may believe unto life and salvation. Profit by the lesson of his earnest importunity. Many, who felt not their own need any more than his, kept rebuking him. It was not decorum -- in their view who were traveling at ease to perdition. Such cries might be well on the sabbath perhaps, and no doubt on a dying bed; but they were wholly objectionable by the wayside and before a crowd.

The Lord heard as He ever does the call of distress and of faith, took His stand, and bade him be brought before Him. And how graphic the sketch, and instructive the eagerness of the blind man casting away his cloak that he might get to the Lord! Poor as he was, he must lay aside every hindrance and go to Him at once. And Jesus answered his heart, and drew out its desire: "Great Teacher, that I may receive sight." And immediately was it given; he also followed Jesus in the way. For this His sheep do. It is their instinct of life in Him; as it is His word to them, that they may be kept in a world of evil, snares, and danger. But the Lord Jesus guides and guards His own, yet not without their hearing His voice and following Him all the way through. And a stranger will they not follow, as the rule (the only safe and right rule), but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.

(*The Bible Treasury* NS 3:266-267.)

103. Nor is there real difficulty in the account of Zacchaeus being placed after the miracle; for Luke puts things in moral order, where required as here, not chronologically. This explains the purposely general language of the third Gospel which called for the incident about Zacchaeus later.

Appendix 2 for Mark:
On the Revised New Testament: Mark

This article from *The Bible Treasury* 13:300-302 has been inserted here as an image file.

THE REVISED NEW TESTAMENT.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK.

IN chapter i. 2 the Revisers have rightly abandoned "in the prophets" though given in the Alex. and most other MSS, because it is an evident correction made to ease the difficulty. The Sinai, Vatican, Cambridge of Beza, Parisian (L) and St. Gall uncials, with some twenty-five cursives, the most ancient versions and express early citations, preserve the true text, "in Isaiah the prophet." Even on human ground it is absurd to suppose that the writer did not know that the first words quoted were from Malachi iii. 1; and if inspiration be allowed, the only question is as to the principle of thus merging a secondary in a primary quotation. Compare the somewhat different use of "Jeremiah" rather than Zechariah in Matthew xxvii. 9, 10. There is purpose in both, which cursory readers have not seen; and so they have been quick to impute a slip, as the later copyists were to eliminate it. But it is as irreverent as unwise and evil to obscure or deny the truth even in such points as these, because the modes of scripture application differ from those of

ordinary men, and we may not at a first glance be able to appreciate or clear up the profound wisdom of inspiration. Kuster's conjecture that the reading was originally "in the prophet" seems a mere effort to get rid of what he did not understand; which really, like such attempts generally, leaves the chief point where it was.—Verse 14, "of the kingdom" disappears with good reason, though most uncials and cursives insert the words, the old versions being pretty evenly divided. It is an addition borrowed from Matthew, whose Gospel it suits perfectly.

In chapter ii. 1, 20 an article is needlessly inserted. Translate "at home" in contrast with being abroad or elsewhere, and "days will come."—At the end of the latter verse "in that day" has the best authority, not "in those days," which came in from the corresponding passage of Luke v.—The end of verse 12 is simply "thus," "on this fashion" being antiquated.

In chapter iii. 13, as in Matthew v. 1, the indefinite article appears wrongly in the Authorised Version, the Revised gives "the" correctly, not meaning any particular mountain, but the high land as contrasted with the low or plain, as on board ship or on the sea is in contrast with on the shore.—In verse 14 the Revisers rightly give "appointed" instead of the equivocal "ordained." They are no less fair in striking out the "ordained to be" of Acts i. 22, and in changing "ordain" to "appoint" in Titus i. 5. They would have done better in giving "chosen" in Acts xiv. 23 and 2 Corinthians viii. 19, as they do in Acts x. 41, though "appoint" is no doubt a legitimate rendering of χειροτονέω.—The chief change of text is in verse 29, "guilty of an eternal sin," instead of "in danger of," or "subject to eternal judgment." "Damnation," as is well known, is not the true force of κρίσεως, though its effect. But the true reading on excellent authority appears to be ἁμαρτήματος, "sin" or "guilt," which might naturally be toned down into judgment. It is more forcible and absolutely expressed than even in Matthew, where blaspheming against the Spirit is said to be irremissible, either in this age, that is, of the law, or in that which is to come, that is, of Messiah reigning over the earth, when all other iniquities are forgiven, and all diseases are healed.

There are many minute changes in chapter iv., but the only correction of version one would notice is the unquestionably right one of "in the stern sleeping on the cushion," instead of "in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow" in verse 38.

In chapter v. 36 it is well to remark the παρακούσας of the critical editors instead of the [εὐθέως] ἀκ. of the common text. But it is doubtful whether the marginal "over-hearing" should not rather have taken the place of the Revisers' text "not heeding," which would have suited if the Lord had said nothing. But He heeds the word spoken enough to bid the synagogue-ruler, "Fear not, only believe."

The latter half of chapter vi. 11 seems an accommodation from Matthew xi. and Luke x. with changes. Yet the ancient testimony is so ample (eleven uncials, nearly all the cursives, and some of the best versions) that it surprises one to see no remark on such a difference in the margin of the Revisers. In the footnotes of the corresponding Greek text Mr. E. Palmer of course gives the words.—The rendering of a phrase in verse 20 as well as the reading after it is questionable. Does συνετήρει αὐτόν mean "kept him safe," or "paid close attention to him"? and is the true reading "was perplexed," ἠπόρει (ℵ B L Cop.) or the far more largely supported ἐποίει which their margin renders?

Chapter vii. 3 presents a difficulty of translation if not of reading. Tischendorf now adopts πυκνά from the Sinaitic copy, confirmed perhaps by some Latin and other versions; but the mass of authority sustains πυγμῇ, lit. "with the fist," or "up to the elbow," the usual construing being "diligently" or "frequently," with "vigour" or "with nicety."—The addition in italics at the end of verse 11 is rightly omitted by the Revisers, as in Matthew xv. 5 also; but a serious Italic supplement appears in verse 19, *This he said*. Here again is the preliminary question of καθαρίζων and καθαρίζον, the former undoubtedly carrying much the most weight externally, if one did not bear in mind how carelessly the best MSS interchange ω and ο, which almost nullifies their suffrages on the point. The strange version of the Revisers seems due to Origen (Comm. in Matt. xv. 10). K. usually is regarded, if in the neuter, as in apposition with the sentence; if in the masculine, as appended in an independent construction, with the gender conformed to τὸν ἀφεδρῶνα, the departure from formal grammar giving the more force to the participle. Indeed καθαρίζει, and καὶ καθαρίζει are found in some copies, all indicative of the difficulty presented by the construction.

In chapter viii. 24, 25, of the Revised Version, we have the healing of the blind man more graphically than in the common text and version. "I see men; for I behold *them* as trees, walking." Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes, and he looked stedfastly (διέβλεψε) and was restored and saw all things clearly (ἐνέβλεπε τηλαυγῶς [Tisch. δηλ.] ἅπαντα).

In chapter ix. 23 the oldest and best authorities omit πιστεῦσαι, though it has large uncial support. Perhaps its difficulty may have led to the omission. If genuine, the true meaning is not the muddle of two clauses as in the Authorised Version, but rather "the If thou canst [is] to believe." The question of power turns on faith. In verse 24, 29, the evidence is strong against μετὰ δακρύων ("with tears"), weak against καὶ νηστείᾳ, "and fasting;" but the Revisers leave both out, as they do verses 44, 46, none omitting verse 48. Some of these witnesses leave out the latter half of 49, followed by our Revisers. The substance of the truth abides no doubt; but the solemnity of the warning appears to be enfeebled in the curtailed form; and the distinction between the wicked and righteous as tested by God's judgment moral in grace or final in verse 49.

The Revisers, on few but first-rate authorities, read in x. 1 "and" beyond Jordan, for the A. V. "by."

In chapter xi. 8 they read "fields" (ἀγρῶν) instead of "branches" (δένδρων), with other small changes.

In chapter xii. 6 the Revisers omit "his," and in verse 20 "therefore" on firm grounds, and for "God" give "He" in verse 32.

There is no doubt that "spoken of by Daniel the prophet" is an importation into chapter xiii. 14 from Matthew xxiv. But there is an interesting though dubious reading in the same verse, "standing where [he] ought not" ἑστηκότα (ℵ B L and so Tisch. Tregelles, Alford), instead of ἑστός (Steph.), ἑστώς (Elz. Griesbach, Scholz), ἑστηκός Lachmann and Green), στηκόν (seven cursives). If the masculine be well founded, it points to the Antichrist, the lawless one of 2 Thessalonians ii. 4. But why should the Revisers perpetuate "her parable," "her branch with its leaves" here, verse 28, as in Matthew xxiv. 32? Why not "its," especially as in Revelation xxii. 2 they correct "her" into "its fruit"?

In chapter xiv. among other changes less noteworthy are the omission of "eat," verse 22, and of "new," verse 24, at the Lord's Supper, and the insertion of "thou" emphatically, verse 30, the best MSS substituting ἔλαβον "received" for ἔβαλλον for "did strike" in verse 65, and omitting the last clause of verse 70.

In chapter xv. 7 they follow ἀναβάς "going up," for ἀναβοήσας "crying out," and omit "to drink" in verse 23 as well as verse 28 (from Luke xxii. 37).

The Revisers put most undeservedly a certain stigma on chapter xvi. 9–20, because ℵ B omit these verses, L with a break adding a miserable compendium, and many cursives giving them with more or less doubt. No good version of antiquity omits. But a few fathers on harmonistic grounds talk of the accurate copies ending with ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ. We need not now discuss the alleged internal reasons against the paragraph. The positive external proofs are really overwhelming; and the internal prove not only that it is inspired scripture, but from none other than Mark himself.

American revisions: *The Bible Treasury* 14:335.

MARK.

ii. 4, 9, 11, 12, no doubt a "pallet bed" or "couch," as elsewhere.—vii. 4, "dip" is more literal than "bathe" or "wash."—In x. 13 if we say "were bringing" we should also say "were rebuking," a cumbrous form indeed, were it uniformly carried out. 32 is a question of reading, and the marg. uncalled for. In 45 "also" suffices.—xi. 24, "have received" scarcely accords with the aorist, and is not idiomatic. —xiv. is so obscure that "pure," "liquid," "spike," —may be contended for with nearly equal force.