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Compared View Of The First Three Gospels, Etc.

Part 2.

I now turn to Luke. It is remarkable how this Gospel brings out the moral condition of things in their various phases, and first of Israel in the days in which the Lord came. We have first the whole status of Judaism most clearly and graphically presented. In the body of the Gospel Luke gives us in general the Son of man, and the great moral principles of relationship between man and God. But for this reason, before this begins, he pictures to us very fully the state of Judaism by itself, and all the blessings which remained to the faithful in it: Herod (an Edomite) king of Judea—the Jewish service going on in Davidical order; angels, ministers of God, His messengers to a godly priest, prophecy, and more than prophecy brought in according to promise; the house of David entering on the scene, but in poverty and low estate. Note, the explanation of the name of “Jesus,” as saving His people, is not given, but He is the Son of the Highest. At the same time, He will have the throne of His father David. Next, as Haggai said, the Spirit remains among them, and acts in holy men and women according to ancient Jewish witness, such as Hannah in the desolations of Israel. Jewish hopes are prophetically sealed of God by prophecy. Chapter 1:67-79.

The Jews, at the same time, are under the dominion of the Gentiles, successors to those to whom Jerusalem had been delivered. They are disposed of at their will. Still the promise is sure, and its accomplishment announced by an angel to the poor of the flock. The heavens see

further into this grace; there is goodwill toward, more exactly, God's good pleasure in, men. But the Jewish order is still there; the faithful accomplish the ordinances of the law, but they await with desire the fulfilment of the promise, and see it in Jesus. They know each other as a remnant. Anna spake of Him to all them who waited for redemption in Israel. Yet prophecy in the remnant sees well the place the new-born child is to hold in Israel. He is for the fall and for the rising again of many. Such is the scene presented in the first two chapters of Luke, and of which the other Gospels say nothing, while this is silent on all the royal question and Herod's effort to destroy Christ, Jesus coming up out of Egypt, the coming of the Gentiles to Israel's King, all which referred to God's dealings with Israel. Further, Christ is a real man; grows bodily and mentally, and In favour with God and man, in His gracious ways. But, child or not, His person was not changed. He depended on no outward mission to have it. At twelve years old, full of the power of His relationship, He is, with comely fitness and marvellous competency, occupied with His Father's business, yet returns into the human child's obedient place.

After that comes the service. In the third chapter we enter on what is common to this Gospel and that of Matthew, but the form is very different. John's preaching, in Matthew, is repentance for the kingdom; in Luke, for the remission of sins. One feels the difference: one is dispensational, the other moral. So in Luke: "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." It is not merely the Pharisees and Sadducees, but the multitude, who are a generation of vipers. So he gives the practically moral test to each class that comes to him. The result as to

John, at least his imprisonment, is given at once. Christ is owned Son of God by the Father, and the Holy Ghost comes on Him. Here this part of the Gospel closes, and the Lord's genealogy comes in, not connected with these Jewish scenes and the promises of Abraham's and David's, but traced up to Adam, Son of God; introducing the great and, to us, all-important character of Son of man.

This makes us easily understand the reason why the genealogy is placed here, and the distinctive character of what precedes it. The whole Jewish condition is there, as we have seen, brought out with one little inlet into heaven, on Jesus coming into the world; and now we have His place as Son of man, One who, as representative of man according to divine perfection and counsels, is come to begin the new thing, and become the centre of the new creation. Only for that His death was needed for God's glory and our salvation. (Compare John 12:23, 24.) But in His own moral perfectness we have the new thing.

The moment His being Son of man, descended according to the flesh from Adam, has been shewn, He is led to be put to the test by the enemy who had deceived the first Adam (chap. 4). This scene we have had as a fact in Mark, and detailed in Matthew, with this difference, that there it is given in historical, and, I may add, dispensational order; here in moral, the scriptural temptation by the Scriptures coming last. Hence Luke omits the sending away of Satan after the offer of the world and Satan's proposal that He should worship him. After this, the moral power of work and victory in obedience is noted in His returning in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. None of that power was lost; indeed,

Christ not having failed in subjective obedience, the strong man was bound. Hence the first thing is not, as in Matthew, the manifestation of power, and then (attention being attracted) the description of the character suited to the kingdom; but the presentation of Himself in grace, the Spirit of the Lord being upon Him, He being therefore man. The gracious words told in their hearts; but in His own country He was, for them, Joseph's son—such is the place of the Lord from heaven, the Son of man (last Adam) presented in grace to men and to Israel. Christ had already preached and acted in Capernaum: but the Spirit of God we see thus formally presents Him in Luke. And the Lord shews, that coming in sovereign grace sent from God, there was no limitation to Israel, as Elias went to Sarepta, and Naaman, the Syrian, was healed; while in either case many in Israel are left aside. Hence unbridled rage in His Jewish audience; but He was not subject to its power. This is all peculiar to Luke.

With the exception of displacing the calling of Andrew and Simon, as we shall see, Luke now follows the same order as Mark. First, His power over the enemy is shewn (chap. 4:33-37); next, over diseases, and all that sin had brought in. This is the power He had in the world as having bound the strong man—He could spoil all bis goods, work an entire deliverance of man from Satan's power, and all its consequences in this world. But He seeks no witness to Himself, does not allow the devils to speak, and retires from the gaze and throng of men when His miracles had drawn their attention. He goes first into the desert, and then, when they would stay Him, pursues His work. This characterises His presence in the world.

The Lord now begins to gather round Himself (chap 5). In Matthew, this gathering round Himself is brought in immediately He appears as the Light in Galilee, according to promise, preaching the kingdom; and then He goes round everywhere; and, when crowds follow Him, explains the character suited to the kingdom. Here, His mission and power as Son of man on the earth being shewn, He, though retiring from view, begins then to gather to Himself. It will be remarked, that we have a much fuller development of the way in which the disciples are called to follow Him in Luke. Simon hears the word in his ship. Christ works a miracle which reveals His person; the effect is just and deep conviction of sin in connection with that person. Then they leave all and follow Him. It is, I apprehend, Luke who changes the place of this. In that which immediately follows, he takes the same order as Mark. In Matthew we have the whole of this arranged according to subjects.

What characterises these facts in Luke is their being presented as the various displays of power in grace. First, Jesus heals that which Jehovah alone healed, the figure of sin as disease and defilement, which excluded from Jehovah's presence, and from communion with His people. He cleanses them from defilement. He charges the cleansed men to tell no man, but it is noised abroad. He heals all who come, but retires into the wilderness and prays. There is power and grace, but it is the Son of man. Next, doctors of the law and Pharisees were then there, and (an expression so fully shewing the situation) the power of the Lord (of Jehovah) was present to heal them. Faith brings the paralytic man; Jesus goes to the root of all evil in Israel (and everywhere), but here especially deals with it in respect of the government of

God, and pardons the man's sins—Jesus brings forgiveness. The word is, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive." Yet it was the Jehovah of Psalm 103. Here "so seen in Israel" is omitted. Next, we find grace receiving the vile. He came to call sinners as a physician for their need. Grace was thus shewn in the midst of Israel, but on principles which went necessarily beyond it. Jesus receives sinners in grace, making all new. These cases, indeed, are common to the Gospels, whatever the order may be, and prominent in them as stamping a plain character on Christ's mission. Only Matthew, introduces the centurion's case where he places it, as especially shewing the bearing of the state of things on the extension of grace to the Gentiles. The fact that, though in connection with Israel, the presence of the Lord and the principles here brought into view went necessarily farther, and could not be confined to the Jews definitely, is brought out in the question as to John's disciples, and the new wine and old bottles, etc.; the vessels must be new for the new power. But Luke adds here a moral principle not noticed in the other two Gospels; that human nature will like the old thing best.

This subject is pursued (chap. 6) in two remarkable cases as to the sabbath, the key-stone of Jewish ordinances: the case of David eating the shewbread—the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath; and the healing of the withered hand—divine goodness rises above ordinances. Luke gives the facts more briefly than Mark. Matthew puts them much farther on in the history, where they are connected with the rejection of Israel. The first of these cases presents the position of the rejected King whose need was above ordinances, and whose condition really abrogated them; adding that, as

Son of man, consequently, He was Lord of the sabbath. The second is the title of grace to rise above them. For grace is of God.

Next, we find the nomination of the apostles. After the Lord's personal position and character had been brought out, this finds a natural place. He selects His instruments. This still follows the same order as Mark; who, after a general statement of the position of Jesus, continues his account with the same event. Matthew has not this choice of the twelve. He continues his full account of Jesus' mission in the midst of Israel till He sends them out to continue it. In Luke we find again here the dependent character of the Son of man. He is all night in prayer before He chooses the twelve. Here comes in the sermon on the mountain in its place; and we have clear evidence of the intended omission by the Holy Ghost of this choice of the twelve in Matthew, for as a man he must have known it, for he was one of the twelve. We have seen Matthew bringing in the sermon on the mount much earlier, as the principles of the kingdom. In Luke 6:17 it should not be "the plain," but "a level place" —still on the mountain. Luke gives the substance of the sermon in its great moral principles. His power, note, was shewn in the multitude (v. 17-19). The Lord addresses Himself in Luke to His disciples, as being themselves in the place He speaks of, instead of stating the abstract principle. The woes too are added. It is an address to the heart and conscience of the person present. He weaves in too, as verses 39, 40, other general principles connected with the precepts He is giving. So verses 44, 45. Here we have left Mark, who does not give the sermon on the mount. He gives the choice of the apostles, and then passes on to the full

blasphemy of the Pharisees, and Jesus' refusal to listen to His mother, preceding the parables from the ship, as in Matthew 12 and 13. But the order in Luke, in this particular case, helps us, as it does in Matthew, to identify the sermon on the mount in the two Gospels.

From the mountain He enters into Capernaum, and heals the centurion's servant. Here Christ's divine title and power is shewn; but he does not use it to shew the rejection of Israel, and the reception of the Gentiles as in Matthew. The widow of Nain, again, shews the divine power and compassion of Jesus in the place of death and sorrow; this circumstance is peculiar to Luke. In Matt. 8 the leper, and the healing of Peter's wife's mother, are introduced respectively before and after the centurion's servant, without reference to the order of time. After this, the relative positions of John and Christ are brought forward; which is not in Mark, and is much later in Matthew. I apprehend its historical place is here. In Luke we have the moral effect of both inquired into. The people and publicans justified Christ, having humbled themselves under John's baptism; the Pharisees not, having refused to do so. Matthew introduces here Jesus thanking the Father for His way of dealing with the wise and with babes, and the real reason of the change taking place; taking it again, I apprehend, out of its historical order to complete the picture of that change furnished by John's position and message. This justifying of wisdom by her children is then illustrated by the woman who was a sinner, in contrast with Simon the Pharisee.

This deep-reaching moral picture is in Luke only, as are also the few words which follow (chap. 8); which cast so clear a light on the Lord's life; and give the double character of devotedness—that of the apostles, and of

the women who followed Him. One of the parables of Matthew 13 is then given, that is, the present service in the word, and responsibility of man, his duty to maintain the light. The case of Jesus' mother and brethren is then introduced in Luke, as shewing Christ's value for those who kept His word, and not as a witness of His breaking His ties with Israel in the flesh. None of the parables relative to the kingdom are spoken of. Here we return to the historical order which is in Mark until the feeding of the five thousand inclusive; that is, the history of Legion, Jairus' daughter, the sending out of the twelve, and the feeding of the multitude. As regards Legion, the difference is remarkable. In Matthew we have the display of Satan's power, as it would afterwards work in the Jews, and the request for Jesus' departure; not any detail as to the poor man that was healed. In Luke, as in Mark, we have the details of the effects on him:—the Lord's real work in grace in the matter. In the case of Jairus and the woman with the issue of blood, the same brevity may be remarked in Matthew.

In Luke all the moral circumstances are much more brought out in detail, as indeed in Mark also. What is shewn in Luke especially is grace, divine power acting in the kindness and goodness of a Man filled with charity. It is not, as in John, a divine person so much as a divine character; and that in the perfect sympathy of a Man. What shews this (as the case of the widow of Nain, Simon and the woman that was a sinner) is constantly found in Luke and not in the other Gospels. It is grace in and towards man.

On the other hand (chap. 9), the mission of the twelve, which comes in its place here, is given much more briefly, and with no special reference to Israel; nor the

elaborate unfolding of the place which testimony would have among the people until Christ's return, which is found in Matthew. We have the fact: they are to preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick, and to go free from care and dependent on Himself. It is the same mission, but in its simple actual character. The effect on Herod is here introduced. Luke gives no account of John the Baptist's death. There is a short allusion to his imprisonment (Luke 3:19), when John's preaching is spoken of; but this part of Israel's sin formed no part of his subject. Otherwise the same order as Mark's is still followed here. On the return of the twelve, the Lord goes into a desert place, is followed, and heals those who have need of healing. In these miracles, necessary to relate as great witnesses to Christ's power, Luke gives but the fact briefly, and, as so given, having more power in that respect. The connection of it with Israel, and His dismissal of the people, and taking Himself another position while His disciples were toiling alone, are all omitted. In Matthew and Mark, the closing circumstances of this miracle lead to a series of events and incidents, which refer all of them to Christ's special relationship with the Jews, the moral position of these, and God's estimate of them; all of which are omitted in Luke. Matt. 14:22 to 16:12; Mark 6:47 to 8:26.

All three Gospels then come to Peter's confession of Christ and the transfiguration. Only in Luke the common opinions as to Christ connect themselves more directly with Herod's, and what is there said. For Luke 9:18 is directly connected with chapter 10, and that with what precedes. Still the transfiguration is a great central event in all, and that connected with the confession of Peter. In all the rejection of Christ and the taking up the

cross are founded on Peter's owning Him to be the Christ, and precede the revelation of His glory. There are some differences to be noted. Matthew recounts Christ's instruction as to the church, which was to take the place for the present of His Messiah glory; and the place Peter was to hold in the administration of the kingdom. Here also in Luke the matter is simply stated in its own moral force; and the details of Peter's dislike to the cross, and the Lord's rebuke, are omitted. The character of what they are about to see is also more simply stated.

In Matthew, for whom the change from Messiah to Son of man is a main point, and the future coming of Christ in this character (see Matt. 24:30), the expression used in connection with this display of His glory is the Son of man coming in His kingdom. In Mark, where service in the word forms the subject, it is the kingdom of God come with power. In Luke it is simply till they see the kingdom of God. There is a difference also in the details. The moral circumstances again appear in Luke. The disciples are asleep. The Lord is speaking of His decease. It is the entry of Moses and Elias1 into the cloud that alarmed them. All the ensuing conversation relative to John's being Elias, of which Matthew and Mark speak, is not found in Luke's account; but he returns after the casting out of a devil to the doctrine of the cross (v. 44, 45). And further, in the rest of this chapter, in Luke 9, we have all the forms which self takes, and which it would excuse and justify from the grossest to the most subtle; and the claim of Christ and the service of grace in the kingdom is shewn to be paramount to every thing. Two of the circumstances are given in Matthew and Mark; the second, that of the little

child, as an example, with a large addition of instruction as to offences; and with the addition, in Matthew, of the position which the church takes, as in the place of Israel in respect of offences. This passes off in Matthew to other questions relative to the Jews.

We then find in Luke a mission not noticed in the other Gospels, that of the seventy (chap. 10). It is in principle the same as that of the twelve, only more urgent, but there is no limit as in Matthew 10. Those that rejected them were to be equally sure that the kingdom of God had come nigh to them. Such was essentially the message, with proofs of the power of Him that sent it. From this onwards to the commencement of the closing scene (chap. 18:31), what we read in Luke is either not in Matthew and Mark, or is here connected with other subjects than the historical ones found in those Gospels; and the various circumstances are introduced in their moral connection. On the return of the seventy the great moral connection of the gospel with eternal hopes comes out. The power of Christ's name over the demons brings to Christ's mind the final overthrow of Satan. Still the subject of joy for them was not that they could cast out devils, but that they belonged themselves to heaven—their names were registered there. This gave a very clear and definite character to the Gospel. It is in this connection that the hiding these things from wise and prudent, and revealing them to babes, is introduced here; not in connection with the rejection of John Baptist and Christ, and the total change in God's dealings with man taking place, as in Matthew 11. Hence it is added here, that the Lord turned to the disciples to remark their blessedness, for these things were brought to their

eyes. It is the blessing of the heavenly people which is before us.

What follows is in Luke alone. After the essence of the statement of the law, the Lord shews to him who would justify himself by a cavil on the terms, that grace, the new and blessed principle of God's dealings, makes us, by its own nature, the neighbour of every one that has need, and obliterates, by its divine nature, the divisions formed by ordinance which work no grace, but, with the heart such as it is, tend to nourish pride by distinguishing him to whom they belong. The bearing of this instruction, and its deep moral character, are evident.

Next, we learn the value of hearing the word—in contrast with cares—and that of prayer, its character and success (chap. n). We have then the final hardness of the Pharisee shewn, and the way in which Satan possesses the heart void of God, though it seem reformed; but without application to Israel's final state, as in Matthew. The Lord turns, on one speaking of the value of natural ties with Him, to the word; that God owned those who heard and kept it, as the only true tie —the Ninevites and Queen of Sheba, as owning the word from feebler lips than He who was there, would condemn that generation. We have then the judgment of the moral state of the Pharisees, but not here connected with the final judgment of Jerusalem, and the connection of the disciples with Israel, as in Matthew. Still the Lord shews, that all the blood shed would be required of them, as in Matthew.

We have then a general warning as to their principles, and those on which the disciples were to act, taken,

partly from a private warning to His disciples, partly from His instruction to the twelve when He sent them out, partly from His statement as to the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost: but this is here employed to encourage the disciples in acting on the principles of the upright testimony He had spoken to them of; shewing that the Holy Ghost who was spoken against, spoke in them, and would tell them what to say; chapter 12.

As the Lord had urged on His disciples, faithfulness, uprightness, and boldness in testimony, so now He goes on to press on them disinterestedness and absence of all carefulness. This, however, is introduced by one who looked to Him to order things rightly on earth. This He entirely disclaims, and turns to the multitude to press on them the folly of having their portion here, which death in a moment could snatch away. With His disciples He presses another motive, namely, their preciousness in the Father's eyes. Here some of the instructions of the sermon on the mount come in.

But the Lord goes on to urge another motive, giving an additional character to their devotedness. Not only it was the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom, so that they might well trust Him for all things: but He Himself was coming again. Christians were to be as those that waited for Him. He gives the beautiful picture of His love making them happy in glory, girding Himself and coming forth to serve them; till then they must watch with girded loins. The difference of the faithful and unfaithful professing servants is then brought out. One cannot but feel, in all this and what follows, even though parts of what is recorded are found in Matthew and Mark, that we are in a wide sphere of moral instruction not entered on elsewhere: and that all

this is given with a moral purpose, not in reference to historical order. He is in Israel, but developing great principles which cannot be confined to Israel.

In what immediately follows, He shews that they must bow to the truth or be judged. He came in grace, and the power of divine love: but there was nothing to answer it. His death would open the flood-gates of this love to the chief of sinners, not wait till there was righteousness enough to receive it. But while this love was in Himself, He was straitened in its display and revelation, till this baptism of death was accomplished. This love, this incoming of God, would raise all the enmity of the human heart. It is not as Prince of peace that His power would be shewn. Not only so, but, by the present manifestation of the grace, though straitened, the fire it would light was already kindled. The Jews ought to have discerned this time. Looked at, naturally, as under the law, they did not become reconciled on the way; they would go to prison till all was paid.

Personally, if they did not repent, they would all perish, like those slain by Pilate at Jerusalem, whom they thought special objects of judgment; chapter 13. This instruction is closed by the parable of the fig-tree in the garden, spared by the intercession of the gardener, that is, for the painstaking service of Christ; then, if fruitless, to be cut down. It only spoiled the garden. In all this, and what follows, we have the judgment of the present state of Jerusalem and the people, in connection with the Lord’s presence. Meanwhile, He asserts, while shewing their hypocrisy, His right to minister in grace, in divine power, blessing to Israel, in opposition to their legal ignorance of and absence from God. The urgency of the acceptance of this ministry is then pressed. He

was going through the cities and villages teaching, and presses the entrance at the strait gate; for the time would come when they would seek to take credit from His having been among them, He would in glory reject them, and they would see Gentiles with Abraham and the fathers, and themselves thrust out. Finally, on the Pharisees urging Herod's evil intentions, He shews that Jerusalem must fill up its guilt in rejecting Him, the Jehovah who would ever have gathered her children, and now mourned in tender grace over her who was henceforth to be desolate, till, according to Psalm 118, she saluted Him who came in the name of the Lord.

In chapter 14 the Lord, on occasion of a dinner in the Pharisee's house, continues His instruction on the grace which characterised God's ways now, and that again in contrast with the sabbath; silencing them, with the same reasoning as to their own conduct. He then unfolds the path of present grace, and its results with God; namely, first lowliness, taking the lowest place (God would exalt, in due time, those who did so: such was His own course); next, to act in grace, and not on the principles of worldly selfishness. The recompense would be in the resurrection of the just. In all this, He is bringing out the spirit and character of the new thing, into which He was leading men; the character of the new man in a world of evil. The reference of one of the company to the joy of eating bread in the kingdom of God, perhaps a commonplace remark, perhaps felt, leads Him to apply the principles He is expounding, to the consequence of their rejection in Israel then. The kingdom was presented in grace; the Jews, in their national capacity, from temporal motives, were slighting it. The Lord would call the poor of the flock, glad to come; and the

Jews, as such, be excluded. But the enjoyment of blessing, at the same time, would depend on unqualified decision in oneself, and against the much greater power, in flesh's judgment of it, exercised against those who sought it.

It will be remarked, that the parable of the great supper in Matthew has a much more dispensational and judicial character. The city is burnt up. It is the king's son the marriage is for. The king's turning to the poor of the flock in Israel, the judgment of those entered, the conduct of many towards the messengers, are not found in Luke; nor the fact of the house being filled with guests. That is, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the general Gentile body of professors are not brought out. The first invited are excluded from the Supper in Luke as unworthy. I am disposed to think it a different occasion.

After insisting on decision, and counting the cost, the Lord concludes by saying, a man must forsake all that he has; and if the salt has lost its savour, it is good for nothing.

Chapter 15 begins a series of instruction, shewing the character and effects of grace; and the change, dependent not on dispensation, but on the full revelation of the divine character, and the consequent judgment of the whole condition of man; though it was in Israel that condition was put to the test. The well-known fifteenth chapter brings out the whole scheme of God's ways in grace with the sinner; in Christ, the Spirit, and the Father; and, in general, that it was the divine joy to save and act in grace. It shews the way in which Christ sought His sheep, and charged Himself with bringing it

home; the way the Spirit sought diligently with the light brought to bear on all; the path of man's ruin, and the way the Father received Him on His return; and, finally, the self-righteous Jewish condition.

Next, we find the way in which grace estimates this world, and man in it; with the use to be made of his forfeited possession in it; that is, of what he possessed, though he had forfeited all title to it. Of this, also, the Jews were the special illustration. When the human earthly place was lost, another future was to be the motive on which the use of present possessions was to be founded. Then the veil of the other world is removed, and we see that this world's being our portion, excludes from that. In the close of this parable, which points at the complete substitution of the heavenly blessing for the earthly, and the judging of all things, in their eternal character, by the letting in of that new light, the Lord shews that Moses and the prophets would have led the Jews to own Him, and be delivered; and that if they did not hear them, His own resurrection would have no effect. The connection of great moral truths with the setting aside of the Jewish system, and the setting it aside by these moral truths, and the grace which belonged to God's nature, when He revealed Himself; both of them too wide for Judaism (the latter, contrasted with its spirit, as the former left all its ordinances necessarily behind), instead of setting it aside dispensationally, is very remarkable in all this part of Luke; chapter 16.

In the beginning of chapter 17, are collected a number of passages found in Matthew and Mark, with additional matter, in which the principles on which the disciples had to walk, in their new service, are stated. Such are—

care against giving occasions of stumbling to the little ones of Christ; forgiveness of what is personal; the power of faith; the recognition that, at best, we have only done our duty. The order and way in which these are introduced and used is the only thing to be particularly noted here. In what follows we have an interesting example of the way of deliverance from the legal ordinances. Ten lepers are cleansed. The Lord sends them—their cleansing was the fruit of Jehovah's power—to shew themselves to the priests, according to the law. They go, believing Him, and are cleansed. Nine pursue their course; one turns back. Outwardly farther from privileges which exalt flesh, he more easily discovers that Jehovah, whom he went to own in Jerusalem, is in Him who had cleansed him. He turns back to offer his thanks there. The Lord, since he had found the true place where God was, sets him entirely free from Jerusalem: "Go thy way," He says, "thy faith hath made thee whole." He was not only blessed but free. The kingdom of God was really in its power in His person amongst them. And this was so true, that, rejected as He was going to be, the time would soon come, when the disciples would be glad to have such days as they then had with Him.

The Lord then, as in chapter 12, He had given the church's place at His coming, gives the Jewish condition and in general the world's. The same instructions are given, in connection with the judgment of Jerusalem, in Matthew, of which the prophetic announcement in Luke is farther on. Here it is the unfolding the condition of the disciples and the Jews, flowing from His then presence and the place His removal would give them. The condition of the witnesses in the final days of Jerusalem

is given here, not as in Matthew in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem. This last is directly and distinctly given by itself, and with plain reference to presently coming events, as a positive object of revelation in Luke.

Here the subject is the condition of the disciples; and the warnings are connected with His teaching on that point. Hence the direction to pray, though having a peculiar parabolic application to the latter days in Jerusalem, has a universal one for men in every circumstance in which they are in difficulty and need. But this dependence upon God was hardly to be expected when the Lord returned. Except the comparison of the times of Noe and Lot, all this is found in Luke only; and the whole is general, and applicable to the coming of Christ, in its bearing on the world at large, though where the carcase is there the eagles will be gathered together.

The characteristic traits, suited to the kingdom, and approved of God, are next shewn. Lowliness—because of our sinfulness—lowliness in the sense of our nothingness. Here we have some of the account, given in Matthew, of the relationship and position of children, in a moral connection, as is usual with Luke. Then, entire devotedness, and the heart purged; not simply the outward keeping of the commandments, however sincere. Goodness is denied to man. One only is good—God Himself. What seems blessing here below, is the greatest hindrance to entering into the kingdom; but grace can do everything. Nor will devotedness lose its reward in this world, or the next; chapter 18.

This closes the morat developments which compose all the middle part of Luke, and form instructions of the highest interest, connected with the present moral introduction of the kingdom. They contrast with Matthew 13, where we have the dispensational earthly survey of it; and with chapters 16, 17, when the great change of system and organisation is brought out to light. Save two or three general principles, such as taking up the cross, the young ruler seeking the best commandment to have eternal life, and the exhortation to lowliness, all this part is omitted in Matthew and Mark. It characterises Luke; and even the topics introduced, which are found in Matthew and Mark, are so in a different connection. On the other hand, a good deal that precedes the transfiguration in Matthew and Mark is omitted in Luke. In this part of Luke historical order is not generally to be sought. This is now again taken up, as it is in the other Gospels too, by telling the disciples that rejection awaited Him from the Jewish rulers. The prophecies were thus going to be accomplished. The disciples did not understand Him.

The history of the last events, begins, as we have seen in reading Matthew, with the entrance into Jericho, where the blind man owns Him as Son of David, and receives his sight. But here also the grace which receives the vile, in spite of Jewish prejudices, must be brought out in Luke; chapter 19. This is the more remarkable here, as connected with His character as Son of David, and His speedy entry into Jerusalem, according to Zechariah. Zacchaeus had been honestly faithful to his conscience; but that day salvation came to his house. His heart had been drawn; but now salvation came to him. The Son of David, Messiah the King, would, in spite of Pharisees,

meet the wants of the poor and despised in Israel, however false their position. And that of Zacchaeus was so; and no attempt to satisfy the exigencies of his conscience changed its falseness; indeed this creates them. But in a time of confusion (and who does not see such?) grace reaches through the forms this confusion takes in individuals, to meet the need which lies at the bottom of the heart, and which grace had produced, and which shews itself in many a detail of which grace takes notice, and which grace can see (though selfishness cannot), as the Lord did here. Such grace as Jesus' draws them out, as it did here; but that grace, at the same time, passes by as well all the efforts to quiet the conscience. It brings salvation. Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham, surely as much as the Pharisees. I am disposed to think, that the healing of the blind man is out of its place in Luke, and is introduced before the Lord's entry into Jericho, in order to give its true character to the reception of Zacchaeus.2 Besides the very interesting history of Zacchaeus, Luke adds the parable of the traffic with the mina, referring to the way in which the kingdom would be set up, and the Jews' rejection of Him. It is evident that there are certain points of analogy between this and the parable addressed to the disciples in Matthew; but there are important points of distinction. Here responsibility is much more distinctly brought out; God's sovereignty, though ever wise sovereignty, in gifts, less. In Matthew one had five talents; another two; another one, according to his several ability. Here each has one; all depends on the faithfulness of the servant. Hence, it is not, as in Matthew, one common joy, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"; but "Be thou over ten, thou over five cities." It is reward in the kingdom, not common joy with

Christ; each being faithful in what was entrusted, and having gained according to what was given him. But another point is brought in, not merely the faithfulness of the servants, in which the analogy, though not sameness, of the two parables lies. The question of the Jews receiving the kingdom or not is treated; they could not, for they would not receive the King. Christ was now near that place where this question was to be decided, the city of the great King; and men thought the kingdom should immediately appear. He shews them that another order was to be followed. He was going to a far country, heaven, to receive the kingdom. Meanwhile, He left His servants to trade; not yet to be His partners in the glory of the kingdom—that would come afterwards. They would have their place in it according to their faithfulness in His absence; to them that had, more would be given. But there was another class of persons, His citizens—over whom He should have reigned—the Jews; but they, in their rejection of the gospel after His departure, declared they would not have Him to reign over them. They are, on His return, brought before Him and slain. It was not merely the rejection of Christ;—He interceded for them on the cross, for that as their ignorance, and the Spirit comes to tell them, He will return on their repentance;—but their opposition to this last, as a message sent after Him, that they will not have Him. This gave the full instructions as to the course the introduction of the kingdom would take.

He rides into the city on an ass. Part of the cry recited here, not in the other Gospels, is worthy of remark: “Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.” That is, in Luke, they not merely raise the cry of Israel in the last day, according to Psalm 118, but the announcement is

extended to heaven. There peace is settled. The power of the enemy is gone; and that glory, which is above the heavens, fully established. Peace reigns there, so that the blessing on earth can follow. This additional and characteristic announcement naturally belongs to Him who reveals the Son of man, and heavenly and eternal things. Further, we have still grace shewn here; the other special part of Christ's character in Luke—He weeps over the city on seeing it.

The question of His authority is in all the three Gospels, as is also the seeking of fruit from the husbandmen; but Luke omits the marriage of the king's son, which, in Matthew, gives the other part of God's dealing with the Jewish people. Luke had already given an analogous parable; but dealing with the subject morally as to the effect of Jesus' teaching, and calling men, and the result in its extension to the Gentiles, after He had shewn His love to the poor of the flock in Israel. In Christ's reply to the Sadducees, an additional and important element is brought out in Luke—the first resurrection peculiar to the children of God. In Matthew, the present authority of scribes, etc., as in Moses' seat, is recognised; but they are denounced by the Lord in the most awful way. Here, after the manner of Luke, the true moral point of their character is stated; no authority is spoken of, and they are left there. A few words suffice for this; chapter 20.

Then comes the widow's mite (chap. 21)', which is not in Matthew.

In all this part Luke's account tallies exactly with Mark's. The character of Jerusalem, as killing the prophets, and the Lord's patient grace, which would have so often assembled her children, found in Matthew

immediately before the prophecy of chapter 24, is in Luke 13. I apprehend, as I expressed in speaking of Matthew 23, it is introduced by Matthew, in connection with his subject, somewhat out of its place, but not so far as to time as might be supposed. The journey mentioned in Luke 9:51, and in chapter 17:11, was the last, which, I suppose, are the same, if the sense of chapter 9:51 is rightly given.

The collection of moral instructions, which follows on chapter 9, leaves the chronological connection untouched. The transfiguration practically closed the Lord's ministry, as the Lord in the midst of Israel; and that, in all the three Gospels. In all the three, besides the account of the birth of the Lord, which is not in Mark, there are three parts: His ministry in Galilee, which closes with the transfiguration; then He specially announces that He is to suffer, and that as Son of man; then we have a course of instruction, whether dispensational or moral. The latter character is largely developed in Luke, so that this second part, in which Christ has the place of Son of man (the subject of Luke's Gospel), is very much longer, contains a great deal of additional matter, and draws out what is found in Matthew and Mark in quite another connection. The third part begins with the blind man near Jericho.

In the second part, in all three Gospels, there is, as to historical circumstances, merely the last journey, and what passed in it; so that the blind man at Jericho connects itself, through this journey, almost immediately with the transfiguration. He then finally left His service in Galilee, and set out to suffer in Jerusalem; so that the character of His service was changed, or rather it was closed: only that He continued to shew mercy, and to

bear witness in grace, till it was actually and finally closed. But He had forbidden His disciples to say He was the Christ, for He was soon going to suffer as Son of man, and could say now, “How long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?”

John shews, I apprehend, that there was, after His leaving Galilee, a course of movements in detail not found in the other Gospels. He goes up into the coast of Judaea from Galilee, the other side Jordan, and goes to Jerusalem; Mark 11. Jesus was at Jerusalem in winter, at the feast of the dedication; John 10:22. They seek to kill Him, and He goes beyond Jordan again; comes up to raise Lazarus, and again departs to a country called Ephraim. Then He comes up for the last time; Luke 9 and 17. This, of course, was a little before Easter. The address to Jerusalem was thus, at any rate, on His last journey up to Jerusalem.

To come now to the prophetic warning of the Lord. The question recorded, as put by the disciples, shews at the outset the difference of the object of the revelation. Christ, as in Matthew, had assured them that the temple would be thrown down. The inquiry, as to the sign of Christ’s coming and the end of the age, is not presented nor noticed in Luke. The question here put, relates solely to the destruction the Lord had spoken of. Hence, while the early warnings referring to this epoch are found here, more briefly, yet much as in Matthew, the prophetic account closes with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and says nothing of the abomination of desolation. The times of the Gentiles have then their course, till they are fulfilled, Jerusalem being trodden under foot. After this come the signs, and the Son of man is seen coming in glory. The difference of

this and Matthew is evident. The passage in Luke, while giving the subsequent events and the coming of the Lord, is specially occupied with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, judicially ushering in the external Christian order of things; while Matthew is exclusively occupied with the time which is yet to come, and (save the fact that the gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to all nations) confines himself to the testimony in Israel. We shall see something analogous in the Lord's supper.

The close of the warning in Luke 21 is also peculiar. The warnings of Noe and Lot are not given here in Luke, but in chapter 17. Instead of that, we have verses 34-36, where the day is declared to come on the whole earth; but then the warning directed to the disciples, that they may escape and stand before the Son of man, leaving it open to a full millennial accomplishment. Thus, while it deals with the remnant, it is much more large and general. In Luke 17 the Noe and Lot comparisons are given as a warning, in contrast to the present character of the kingdom then through Christ's presence. The kingdom was there in His person; but His rejection would change all, and then He would come as a flash of lightning in the midst of the busy selfish occupations of this world, like the deluge on the world and the fire on Sodom.

I do not think, from chapter 17:22, the Gospel of Luke has a date, until the last events. What is narrated, is added to what precedes; and then, when the prophetic warnings are given, that is, when the residue are warned, the present change is brought forward, and the time of the Gentiles dispensationally stated.

In what follows in chapter 22, in the main, the three Gospels are alike; only Luke, as he usually does, where not led out into moral development, gives a very brief and concentrated resume of the facts more distinctly stated elsewhere. I refer particularly now to Judas and the chief priests. The “then” of “then entered Satan,” ver. 3, is not in the original. It was after the sop he entered in. Before that, he had put the betraying of Jesus into his heart. This is all put together, with the chief priests’ counsel; chapter 22:1-6. A similar instance is as to John Baptist (Luke 3:15-19): as is also the visit of the women to the sepulchre.

Then follows the choice of the room for the Passover. Here there are some important circumstances peculiar to Luke. First, the Lord’s love and feeling about it (v. 15); next, the reference to the eating the lamb for the last time, and the cup: besides the institution of the Supper, the presence of Judas, and the strife among them who should be the greatest. The manner of expression, too, is according to the character of that Gospel; that is, opening the then next present order of God’s dealings, instead of going on dispensationally to the renewal of God’s relationship with the world. The Passover was to be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. Hence He was glad to eat of it for the last time in His earthly association with His disciples. This is not in Matthew. It is the great moral fact of universal bearing of the death of Christ.

Next, as to His drinking of the fruit of the vine. In Matthew, He takes His character of Nazarite separation from Israel, until He drinks it in a new way in the Father’s kingdom: the time of future blessedness spoken of, in this way, in Matthew. Compare chapter 13. Here,

He takes the Nazarite place as a present thing, but closes, so to speak, every thought of this association in the present time, fixing the mind on the present setting up of the kingdom. In Matthew in connection with His death, and the founding of the new covenant thereon, He goes quite on to the establishment of the Father's kingdom: only shewing His separation from all on earth, till that establishment of the kingdom came. The words of institution differ, also, somewhat. In Matthew, He replaces the pass-over: and the words, "this is my body," only are given. In Luke the gift of grace is noticed. In Matthew it is noticed as going out beyond the Jews, to whom Christ had presented Himself, as related in that Gospel—shed for many, for the remission of sins. In Luke it is the simple, personal application of grace— "for you."

The inquiry among the disciples who should betray Him, is found in Luke in a few words, as we have seen in other cases. On the other hand, an humbling moral circumstance is stated; that, even here, was a strife among them who should be greatest—at such a moment! But it gives occasion to the perfect and patient grace of Christ, to teach them the true path of glory He had followed—that of humility, and being servant to all; and to own, in unspeakable grace, as if dependent on their kindness, their perseverance with Him. Also He appointed to them a kingdom, as His Father had appointed to Him: so that they should be at table in His kingdom, and sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The very greatness of the glory and the blessing ought to silence the dispute.

In Matthew the fact here revealed is given (Matt. 19:16-30) in connection with setting aside human

righteousness, and riches as an advantage and reward connected with it (that is, the setting aside the Jewish system); and with the glory, in the time of the regeneration, consequent on the loss of all for faith: still shewing, in chapter 20, that grace—sovereign grace—characterised God's dealing with men in the kingdom.

To turn to Luke 22, where the general application of Christ's death to faith is spoken of, the result of the present faithfulness of the disciples in connection with Christ before His death would meet its judgment in Jewish millennial glory. But into His death—which, while witnessing judgment of sin, was the means of salvation—they could not follow Him; to be saved by it was another thing. Their service in His suffering in the kingdom would be recompensed with glory in the kingdom; but death, as such, man could not stand in, such as he was: that belonged to Christ only, a lesson they had not yet learned. They could not go into it as death from the divine judgment of sin; but they could as a sifting from the enemy, to learn that they could not, but must be dependent on Another's doing it. This is found only in Luke; and the ardour of nature is suffered to go farther in Peter, to teach the entire incapacity of the energy of nature to do the work of God (its ardour only making its fall more apparent and terrible); so that, by the experience of what it was worth, and grace meeting it, one should be better able to strengthen others with true strength. This done, the Lord shews the difference of their position during His life, and that induced by His death. He had served them as a living Saviour. They must suffer, and, humanly speaking, shift for themselves when He became a dying one. On the earth He was

reckoned among malefactors; for the things which concerned Him drew to a close. New ones would begin.

This contrast of Christ's life, and His disciples' connection with it; and His death, and the impossibility of their being connected with Him in it, is peculiar to Luke. Into the latter, that is, the scenes connected with His death, he now enters. This point is important. The human character of the blessed Lord's suffering in Gethsemane is much more brought out in Luke; and circumstances of the deepest interest are added, while the details of the thrice repeated prayer are omitted, and all is brought together in its moral character. The chief circumstances added are these.

The Lord already on arriving at the place, Himself perfect in the sense of what it was, warns them of their need and how to meet it. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." Further, an angel from heaven appeared to Him to strengthen Him. Here we find His human position clearly brought out. Again, we have the solemn sign of the conflict in which He was: His sweat as great drops of blood falling down. All this is brought together without distinguishing His three prayers. Save the answer of the Lord to Judas as to his kiss, nothing distinctive, that I am aware of, is in what follows, only the healing of Malchus is more briefly noticed. Conflict through prayer in view of temptation, not to enter into it, characterises Luke's account of Gethsemane, not the being sorrowful unto death. The forsaking of the disciples is not in Luke. The personal human conflict of Jesus is His subject. The trial of Peter follows in Luke. The Lord had closed His address to those that came, by saying that it was the hour of Satan's power—alas! their hour also, but the time of the exercise of the power of

darkness; happily for us, for the light has shone there, and in that light, the power of darkness is gone for us. This Gospel brings in, in connection with this, Peter's history under temptation and the power of the enemy, before pursuing that of Christ's interrogatory.

There is no difficulty in the details, as has been imagined. The maid spoke to the men, a man to Peter. The perfect grace of the Lord is brought out here in a circumstance omitted elsewhere—the Lord's looking at Peter. The personal sorrows of Christ are given as such in Luke. His being buffeted is given also before His interrogatory: and this last very briefly in the testimony of Christ Himself, who declares the uselessness of reply; that henceforth they would not see Him, but in glory. All the witness as to the destruction of the temple is omitted.

The account of Luke is here also much more brief, but an important fact added (chap. 23). Judas' death is not found (see the Acts), nor the message of Pilate's wife, nor the Jews taking His blood upon their head, nor, subsequently, the crown of thorns and insults. On the other hand, the sending to Herod is brought before us, and thus the full uniting of all against the rightful Lord of the world—the Christ—is presented to us; with the solemn but too natural picture of the opposition to Christ, uniting those who in their personal interests and passions were otherwise enemies. They can compliment each other in treating Christ thus. Pilate, doubtless, would have quieted thus a disturbed conscience by throwing the matter over on Herod, or avoided the guilt. But thus it was to be. Nor can men thus escape the fruit of their own wickedness. He hoped to get rid of the

matter. What is noticed in Luke is, that he delivered Jesus to their will.

The circumstances attending Christ's crucifixion give a very different character to the scene, though the great central truth is necessarily the same. He is all through now, indeed, the green tree. It is the Man, the Man dependent on the Father, the holy confiding Man, as full of grace now as when walking through a world enlightened (had it been possible) by His miracles. His sufferings, His death as King of the Jews, are recounted surely, the veil of the temple is rent; but the accomplishing so many prophecies, and the expression of His expiatory agony, are not noticed. Nature wept at His sorrow, His loss, and the terrible act was felt; but it was over themselves these daughters of Jerusalem should weep. He was the green tree, and if this happened in Him, what should be done to the dry, the lifeless Jerusalem, whose sorrow He was bearing, whose state in judgment He had in grace stepped forward to take for the remnant, who would fain have seen Him received, and acknowledged the sad estate of Jerusalem? Still a nation's sin was there. Judgment was due, and He, the green tree, took it on Him. The remnant would thus escape, but the dry tree, what would be done in it? It is not simply salvation here, but judgment on the nation. This unfolds many Psalms, and the desire that the meek and righteous should not be ashamed for His sake.

Verses 35-38 very briefly recount what the other two evangelists relate in detail; and then we have the deeply interesting account of the malefactor, which, as the weeping women drew out the judicial dealings with Jerusalem, and the place Christ took as to the judgment

due to the people, unfolds the heavenly portion through faith in Jesus, in virtue of expiation and grace of one who leaves this earth, however great a sinner a man may be, be he who he may, before even the kingdom is set up at all. This we have constantly seen is in view in Luke,—the eternal, moral, heavenly blessing, what we call Christianity, in contrast with the order of dispensations, while even owning these. Even the dispensational part (the weeping women) is treated morally. The poor thief, converted, justified, and cleansed, was to be that very day with Him in paradise. The traits of his conversion and faith are admirable. The circumstance that the sun, the centre of all natural light and life, and of the whole system of nature for us, was darkened is added (v. 45). Nature was put out, and its central sun darkened, as it were, but the way into the holiest laid open by the very same thing.

But, on the other hand, there is no rising for the earthly witness (as in Matthew) of bodies of the saints. Further, there is not the agony of rejection from the light of God's countenance—the opposite to all that every righteous man in Israel hitherto could say, for they had been heard. But we have the new man, the man that trusts in God. Having passed through it and drunk, in perfect obedience, the bitter cup, He can say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." In death, He trusts His soul to His Father. So the centurion also here recognises the Lord in this character; "Certainly this was a righteous man." Luke adds the moral effect on the people now, as so often happens under the effect of what their misguided passions had led to. That He was with the rich in His death is then related by all.

In what follows, as we have so often found, Luke relates in a general way, bringing all together, the discovery by the women and by Peter of the resurrection of Jesus; but there is no apparition of Jesus here to any of them; chapter 24. Angels spoke to the women—they to the disciples. It was as idle tales to these; only Peter went to the sepulchre and found it was so, and departed wondering. But then Luke gives the details of the touching history of the journey to Emmaus, just noticed by Mark, where Jesus reveals Himself; and here it is by an allusion to His death, which, though in no way the Lord's supper, intimated a part of the same truth as that. The Christ they had to know was a Christ who had died, whose body had been broken for them, and who then disappeared—was to be known by faith. At the same time He had expounded to them the Scriptures. This and indeed something more, is again found after His personal revelation of Himself to Simon, and to the eleven and others. We have His revelation of Himself-first to Peter, and then the clear setting forth that He was really a risen man, having flesh and bones, and having even eaten with them. Two things then are presented, divinely given intelligence of Scripture, and power given from on high.

Such are the great bases of the Gospel here presented—the Man risen—known in death, and gone away; scripture understood by divinely-given spiritual intelligence; and power from on high. Of this last we have little to boast. Next, all that passed in Galilee, recorded by Matthew, is omitted. Matthew gives his last glimpse of Jesus there, and does not speak of the ascension. What is recorded also by John as passing in Galilee is also omitted.3 He closes with the respective

positions of Peter and John (representing the Jewish and Gentile parts of the Christian church), without historically mentioning the ascension. All this part of the history is omitted in Luke, and the link of the Lord's departure is with Bethany, His home when rejected of Jerusalem, the heavenly family. There He blesses them, and, as He does so, is taken up to heaven. The mission they receive is according to this. It is not going forth to the Gentiles, assuming the acceptance of, at any rate, the remnant of Israel; nor simply enlarging the service to all creation; but as from outside all, as from heaven, to preach to all the Gentiles, beginning at Jerusalem, which for heavenly things needed it as much as Gentiles, and as to dispensation, had the first place as object of promise. They were to go to all, but "to the Jew first." The apostles were witnesses, but the Holy Ghost also would be given. Though their blessing and mission were from heaven, they find their way to the temple, there praising God.

To simplify the use of the parallel columns on pp. 28-36, a change has been made in the method of cross reference, and the paragraphs on the next page adjusted accordingly.

1 It rather appears that the second "they" refers to Moses and Elias, though it is not absolutely certain.

2 The expression employed, I judge, carefully avoids the moment or act of entering into Jericho. The Greek for "as he was come nigh unto Jericho," Luke 18:35, is in a form always distinctively used for a period or course of action, a state of things during which a thing happens. It may refer to an individual act; but it is while a thing takes place, not as it takes place, as a particular point. It

is at the period in which Jesus came into the neighbourhood of Jericho, which He did in a particular manner; in fact, at that time.

3 The Lord teaches the ascension to Mary Magdalene. See John’s Gospel, though there be no account of it.

Relative Order Of Three Synoptical Gospels

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are arranged in three parallel columns in the following pages, in their relative order with references in black type to each passage running consecutively.

°Put after the Scripture indicates that no parallel passage occurs, the small figures such as 74 143 shew immediately where the parallel passages can be found in each of the other Gospels.

Mark is the most strictly chronological.

Luke follows him closest where he is so; but the middle of the Gospel is a collection of instructions not chronological, but morally connected.

Matthew orders his materials, or the Holy Spirit by him, to shew the dealing with the Jews, as come to them according to promise, and the change to the new thing; and, though prophetically speaking of church as well as kingdom, leads Christ at the close to Galilee with the residue, and does not follow the history to the ascension; but he alone gives the history of the resurrection itself. Harmonies lose the distinctive power of the Gospels.

I believe Matthew 28: I, to mean the evening of Saturday, the crepuscule of evening, not of morning: verse 5 is a new paragraph. Luke 24:34 alludes to the appearing to Peter, of which Paul speaks. Luke’s account as to women is quite general. Mary Magdalene was at the sepulchre when it was dark; Peter and John go, and go away home. Mary remains and sees Jesus. When the

women come, they see the angels and flee. Mary Magdalene, taught of Jesus, goes and tells the disciples. As the others went, Jesus meets them, and desires them to tell His disciples He was going into Galilee. Mary Magdalene was to tell them He was going to the Father. It was only in their flight the woman said nothing to anyone. After meeting Jesus they were probably re-assured; and, at any rate, afterwards they told what the angels told them, as we learn from the Lord going to Emmaus, and see Luke 24:9. But he unites all in a general statement as often, and adds other women. Verse 12 is apart; the Greek has not “then.” The accounts are very brief, and refer to the object of the Gospel. Several saw Him. See Mark 16:14; and 1 Corinthians 15.

* The chart was removed because it was not fully readable.

Notes On The Gospel Of Luke

Chapter 1.

The Saviour is presented to us in Luke in His character as Son of man, displaying the power of Jehovah in grace in the midst of men. At first, doubtless, we find Him in relationship with Israel, to whom He had been promised; but afterwards moral principles are brought out, which apply to man, as such, wherever he might be. And indeed what characterises Luke's account of our Lord, and gives special interest to his Gospel, is that it presents to us Christ Himself, and not His official glory as in Matthew, nor His mission or service as in Mark, nor the peculiar revelation of His divine nature as in John. It is Himself, such as He was, a man upon the earth, moving among men day by day.

Verses 1-4. Many had undertaken to give an account of what was historically received amongst Christians, as it had been related to them by the eye-witnesses. However well intended this might be, yet it was a work undertaken and executed by men. Luke had an exact and intimate knowledge of all from the beginning, and he found it good to write in order to Theophilus, that he might know the certainty of the things he had been instructed in. It is thus that God has provided for the whole church by the teaching contained in the living picture of Jesus that we owe to this man of God. For Luke, although he might be personally moved by Christian motives, was of course none the less inspired by the Holy Ghost to write.

Verses 5-17. The history brings us into the midst of Jewish institutions, feelings, and expectations. First, we have a priest of Abia (one of the twenty-four classes:1 Chron. 24), with his wife who was of the daughters of Aaron. “They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” All with them was in accordance with God’s law Jewishly; but they did not enjoy the blessing so earnestly desired by every Jew; they were childless. Yet it was according to the ways of God to accomplish His work of blessing while manifesting the weakness of the instrument which He was using. But now this long-prayed-for blessing was to be withheld no longer; and when Zacharias draws near to offer the incense, the angel of Jehovah appears to him. At the sight of so glorious a being Zacharias is troubled; but the angel says to him, “Fear not, thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John,” that is, “the favour of Jehovah.” And not only should the hearts of many rejoice in him, but he should be great in the sight of the Lord and be filled with the Holy Ghost. “Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias … to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” The “spirit of Elias “was a firm and ardent zeal for the glory of Jehovah and for the re-establishment, through repentance, of Israel’s relations with Him. The heart of John clung to this link of the people with God, and it is in the moral force of his call to repentance that John is here compared to Elias.

Verses 18-23. But Zacharias’s faith, as is alas! so often the case, was not equal to the greatness of his request.

He knows not how to walk in the steps of Abraham, and he asks again how such a thing can be. God's goodness turns the unbelief of His servant into a chastening that was profitable for him, and that served, at the same time, as a proof to the people that he had been visited from on high. Zacharias remains dumb until the word of Jehovah is accomplished.

Verses 24, 25. Elizabeth, with feelings so suitable to a holy woman, remembering what had been a shame to her in Israel (the traces of which were only made the more marked by the supernatural blessing now granted to her), hides herself, whilst at the same time she owns the Lord's goodness to her. But what may conceal us from the eyes of men has great value before God.

Verses 26-38. And now the scene changes, in order to introduce the Lord Himself into this marvellous scene that is unfolding itself before our eyes. In Nazareth, that despised place, there was found a young virgin, unknown by the world, whose name was Mary. She was espoused to Joseph, who was of the house of David; but so out of order was everything in Israel, that this descendant of the king was a carpenter. But what is this to God? Mary was a chosen vessel; she had found favour in the eyes of God.

We must remark that the subject here is the birth of the child Jesus as born of Mary. It is not so much His divine nature as the Word which was God and which was made flesh (though, of course, it is the same precious Saviour presented here as in John's Gospel); but it is Jesus as really and truly man—born of a virgin. His name was to be Jesus, that is, Jehovah the Saviour. "He shall be called the Son of the highest, and the Lord God shall give unto

him the throne of his father David "—still looking at Him as man born into the world. But He was God as well as man. Holy by His birth, conceived by the power of God, this blessed One, who even as born of Mary is spoken of as "that holy thing," was to be called "the Son of God."

The angel then tells Mary of the blessing God had bestowed upon Elizabeth. The wonderful intervention of God had rendered Mary humble instead of lifting her up: she had seen God and not herself in what had happened. Self was hidden from her because God had been brought so near, and she bows to His holy will. "Be it unto me according to thy word."

Verses 39-45. Afterwards we find that Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, for her heart loves to see and acknowledge the goodness of the Lord; Elizabeth, speaking by the Spirit, acknowledges Mary as the mother of her Lord, and announces the accomplishment of God's promise. "Blessed is she that believed," etc.

Verse 46. The heart of Mary is filled with joy, and she breaks forth into a song of praise. She acknowledges God her Saviour in the grace that has filled her with such joy, whilst, at the same time, she owns her utter littleness. For whatever might be the holiness of the instrument that God might employ, and that was found really in Mary, yet she was only great so long as she hid herself; for then God was everything. By making something of herself she would have lost her place; but this she did not. God kept her in order that His grace might be fully manifested.

The character of the thoughts that fill the heart of Mary is Jewish. It reminds us of Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2, which speaks prophetically of this same blessed

intervention of God. But Mary goes back to the promises made to the fathers, and takes in die whole of Israel.

Verse 56. After remaining three months with Elizabeth, she returns to her house humbly to follow her own path, in order that God's ways may be accomplished. Nothing is more beautiful in its way than this account of the conversations of these holy women, unknown to the world, but who were the instruments of God's grace to accomplish His glorious designs. They moved in a scene where nothing entered but piety and grace. But God was there Himself, no better known to the world than were these poor women, but preparing and accomplishing what the angels would desire to look into.

Verses 57-59. But what is only known in secret by faith is at last to be accomplished before all men. The son of Zacharias and Elizabeth is born, and Zacharias, no longer dumb,, pronounces the blessed prophecy we have in verses 69-80. The visitation of Israel by Jehovah, which he speaks of, embraces all the happiness of the millennium, connected with the presence of Jesus upon the earth. All the promises are Yea and Amen in Him. All the prophecies encircle Him with the glory which will be then realised. We know that, since He has been rejected and while He is now absent, the accomplishment of these things is necessarily put off till His return.

Chapter 2.

When God is pleased to occupy Himself with the world, and to take a part in what passes therein, it is marvellous to see how He acts and the instruction He gives. There is no agreement, but a total opposition between His ways and those of men. The emperor and his decree are but insignificant instruments. Caesar

Augustus acts in view of his subjects; yet he is, without knowing it, the means of accomplishing the prophecy that Jesus should be born in Bethlehem. The entire course of the world is outside the current of God's thoughts. The capital fact for Him and for His kingdom here is the babe's birth at Bethlehem; but the emperor has no thought about it. The decree puts the world in motion, and God makes good His thoughts here below. How wondrous! All the world is in movement to bring about this event, needed to fulfil prophecy, that the poor carpenter, with Mary, his espoused wife, should be in the city of David, and David's heir should be born there and then. And this is the more striking, for the census itself was first made some years afterwards, when Cyrenius was governor of Syria: God is accomplishing His purpose of love. But man was blind to it. Who cared to notice the poor Jew, though he might be of the house and lineage of David? The things that are perfectly indifferent to man fill the heart and eye of God.

Still we are in Jewish atmosphere. Promises are being accomplished; the babe must be born in Bethlehem. "The city of David" is nothing to the Christian as such, save as shewing prophecy fulfilled: to us the Son comes from heaven. Of earth the babe is the object of God's counsels; angels and all heaven are occupied with His birth; but there is no place in the world for Him! Go where the great world registers every individual, go to the little world of an inn, where each is measured by the servant's knowing eye, and place is accordingly awarded from the garret to the first floor; but there is no room for Jesus! And the manger led, in due time, to the lowest place—to the cross.

What a lesson for us as to this world! What a difference, too, between giving up the world and the world giving us up! We may do the one with comparative ease; but when we feel the world despises us as Christ was despised, we shall discover, unless He fills and satisfies the heart, that we had a value for its esteem that we were not aware of. When obedience is as important to us in our measure, as obeying was to Christ, we shall go right on whatever be before us, without regarding the world: not that we shall be insensible, but when Christ is the object we shall only be occupied with Him.

All intelligence of the things of God comes from His revelation, and not from the reasonings of men. Hence, the simple go farther in spiritual understanding than the wise and prudent of the earth. God acts here so as to set aside all appearance of human wisdom. Happy he who has so seized the intention of God as to be identified with it, and to want none but God! This was the case with the shepherds. They little entered into the great intent of the registration; but it was to them, and not to the prudent, that God revealed Himself. Our true wisdom is through what God reveals. But we never get God's fullest blessings till we are where the flesh is brought down and destroyed—I speak as regards walk. We cannot get into the simple joy and power of God, till we accept the place of lowliness and humiliation—till the heart is emptied of what is contrary to the lowliness of Christ. These shepherds were in the quiet fulfilment of their humble duty; and that is the place of blessing. Whoever is keeping on terms with the world is not walking with God; for God is not walking with you there. From the manger to the cross all in Christ was simple obedience. How unlike a Theudas, who boasted himself

to be somebody! Christ did all in God's way; and not only so, but we must come so too.

The glory of the Lord shines round about the shepherds, the angel speaks to them, the sign is given; and what a sign! "Ye shall find the babe wrapped up in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God" —and for what? "The mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh." The hope of Israel is revealed to them—glad tidings of great joy to all the people. For Jesus is the pivot of all God's counsels in grace. Adam himself was but a figure of Him who was to come. Christ was ever in the mind of God. Such displays of glory are not shewn to mortal eyes every day; but God sets them before us in His word, and we must every day follow the sign given—follow Jesus the babe in the manger. If He filled the eye, the ear, the heart, how we should see the effects in person, spirit, conversation, dress, house, money, etc.

Such, then, is the sign of God's accomplishment of promise and of His presence in the world— "a babe in a manger" — the least and lowest thing. But God is found there, though these things are beyond man, who cannot walk with God, nor understand His moral glory. But God's sign is within the reach of faith. It is the token of perfect weakness; a little infant who can only weep! Such, born into this world is Christ the Lord. Such is the place God chose—the low degree. God's intervention is recognised by a sign like this. Man would not have sought that. The heavenly host praise God and say, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill toward [in] men." Nothing higher nor more astonishing (save the cross) for those who have the mind

of heaven. The choir above see God in it—God manifested in flesh, and praise God in the highest. They rejoice that His delights are with the sons of men. Of old God had displayed Himself to Moses in a flame of fire, without consuming the bush, and here, still more marvellously, in the feeblest thing on earth; infinite thought morally, though despicable in the eye of the world! How hard it is to receive that the work of God and of His Christ is always in weakness! the rulers of the people saw in Peter and John unlearned and ignorant men. Paul's weakness at Corinth was the trial of his friends, the taunt of his enemies, the boast of himself. The Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness. The thorn in the flesh made Paul despised, and he conceived it would be better if that were gone. He had need of the lesson, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is God's rule of action, if we may so say, to choose the weak things. Everything must rest on God's power, otherwise God's work cannot be done according to His mind. One can hardly believe that one must be feeble to do the work of God: but Christ was crucified in weakness, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For the work of God we must be weak, that the strength may be of God; and that work will last when all the earth shall be moved away.

Verse 21-38. But besides the additional testimony rendered by the offering of His mother to the circumstances in this world, in which the Lord of glory was born, we may see that, while God all through the Gospel is settling man in his new place with Himself, He did not forget His ancient people. He shews us here that He met every thought in every heart that was touched by grace in Israel. His heart was especially toward those

who sorrowed over the sins and desolation of His people; and who, withal, waited for redemption, crying from the darkness, “How long, O Lord?” God will accomplish in power that wherein man has failed in responsibility. Should we therefore be content if God’s people do not glorify Him? No; faith is not hard; it will sorrow, but it will wait for God, and God’s time too; for faithful is He who hath promised, who also will do it. He will bring about His own purposes.

Verse 25. Thus was Simeon “waiting for the consolation of Israel.” Thus Anna departed not from the temple, but served with fastings and prayers night and day; thus all that had looked for redemption in Jerusalem. There were those who watched, and Anna knew and spake to them. The rest doubtless were occupied with Roman oppression; but these few waited for Him, bowing before His hand in judgment of evil, but looking for His deliverance.

I believe there was something more in Simeon’s soul than the joy of holding in his arms the babe, the expected Messiah; Simeon felt he had God, and was satisfied. So he says, without even looking on to the glory, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.” In Romans 5:11 the apostle, after speaking of rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, says, “and not only so.” What could be more than that hope? Yes, there is more: “we also have joy in God.” The eyes of Simeon have seen God’s salvation, and he begs of the sovereign Lord that he may go.

We often see something like this in dying saints, who deeply joy in the Lord’s love to His own, and in the

nearness of His coming for them. Why, one might say, what is His near coming to those who are dying and departing to Him? Just this—the nearer we are to God, the more precious is all the truth of God, and everything which is near to His heart. So in verses 30-32 Simeon rejoices as he surveys the extent of the divine deliverance. It was for the revelation of the Gentiles, who had been till now hidden in the dark of idolatry and ungodliness, as well as for the glory of Israel. But his soul is satisfied possessing Christ, and anticipating the effect of His presence in the whole world: he has all in Him, and desires to depart. If a man walks with God and has finished his course, he knows that his work is done and is conscious of the Lord's time being come. He has a companionship and communion with the Lord he has walked with. If simply brought to a bed of sickness, he is not then ready to go; not that he fears, but God is teaching him something else. But when God's time is come, all is joy and readiness. He feels like Simeon, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.

But, further, when Simeon blessed Joseph and Mary, the Spirit gives him to disclose the more immediate results of the babe's presence in Israel. He should be the touchstone of many hearts, an occasion for the fall as well as the rise of many; He should be a sign spoken against, a rejected Messiah; and Mary's heart should be pierced through, whatever the present joy or the future glory.

Israel was low indeed, but did not know it; Israel must be made to know it, and Christians too; for Christ had to descend to the grave and rise again. The thoughts of the heart must be revealed, whatever the outward garb. But then He is the one who brings out God's thoughts too. If

He is the Christ, the glory of God's people, He is also the one who will abase the flesh, and meet and humble man in his pride; He is the one who will make you know whether His rejection is more precious than all beside.

Verse 39. When all was done according to the law, they returned to Galilee to Nazareth. Jesus would not be the Christ we need, if He had taken any glory from Jerusalem. His place is among the poor of the flock—His place all through in Israel.

Verse 40. "And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him." Luke gives us more of the reality of His childhood than the other Gospels. He was not made man full-formed like Adam.

If one only reads the account without comment, how the soul feels it unspeakably precious! When we see who it was, we see human nature in Him filled with God, so to speak. It is not official distinction, but the heart feels God brought nigh. The blessedness of the child's intrinsic loveliness fills the heart. Deeply instructive too is the incident recorded in connection with the passover when He was twelve years old. His true character comes out, though He was not yet to act upon it. He came to be a Nazarene—to be about His Father's business. This is here stated distinctly before He enters upon His public ministry, that it might be seen to be connected with His person, and not to depend merely upon His office. He was the Pastor of the flock in spirit and character. It belonged to Him. He was the Son of the Father, though abiding God's time for shewing it.

Verse 51. Nevertheless "He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them." What a

majesty in His whole life! His being God secured His perfection as a child and man here below. He had ever the blessed consciousness of His relationship to His Father—an obedient child, but conscious also of a glory unconnected in itself with subjection to human parentage. He belonged to Mary and even Joseph; in another sense He was not theirs. His divine sonship was as well known to Him, as His obedience to His parents was in due season absolutely right.

Verse 52. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” His human intelligence being developed, He, though ever perfect, became so in a full way—the perfect man. The lovely plant grew up and unfolded before God and man.

Chapter 3.

The two preceding chapters have given the general character; they have shewn the going out of the thoughts of God to man. Accordingly we find that the Gospel, as a whole, is particularly occupied with what is not Jewish. Still the Jewish part is given at first with considerable detail, inasmuch as Israel, because of their unbelief and moral worthlessness, are to be set aside, in order to make way for new relationships, founded on what God reveals Himself to be for man in Jesus, the true and only mediator. But if chapter I disclosed the faithfulness of God to the Abrahamic promises, to His covenant and His oath, chapter 2 puts us in the presence of the actual government of the world and of the Lord’s land and people under the fourth beast, the Roman empire. What confusion does not sin create? The Jews are subject to the Gentiles; Joseph and Mary, of David’s royal house, go up to be taxed. Nevertheless the

ways of God shine so much the brighter for the darkness that surrounded them: He was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Israel, however, would be put to a new moral test by His presentation of Himself. Alas! it would soon appear that, if they had not kept the law, they hated grace. “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be spoken against.”

In chapter 3 we have the ministry of Gcd coming in by a prophet as of old by Samuel. “The word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.” It is not without object that the Spirit mentions the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, etc. All the earth was seemingly at rest under its heathen lord; the word of God found its suited sphere in the wilderness. The law and the prophets were until John: and where should he be in such a state of things but the wilderness? Could he morally own it? God will not have His messenger in Jerusalem.

Prophecy is the sovereign means whereby God can communicate with His people when they are ruined and departed from Him. John understands this, and preaches the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And such was the place assigned him, many centuries before, by Esaias the prophet. It was vain for Israel to plead their privileges and rights. All was wrong, and the Judge was at the door. John’s work was not to lead the people back to the law: he was preparing the way of the Lord. Herein he differed from the prophets as well as the law, or rather he went farther; for God’s time was come for a step in advance. The prophets led back to Horeb: John says not a word of this, though his father was a priest, and himself, of course, an Aaronite. He does not try to

set up again what was closed; he announces the kingdom. He may not introduce the church, nor even the glad tidings of God's grace (both awaited the accomplishment of the work of redemption), but he drops the law, and shews that God's purpose is the kingdom.

The quotation from Esaias sets aside Israel—not the Gentiles merely but Israel—as grass, withered grass, without a green blade left. Yet the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this when all hope for man was gone. Israel may have failed, but the word of the Lord shall stand. Moreover, since it was the Lord who was coming, every valley should be filled, etc. Not the Jews alone, but all flesh, should see God's deliverance. If sin plunges all in indiscriminate ruin and a common judgment, God can meet man thus ruined, but His glory will not be shut up in the narrow limits of Israel.

Verses 7-14. But, to be blessed, man must repent. God would have realities, and not a mere nominal people; He must have fruits answering to hearts which felt and judged their moral condition, and which therefore turned from themselves to God. Ordinances, formal claims, etc., which should have been means of blessing, would be no shelter against the coming wrath; nor would God permit them to hinder His creating true children of the promise, if this generation were but Ishmael over again. Judgment must begin at the house of God.

In fact, as we know, John was beheaded, and the Lord was crucified, and the kingdom, presented in Him, and by Him, was rejected by Israel. By-and-by it will be set up visibly and in power.4 Meanwhile the church is set

up, because the kingdom is not set up in this manifested way. And those who now take their place with the Lord share His rejection. They are members of His body, the church. They shall share His glory, but it will be heavenly, and not earthly, glory. In another sense we are in the kingdom now. To faith heaven rules now, and we own it, and know it; but Satan is actually prince and god of this world; and hence those who are made kings to God (for that is our true place) are called to suffer. Therefore Paul went everywhere preaching the kingdom of God, as well as Christ and the church. We have that by virtue of which we shall reign with Christ; but even that is not our best portion. To be one with Christ—His body and bride—is far more blessed. If your mind only rests on the person of Christ, there is no difficulty in seeing that when He is cut off, all must cease as regards the earth. He is the centre of all; and when rejected, what prophecy spoke of, and what seemed about to be accomplished, breaks off. Thereupon Christ ascends, and takes up a glory above the heavens, and there now the saints find their place with Him. Compare Psalms 2 and 8.

John Baptist, then, addresses himself to the Jews, demanding repentance, and righteousness as its fruit; shews them that, if they were nearer to God outwardly as Jews, they must expect judgment the sooner. If the Lord was coming, He must have what became the Lord. The axe was even then lying at the root of the trees; if there was not good fruit on the trees, every one must be hewn down and burnt. Repentance or wrath—which? The Lord would allow no plea of descent from Abraham, if their ways belied Abraham; He must have righteousness. It is the Lord that is just at hand, and He

must have a people fit for Him, or He would out of the very stones make a suited people for Himself.

Evidently John's word is not a voice of mercy to the poor sinner. God is presented in the way of judgment, not of sovereign mercy. He does not say, "Come unto me." John could not say it, because he was not Christ, and none but He could say, "Come unto me." John came in righteousness.

In verses 10-14 moral testimony is given, and that in detail. John deals with the practical iniquity of each set of people. So even when the question of the Christ is raised (v. 15-18), "one mightier than I cometh," says he. It is of His power specially he thinks—His power morally as outwardly. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." It is the power of the Holy Ghost and His consuming judgment. He could not speak of the grace of the gospel which we know now. He proclaims One who was coming after him, not a present salvation. Whatever would not stand the fire was to be burnt up. For His fan "is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable." (Compare Isa. 21:10, etc.) God's floor was Israel; there He was getting His wheat, if any were to be found. But His fan is in His hand; He is going to make short work. Titus finally set aside God's floor upon the earth; Israel's sin had lost it morally when they rejected Christ, but at the destruction of Jerusalem it was done with thoroughly for the present.

Verses 19, etc.—Luke's method of instruction is to be noticed in passing. He shews that John had preached and exhorted moral truth, and then disposes of him,

putting him, as it were, out of the scene, in order to bring Christ in. It was not that historically John was imprisoned at that juncture by Herod the tetrarch; it took place long after. But it is a sample of Luke's manner, who returns to the Lord's taking His place amongst the remnant of Israel. For the Lord does not identify Himself with the nation; but, directly there is a poor remnant, He identifies Himself with it.

This history opens with verse 21, and how wonderful and full of grace! "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended, in a bodily shape like a dove, upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." One may have looked and listened mournfully, as one reads of John Baptist and his testimony. We might have asked, as the dying record of men passed before us, What is man? But now my eye rests on Jesus: I find the Lord from heaven a man. All is to begin again. Do I ask again, What is man? At once Christ comes out. Do I look at myself? at all around? What do I see? Enough to break my heart, if there is a heart to be broken. The only thing which prevents people being utterly broken down is that they have not a heart to feel things as they are.

But a rest is here! I have got a man now who satisfied God—this blessed man on earth in the presence of God, looking to God, and an object to God! not Messiah purging His floor, but Him in whom God's thoughts and purposes are all folded up—not man perishing before the moth, but Jesus the Son of man, not merely coming down from Abraham and David, but traced up, "which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God" —the

second Man, the last Adam, the quickening Spirit. What a relief; for what is man? What one's self when the heart's sin is known—giving up God for an apple from the beginning hitherto! But now a man, a blessed man, appears, "and praying." We are not told this elsewhere, and why here? Because Luke presents man in his perfection—the dependent man; for dependence is the essence of a perfect man. Truly we see God shining all through, but yet in Jesus the dependent man, in the place and condition of perfectness as man. The root of sin in us is self-will, independence. Here my heart has rest! A dependent man in the midst of sorrow, but perfectly with God in all. See Luke's account of the transfiguration also: in humiliation or in glory, it makes no difference as to this; the perfect is ever the dependent one.

And when that blessed heart thus expressed its dependence, did He get no answer? "The heaven was opened." Does heaven open thus on me? It is open to me indeed, no doubt, but I pray because it is open; it opened because He prayed. I come and look up because the heavens were opened on Him.

It is, indeed, a lovely picture of grace, and we may be bold to say that the Father loved to look on—to look down, in the midst of all sin, on His beloved Son. Nothing but what was divine could thus awaken God's heart; and yet it was the lowly perfect man. He takes not the place of His eternal glory, as the Creator, the Son of God. He stoops and is baptized (Psalm 16). He says, "in thee do I trust." He says to Jehovah, "Thou art the Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee." He says to the godly remnant in Israel, "To the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent … In them is all my delight."

He needed no repentance, yet is He baptized with them; just as when, later on, He puts forth His sheep, He goes before them. He identifies Himself in grace with Israel, even with such as were of a clean heart. And the Holy Ghost descends like a dove on Him—fit emblem of that spotless man!—fit resting place for the Spirit in the deluge of this world! And how sweet, too, that Jesus is pointed out to us as God's object. I know the way the Father feels about Him. I am made His intimate, and admitted to hear Him expressing His affection for His Son, to see the links reformed between God and man. Heaven is opened, not on something above, but upon a man on the earth. Thus I get rest, and my heart finds communion with God in His beloved Son. It is only the believer who enjoys it, but the link is there. And if I have that in and about me which distresses the soul, I have that in Him which is unfailing joy and comfort.

The genealogy quite falls in with the thought that God is shewing grace in man and to man. Jesus, the beloved Son of God, is traced up to Adam and to God. Jesus is Son of man; He is heir in this sense. He takes up the inheritance God gave to man. O what a truth! Where could one's heart turn for rest, if it had not Jesus to rest in? With Him, let heaven and earth be turned upside down, and still I have a rest. What blessedness for the heart to have the objea God Himself is occupied with! May our hearts also be more and more occupied with Him!

Chapter 4.

We saw the Lord taking His place of servant with the excellent in Israel, and thereon the heavens opened, and Himself owned by the Father as His beloved Son. His

delights were with the sons of men, and He is traced up, not to Abraham only, the root and depositary of Jewish promises, but to Adam and God Himself. Independently of His proper divine glory as Son of the Father, Jesus should be called the Son of the Highest, the Son of God. As man on earth, He was sealed with the Holy Ghost. He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. His entire perfectness now was to fulfil, as a servant, the will of Him who sent Him; for a servant doing his own will is a bad servant. Dependence, waiting, and obedience, were the characteristics of this place, and they are found in Him to the uttermost. Hence, as in the Psalms, "I waited patiently for the Lord." He would not ask for power, but waits on God. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Put thoroughly to the test, He would do nothing but His Father's will. He was to learn obedience. Having taken the place, He would go through it wholly, not in one act, but experiencing the force of that expression, learning obedience, without one comfort here, with enemies around, bulls of Bashan besetting, dogs compassing. He had to learn obedience where obedience was always suffering, even to the yielding up of life. Every single step was humiliation till the close came in the cross, where the wrath of God was borne in love to us. No doubt He found, in His rejection, fields white for harvest, and so shall we, in our measure, when walking in the same path. But the cross was always before Him, —everything that could stop a man. Nevertheless He went on, patiently waiting, and not asking for deliverances. Thus He presented perfect God to man, and perfect man to God.

Verse i. In this chapter He begins the walk of suffering obedience publicly. And the first thing to be remarked is that, being full of the Holy Ghost, He is led by Him into the wilderness, where He is tempted by the devil. There are two ways in which the enemy has power; first by allurements, and secondly by terror. In the one he works upon us through our lusts, presenting what is calculated to attract, and so he rules over us naturally. In the other he has the power of death. Thus, Judas being a covetous man and without the faith which purifies the heart, Satan suggested the occasion and gets him. He has no right to rule over men, but he acquires dominion through the lusts of the flesh. Another way is through the terror of death. In both he assailed the Lord, but found nothing in Him.

Here, then, we have the devil meeting man in the power of the Spirit of God—man tempted, not in paradise, but in the wilderness. Jesus does not say, “I am God, and you are Satan; go away.” That would not have glorified God, nor have helped us. But as the Lord was led into the wilderness, not by lust (God forbid the thought!) but by the Holy Ghost, so in His blessed grace He puts Himself in the place where man was. He has help from none, not even from John the Baptist. There was all that might have stumbled rather, had it been possible; through all He goes as man. He must be tempted, and must overcome where man not only had failed, but was lying under the power of wickedness.

Verses 2, 3. There was no harm in hunger: it was no sin. He could have commanded stones to be made bread, but to do so, save at His Father’s word, would have been doing His own will, and then He had not been the perfect man. Satan tries to introduce into His heart a

desire which was not in the word of God; He succeeded in insinuating a lust into the heart of Adam; he fails with Jesus, though He was for forty days exposed to his presence and power. Jesus had to know by experience what it was to have working at Him, without a single support, without a friend, in solitary dreariness (save indeed the wild beasts) with the devil! Thus He measured the power of Satan. The strong man was there, putting forth all his weapons, but the stronger than he overcame: Jesus binds the strong man. He was abstracted from human condition for forty days, not like Moses to be only with God, but as the one who was always with God, to be exposed to Satan. None other man needs to be abstracted in order to be tempted, he has only to go along with men. In this case, this extraordinary separation was to be with the devil. To be with God He did not need anything out of His every-day path, for it was His natural place; but to be with Satan, He needed it. Others were strangers to God, and at home with Satan. He, in the most adverse things, is a stranger to Satan, and dwells in the bosom of the Father. But He emptied Himself as God to become a servant as man, and there He waits in dependence on the word of Him whom He served. The living Father had sent Him, and He lived by the Father. He was as man under His authority, and His meat was to do His will. “By the words of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.”

Verse 4. It is the written word He ever uses, and Satan is powerless! What amazing importance Jesus gives the scriptures! God now acts by the word, and Satan is resisted morally in this way. A man cannot be touched by Satan while the word is simply used in obedience. “He

that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." It was not as an exercise of divine authority He dismissed Satan, but the enemy is proved unable to grapple with obedience to the word of God. If he cannot take out of the path of obedience, he has no power. What more simple? Every child of God has the Holy Ghost acting by the word to keep him.

Jesus does not reason with Satan. A single text silences when used in the power of the Spirit. The whole secret of strength in conflict is using the word of God in the right way. One may say, I am not like this perfect Man: it might be so with Christ, but how can I expect the same result? True, we are ignorant, and the flesh is in us; but God is always behind, and He is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. Temptation may be simply a trial of our obedience, as in Abraham's case, not a snare to lead us astray. Satan presents what has no appearance of evil. The evil would be—doing one's own will. Now it solves every difficulty to ask—not, what harm is there in doing this or that?—but, why am I doing it? Is it for God or myself? What! am I to be always under this restraint? Ah! there the secret of our nature comes out; we do not like the restraint of doing what God will approve. It is restraint to do God's will! We want to do our own will. To act merely because one must is law, and not the guidance of the Spirit. The word of God was the motive of Christ, and such is Christ's guidance. Not fencing the old man, but the new man living on the word is defence against Satan.

Verses 3-13. The first temptation is an appeal to the need of the body. The second in Luke (not in Matthew) is the inducement of the world's glory. The third in our Gospel is the religious temptation through the word of

God, and therefore morally the hardest of all to one who values that word. And this is the reason why Luke departs from the actual order of the events, in order to group them morally, as is the habit of this evangelist elsewhere also. Thus we have the tempter assailing the Lord Jesus, first, as to man's life; second, as to the power given to man; and third, as to the promises made to Christ Himself.

The Lord might have argued with the devil, but He does not even tell him that the dominion of the world would be His by-and-by. He takes His stand on that which settles everything, and is a perfect example for us. He stands to God's word, and God's worship. He awaits His word, He worships Him, He serves Him only. How simple and how blessed! It was the immediate link of an obedient heart with God. The question was one of relationship to God. So of old, Eliezer receives blessing, but before he begins to enjoy it, he gives thanks. He had the word first, then the blessing— and what follows forthwith? He bows his head and worships. God is the first thought of his heart. And so still more fully with the Lord here. The last and subtlest temptation was grounded on the promises to Messiah (v. 9-11). If thou art the Son of God, why not try? But why should He try, who knew that God was for Him? Why should He be like presumptuous Israel of old, who would go up the hill in disobedience, to prove whether the Lord was among them? Not even when Lazarus was sick would He stir, till it was the Father's will, though all nature would have moved: and He knew well the sorrow of that house which was His refuge; for "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

The Lord did not listen. Who would? you say. But you do listen to Satan, every day of your lives that you seek a very little bit of the world. But was there not a promise? Doubtless there was; yet why should He throw Himself down to see whether God would be as good as His word? Did He not know that God was with Him? And so with us: let us only have the word behind us, no matter what may be before us. Never should we raise a question whether God is with us. If He does not send, let us not move, but let us never question His presence. If we are in the simple path of His will, the Holy Ghost will act in us to guide, and not merely on us to correct.

Thus then, in the order of Luke, which, as we have seen, is not historical, but moral, we have the progressive exercises of a man. First, natural lusts; secondly, worldly lusts;5 and lastly, spiritual temptations. The Lord Jesus was tempted here, not in Eden, but in the great system where we are. He put Himself, by the will and wisdom of God, in the place of our difficulty in the world, where man is. He has gone through all the difficulties a saint is in. Who wants His help? Not a sinner, for he wants salvation: but a saint needs help and sympathy in his path. We have practically to keep our first estate, as renewed. Satan cannot touch the new man, but he tries to entice us out of the path of godliness. We want the succour to walk as obedient ones where Christ walked.

Verse 14. “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.” In all things His obedience is shewn. Untouched by Satan, He goes forth in unhindered power: as we shall in a measure, if like Him we pass through temptation, so as not to be touched by Satan.

Verse 16. “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up” —the low, despised place, but just the place where spiritual power is found. Was it not ever thus? When was it [power] found allied to the great things of this world?

Verse 18. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor,” etc. It was the characteristic of grace to come to such. The great business of Christ was to preach, that is to present God. The Holy Ghost gives the right word at the right time, and in the right way. “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears,” v. 21. The Lord does not reason; He says, Here it is. The way of God is to present what we want. You want salvation, there it is; you want mercy, and there it is. God alone can thus come, by grace, into the place of a sinner. They wonder, for His were precious words, but soon they ask, Is not this Joseph’s son? Was He ashamed of being the carpenter? Grace goes down to the lowest need. But man will take occasion to despise grace, because it is clothed in humiliation: he cannot but see God, but he steps aside to look at the humiliation, and so shew out the hatred of his heart. God’s grace is despised and His sovereignty is hated. God did not despise Nazareth, but man despises Jesus because He came out of Nazareth. Even the guileless Nathaniel asks, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? “How little appreciation of the way of grace there is even in the godly! Christ comes into man’s misery, and finds him where he is. Could an angel? No: he stays in his proper position, doing the Lord’s commandments, and hearkening to the voice of His word. An angel ought not to come down to me in my sins: God only can in His

grace. And man despised the lowliness to which grace brought Him—wretched man!

But Israel ever resisted grace, and yet it was ever the way of God's delight. Witness the widow of Sarepta in Sidon, and Naaman the Syrian leper. Grace overleaped the bounds of Israel (v, 25-27). They might be enraged, but grace does over-step their limits. They rose up to thrust down Him who had denied their privileges, but He passed through (v. 30) to renew the work of grace elsewhere (v. 31, 32). This does not move Jesus; it tries Him and breaks His heart, but it does not move Him. The reproach of man turns Him to God. His comfort in His rejection is His Father's will: "Even so, Father." It was perfectness in the scene of grace, as before in the scene of temptation.

There was also the manifestation of power, and not merely promise. There was the accomplishment of promise for the deliverance of man in power as well as grace: and this remains true for us, who know Him as a man risen, and at the right hand of God. Mere promise does not give a centre for the affections: Christ Himself is that—Christ to whom promise pointed. He awakens divine feelings and thoughts in us, which find no response or satisfaction from anything in this world. It is the special character of Christ: when He presents Himself, it is perfect peace and grace; and in fellowship with Him, the soul can praise and rejoice in what He is.

This grace adapts itself to all difficulties, so as to bring man into peace with God. The very demons knew who He was; man alone was dull and blind. The demon held captive, but a single word of Jesus sets the captive free. He was there, not a promise merely, but power

accomplishing, the living power of the Lord Himself among men, the power of God in man overcoming Satan. Such was Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum, dealing with the unclean spirit (v. 33-37). And it is the same when He goes out and enters Simon's house. Disease disappears, the weak is made strong. He ministers unto Simon's wife's mother, as she lay taken in a great fever, "and immediately she arose and ministered unto them" (v. 38, 39). What can resist this delivering power in the person of the Lord Jesus? "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto him, and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them; and demons also came out of many." He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. Therefore when men stayed Him that He should not depart, He pleads His mission to preach elsewhere also." He is ever the obedient One.

Chapter 5.

It is interesting to know the progressive power of the word of God. The Lord was preaching, as related at the close of chapter 4, and in so doing, as well as in the miracles He wrought, He was manifesting the power of goodness. Thus, in performing miracles, two purposes had to be accomplished —confirmation of the testimony given, and present deliverance from the power of Satan. But His great business was preaching the kingdom of God. He will set up the kingdom in power by-and-by, but His great object then was (and is) to bring the heart into contact with God; and the word does this more than miracles.

Verse I. In a measure even the unconverted are sensible of the presence of God. Adam was, when he tried to hide himself. When the gospel is preached with power, crowds are gathered together by it, touched, perhaps, by something new, but without fruit. So it was with the Lord's preaching and miracles. We know their motives were selfish often, yet He went on all the same. Come for the blessing of man, He would associate others with Himself in this work of grace; but He calls them in such a way as leaves no glory to man. He "saw two ships standing by the lake, but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would launch out a little from the land; and he sat down and taught the multitudes out of the ship. Now when he had left off speaking, he said to Simon, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught" (v. 2-4). The word had authority in the conscience. Peter and Andrew had seen Jesus before, but had not yet staid with Him; there had not been sufficient power in their faith to attach them to Christ. There are many now, as ever, who own the authority of the word, and yet not attached by its power to His person— many absorbed by their every-day pursuits, the word not having laid hold of their souls so as to make them walk thoroughly with Christ. It is one thing simply to hear His word when spoken to them; quite a different thing when the word reaches them, and becomes the spring and motive of all their ways. So, here, these men had spent a little time with Jesus, had heard Him speak, and owned Him as Messiah; so, now also, we see obedience to His word when it comes to them. They launch out at His word, and at His word they let down their nets.

The miracle which the Lord wrought was one every way suited to act on those concerned. Their own powerlessness was confessed. “Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.” Man could do nothing in such a case: if Jesus could, it was because everything was at His disposal. “At thy word I will let down the net” (v. 5).

Verses 6-8. “And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners … and they came and rilled both the ships, so that they began to sink.” There was not even strength to receive of themselves. “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” If the word of Jesus had not reached Peter’s heart, he would merely have obeyed it as a means of temporal help; but he owns Him as Lord, hearing far more in the words spoken. His conscience was reached. The Lord Himself is revealed to Peter, and that shews Peter himself. When the eye of God is consciously upon us, we see in ourselves what He saw. This was Peter’s case. He, when brought into God’s presence, feels that he has been deceiving himself.

Grace begins here, but we have not the end yet. So Paul was blind three days, and his soul so wrought on that he could neither eat nor drink. Here Peter falls down at Jesus’ knees. So with us: when brought really into His presence, there is the discovery of our sinfulness. The means used to bring us there may be various—circumstances of life, providential occurrences (with Luther, a thunder-storm). But when we are there, there is the revelation of Christ Himself, and wherever He is, He takes His right place in the soul. It is not only that a

man then has salvation, but he cannot longer be content without God having His due place before him.

Peter does not fly away from the Lord, like Adam hiding himself: he is attracted to Him. At the same time he is there a judged, convicted, sinful man in his own conscience, which takes the part of Christ against itself. “Depart from me,” he says, but he says it at Jesus’ knees. This might seem like a contradiction. It was really love to the Lord and care for His honour, because His word had become the revelation of Christ to him. His heart has not perfect peace, but Christ has got possession of it. Grace draws to Christ, but there is withal the sense of unfitness till His work is known in all its peace-giving consequences. God sees the thoughts and intents of the heart, and we are made to see these as He sees them. Righteousness is planted in the conscience; God and man are brought together. It was not that Peter could be happy anywhere but at the knees of Jesus, but he felt all the while how unfit he was to be in such company.

But the Lord deals in perfect grace. He does not leave Simon Peter. He knew all his sin before He went into the ship, and says to him, “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” Jesus went into the ship to shew Peter that he had nothing to fear. Truly “perfect love casteth out fear.” Fear has torment till grace is fully revealed; and now it was, with as much authority as that miracle-working word, “Let down your nets for a draught.” It was the word of Christ to his heart. If he trusted it for the fish, why not for his fears? Peter had said, “Depart,” but instead of that, Christ had already come, knowing all he was better than Peter. He was come as a Saviour; nay, more, He intimates to Peter that He was going to

make him an instrument in gathering others. Everyone who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart becomes a vessel of living grace himself: not the source, but the river flows through him, so that people may come and drink. Recipients of grace, we are associated with Christ in the activity of love. Outward gift is not meant here, but that, as members of His body, there is living fellowship with the Head in the testimony of His grace and power.

We see in these disciples the effect of all. They are absorbed with Christ now. They not only look to Him for salvation, but they think of nothing else for life, speaking now generally and apart from any particular failure. “They forsook all and followed him.” Christ becomes their life. It is a new line altogether—not merely obedience to an express command, with the reserve of thinking and saying, perhaps, “there is no harm in this or that.” Christ pleased not Himself. His reason for action was His Father’s will, and not the absence of a prohibition. And we are sanctified unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. “They forsook all,” and where Christ went they went. They are associated with their Lord in His love to souls, and in the walk of life. This is liberty. May we, having Christ our life, have Him as our one motive! detached from all to Him, yet channels for all the blessing and grace we have ourselves tasted in Him! There is power to attract out of every corruption around, and to gather the soul into the thoughts and ways of God, by the revelation of Christ Himself.

Verse 12. Christ was the manifestation on earth of God’s power and character—of grace. Of this the leper’s case which follows is a striking witness; for leprosy was an

evil which none but God could remove. But God was there in grace. Leprosy presented sin in the aspect of uncleanness. A man full of it on seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” There is the recognition of divine power in Jesus, but He has not full confidence in His grace. He seems disheartened by misery, and almost in despair says, “If thou wilt,” etc. But He who alone on earth had the title so to say, says, “I will.” It was God only—not in heaven, but come down in man and among men. Christ was there, who could touch the leper and the leprosy without being touched by it. Divine power was needed, doubtless, and the very priests could not but attest the results of its intervention, but there was divine and perfect love in His touch, while it was the touch of a man, a man who acknowledged the ordinances of God, as one who had been born under law. Thus this “turned for a testimony.” For the leper must go to the priest, and what could he think? Why, who has been here? Jehovah must have been to heal the man.

Verse 16. And what next? Jesus “withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed.” Let the power exercised be ever so great, and manifestly divine, He is the dependent man; and this is just where we fail.

Verse 18. Here we have another thing—not the power of Satan, as in chapter 4, nor the uncleanness of sin, typified by leprosy, but the guilt of sin. They brought the man, because they felt the need; and there was the perseverance of faith, which would not be put off till another day. And Jesus brings forgiveness of sins, as well as cleansing from defilement. This is what appears in the instance of the palsied man. The first and grand point is that Jesus pronounces his sins forgiven.

Authority to pardon was come in the Person of the Son of man on earth, whatever scribes and Pharisees might think. It was God, the Lord Jehovah, but the Son of man withal, having on earth power to forgive sins, and using it. It is in this way Israel is to be forgiven by-and-by (compare Psalm 103:3); and accordingly, the Lord here gives the proof of that authority to forgive by the healing the disease of the paralytic. “That ye may know,” etc. (v. 14). The man was to know in his relationship to God, that his guilt was gone.

Through infinite grace, we are entitled to more than even this; for we have the righteousness of the accepted man in God’s presence. We are made the righteousness of God in Him. This palsied man was a sample of what will be, in the future day, Israel’s portion. Jesus was forgiving iniquities and healing diseases. He had shewn the power to do the one; now He would shew that He could do the other also. It is God’s delight to do it all. You may not believe that you can have such a boon, but it is ours in Christ. The perfect Man has come with perfect title in His Person. God wrought there, but it was also as a man filled with the Holy Ghost. The believer walks, too, a proof not to himself so much as to others that God is there. The man ought not to say, “I wonder if I can walk”; if he has faith, he will get up and do it.

Two things are here present. First, the exceeding blessed grace that tie Lord is come, the power of God within the sphere of human misery, which, extreme as it may be, does but make that power evident. If I look around as a man, I am lost. I cannot unriddle the history of the world—abominations committed in the name of Christ, Himself rejected by His people Israel, and crucified by those Gentiles to whom God had entrusted

the government of the world, Mohammedanism, heathenism; what kind of a God have you, says the reasoning heart, when it is such a world! But here I have the Lord come down into all the wretchedness, sickness, sin; and my heart is drawn away from pleasure and sorrow to Him. How beautiful to see heart after heart brought around this One, the only true centre, soon to be the risen head of the new creation, Himself the object drawing out feelings and affections of which He alone is worthy; He who by His excellency, gives excellency, and by His gracious thoughts towards us produces and draws out gracious thoughts in us. Next, our hearts are fixed just so far as we have an object— fixed according to God, when we have Christ Himself before us. How can I love if I have nothing to love? A man is what he feels, and likes and thinks. If my soul lives and feeds upon that which is most excellent—Christ the bread of God, Christ becomes, in a practical sense, formed in the heart. In Him, the man Christ Jesus, God has had all His delight, and the display of it too.

Remark further, that in the accounts we have seen, divine power in the person of Jesus, the Son of man, is exercised in the midst of Israel. First, chapter 4:31-41, its triumph over the enemy's power in sicknesses and in demoniacal possessions, and the testimony of the kingdom, when all such effects of Satan's work should disappear. This last opens the way for the more positive and deeper blessing of souls, being put in relationship to God. Hence from chapter 5:1-26 (the call of Peter, the cleansing of the leper, and the pardon of the palsied man), it is a question of the state of the soul (whatever the outward accompaniments might be), of the authority of the word of the heart, of faith, and of Christ's

personal glory. Still it was grace in operation towards Israel; grace, if one may so speak, in government. To Israel God had said that He would not put upon them the plagues of Egypt, save for their sin. They were an outwardly elect, redeemed people, but they were under God's government; and hence chastening came, of which the leprosy and the palsy were peculiar samples. Jesus shews Himself to be "Jehovah that healeth thee," in the midst of Israel, though He was passing away from them into a wider display of power and goodness. He could have healed every one, leprous or paralytic; He could have removed all the diseases, now, alas! brought on the Israelites; but in these cases it is where they come to Him in quest of healing, that is, it is in answer to faith that He works. He was there, shewing divine power and grace in healing.

Verse 27, etc. But this grace, being of God and sovereign, could not be bounded by human circumstances. Wherever a want appeared to Him, could He gainsay His power or His love? Now, see how that connects itself with what follows. There was full deliverence for all who trusted in Israel, but He could not, and would not limit His grace. The law limited, but when Himself, the God who gave it, came, everybody who needs Him is welcome; His house is a house of prayer for all nations. Hence He calls a publican, a Jew indeed, but detested by the Israelites, and in a sense rightly, when viewed as the mark of their servitude nationally. A publican was one who profited by their Gentile masters, to extort money from Israel, and therefore naturally regarded with horror. But Jesus calls one named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom—calls him to be an apostle! Grace must act according to its

own rights. If God has been good to you and me, does that hinder His mercy and love to another? Grace creates the instrument it wants to act by; and it will flow farther than the publican yet, even to the most distant Gentile. True, Israel had the promises, the Gentile, strictly speaking, had none; but for that very reason it was more purely grace; and grace would act towards the Gentiles. The Lord Himself, God, was there, and Israel could not be the centre, nor the temple, when He was there, the despised Lord of both. He is the door, the new centre and turning-point of blessing; not a mere branch of the old vine, but Himself the true vine. As a Jew, He was subject to ordinances, but as the Lord, He is above them, and He breaks out beyond all the old restrictions.

“Levi made him a great feast in his own house, and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them; but their scribes and Pharisees murmured.” It was a terrible sight and blow to such. But Jesus answers, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” They mistook the Lord altogether: He came to shew how grace could deal with those who had no righteousness.

Verse 33, etc. He is now breaking, as it were, out of the old thing. He is faithful to Israel, but breaking up that order of things. How could they fast who owned the presence of the divine husband of Israel, the Messiah! The time was coming when the cross must be taken; but when the Bridegroom is there, fasting was out of place and season.

Verses 36-39. Further, the old garment cannot be patched with new cloth. Jesus would do no such thing as

tack on Christianity to Judaism. Flesh and law go together, but grace and law, God's righteousness and man's, will never mix. Neither can the new wine, the power of the Spirit, be put into the old legal ordinances without loss on all sides. A man accustomed to forms, human arrangement, fathers' religion, etc., never likes the new principle and power of the kingdom; he says, The old is better. Such is nature; grace is offensive to it. Nor does man improve in divine things. He can degrade himself and give up what his heart never relished. And this goes on rapidly to-day.

Chapter 6.

Here we have a most weighty thing spoken of—the sabbath. It is a question that often agitates the minds of men, and it was then specially important as closing Jewish relations. And this, it will be borne in mind, was just where the Lord had morally arrived at the close of the preceding chapter. The rights of His person and His grace, now becoming more rejected by the religionists, of Israel, reach out beyond the narrow bounds of that proud people. God thereon, by degrees, intimates the coming purpose of His mercy; His salvation in due time shall be sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear if the Jew judges himself unworthy of everlasting life. God will have His own joy of saving souls somewhere.

Now it is very evident that the incident of the cornfield (v. 1-5), "on the second sabbath after the first," thoroughly falls in with the object of the Spirit in hand. "The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." His person entitles Him to supremacy over that which was the sign of the covenant of the law. In the next case (v. 6-10) He asserts the right to do good on the sabbath-days, as His

adversaries on the same day shew their disposition to destroy.

The sabbath, in any real sense, man had entirely lost; indeed he had never entered into God's thoughts of rest. It was His rest, and had not sin spoiled all, man should have enjoyed that which was the result not of his own, but of God's labour. This is the proper character of that rest which belongs to man distinctively; but sin having come in, the necessity has arisen that God should work afresh, if man is ever to share the rest of God (Heb. 4). Meanwhile Christ has appeared and finished the work which God gave Him to do. Hence, we who believe, find rest in Christ, as does God Himself. In Him, by virtue of the accomplished and accepted work of redemption, we have our sabbath spiritually.

The day was set apart and hallowed from the beginning (Gen. 2). Afterwards it came in, first in grace to Israel, marked by the cessation of the manna, and a double portion to provide for that holy day (Exod. 16): and, secondly, as a part of the law of Sinai, and incorporated with every new and special dealing of Jehovah (chap. 20). (See also chap. 31:13, 14; 33:14; 34:21; and 35:2.) It was a memorial thenceforward of the deliverance out of Egypt (Deut. 5:15). Accordingly, the prophets expressly treat it as a sign of Israel's separation from all other nations unto God, and God's covenant with them (Ezek. 20:12-20; 22:8; 23:38; 44:24; Isa. 56, 58; Jer. 17:21-27.) But then, in the past, Israel, a sinful people, had the sabbath as a legal ordinance, and consequently are condemned by it as by all else.

Where is this covenant with Israel? All gone because of their iniquity. Hence they were thrown into the hands of

the Gentiles, and became slaves. “Behold we are servants this day; and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it; and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us, because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle at their pleasure, and we are in great distress” (Neh. 9:36, 37). If they had a temple after the captivity, it was only at the mercy of their Persian masters. The outward emblem lingered on, no doubt, and was especially made much to dishonour Him, of whom and whose work it was so significant; but where was its reality when Jesus was on earth? Alas! He lies in the grave all the day which His murderers kept as a day holy to Jehovah (“for that sabbath was a high day!”): awful testimony to the Jews of their position. Their own Messiah slain by His own people: such was the truth which that sabbath-day uttered to him who had ears to hear. Israel never had the rest of God. If Joshua had given them rest, etc. (Heb. 4). There remaineth therefore a rest. They must own Jesus first.

But the rejected Jesus was Son of man, and the Son of man was Lord of the sabbath (v. 5)—a truth of the utmost gravity, to be asserted with all strength. Those who confound the Lord’s day with the sabbath are in danger of forgetting this. It was the very point here in controversy with the Jews who maintained that the sabbath was superior to the Lord. But He shews that another new principle had come in, which wholly overleaped the old, and that to remain in the old was to have no deliverance. For there is no possibility for a lustful creature to be under a commandment that condemns lust, without being condemned. Grace,

however, has entered through a rejected Christ, and now there is rest for us who believe—not for those who are on the ground of law.

This is the reason why Christians keep the first day of the week, and not the seventh or sabbath day. The rest was acquired by the power of Christ's redemption, and the first day, when He arose from the dead, was that which proclaimed it to faith, spite of man's guilt and ruin. The seventh day will be the rest of man on earth; the first day celebrates Christ's taking us in Him to heaven. Then was life from the dead, life more abundantly, liberty from the law and every consequence of sin—in a word, the victory of grace. The Christian therefore has the first day distinctively, because it belongs to and witnesses of the perfected work of Christ, and consequently introduces heavenly rest. The first day is in contrast with the seventh, which appertained to the round of man's labour in nature and of the Jew's under the law, in which Adam and Israel utterly broke down. It is the Lord's day emphatically, and thus testifies of the triumph of Christ's word and the glory of His person—not the day which guilty unbelief would have perverted into the proof and means of His inferiority. It is positive, direct blessing to him who owns and honours it—not because it is the close of legal toil, but the commencement of Christian hope—the resurrection-day when we begin our spiritual life; and look on for what will crown so precious a pledge.

Here, however, the grand thing is the maintenance of the rights and the authority of the Son of man. You never can, according to God, raise up the title of the sabbath against the Lord of the sabbath.

Verses 3-5. What did David, the anointed of the Lord, when Saul persecuted him and sought his life? Was it of God, then, to uphold the ritual and so starve the man after His heart? No; the foundations were out of course, and everything became common in Israel when the chosen king was thus iniquitously rejected. But a greater One, and a graver sin, were now in their midst. The Son indeed, but the Root of David, God Himself was there; He who instituted the sabbath, its Lord, was there in the person of the Son of man.

Verses 6-10. But if God was there, would He deny His own goodness or restrain His power in presence of human misery, because “the scribes and Pharisees watched him whether he would heal on the sabbath-day?” Divine love must act and heal the withered hand, even if wretched man should seek to find therein an accusation. And they were filled with madness and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus (v. 11); but Jesus in those days retired to a mountain to pray. He drew near to God, to commune with Him what He was to do for them (v. 12). His was the activity of grace—of love displaying itself holily and mightily in the midst of evil.

Verses 13-16. “And when it was day he called his disciples,” etc. In this call He proves that He was the only One who could empower others to bear this testimony also: and yet here, as in all that passed before, He is the lowly dependent One—perfect man, as weH as God. He was in perfect unbroken communion with His God and Father, though Himself God manifest in the flesh. How blessedly near us this brings Him, though so infinitely above us! What He did, we should aim at, whatever our measure and our little sphere. In

Him we see man perfect in that place of power wherein He came.

He knew whom He chose. He knew that one of them had a devil; but He sent them out. Twelve He chose specially, whom also He called apostles, “sent ones.” It was an important and significant word, as quite a distinct thing from both law and promises. No one was sent out by law. Now God is active; He is sending His Son, and the Son is sending out apostles. The love of God is active in gathering souls. This first sent One is a man, really and truly. God’s work of His grace must be done by His Son: not by angels, but by His own Son, as the Man Christ Jesus, and He sends men out from Himself. The gathering point is Man—Himself of course. To Man God has committed all things. While it must be God who shews grace, the Son of man it is who comes on the mission of love, and sends out men to men.

Verses 17-19. Whatever He attracts by, He gathers round Himself to worship, surrounds Himself with them, and then comes down and stands in the plain. The great multitude are attracted by His miracles and their wants, coming to hear and be healed. The company of the disciples were an inner circle. “The whole multitude sought to touch him.” It is not said that they were converted, which is another thing; but living power went out of Him, healing their bodily misery and delivering from the power of Satan.

Verse 20, etc. He now lifts up His eyes on His disciples and speaks to them, not as in Matthew 5, etc., giving them the developed principles of the kingdom; but distinguishing those before Him as the remnant. Hence it is “ye” here. He puts seal and stamp on those actually

gathered round Himself. They are to be like Him. He is at once their centre and their pattern. He was God, but the fulness of the Holy Ghost dwelt in Him as man also; and so He could say, “I do always those things which please him.” So should it be with those around Him.

Verses 20-26. “Blessed [are] ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed [are] ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled. Blessed [are] ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you,” etc. These words of the Saviour give the contrast of those He pronounces blessed with all that are in ease in this world. Those who, if in this life only they had hope in Christ, would be of all men the most miserable, are the only happy few; they are severed from all others, and put in relationship with Him the source of blessing, to be blessed. If you can make yourselves happy and comfortable in this world which has rejected Jesus, count not on His blessing.

It is the poor, the despised with Jesus, who shall have the kingdom. He says, if we may so speak, “I am distinguishing you” (for there is no enunciation of abstract principles, as in the beginning of Matthew 5, but a speaking to the hearts of those gathered around Him). “I am come as the centre of power and active love. There is but one sole place of blessing on earth. With Me you are blessed.” Others may be gay and cheerful where Christ has no place; but it is a time when a true spiritual soul can get no good save with Christ. It is a definite distinction of, and address to, the disciples who attached themselves to Him. This is made clear in verse 22, where the persecution for righteousness, which Matthew carefully records, is omitted. Here it is only a question of suffering “for the Son of man’s sake.”

In the midst of a world of misery and selfishness there came One who displayed not law nor judgment, but grace. But the light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. Like the adder that hears nothing, the world goes on as deaf as it is blind. No; you who are "full," now Jesus has no charm for you; but you, disciples, are weeping now—the sorrow and the sin of man distress your spirit: you shall rejoice. When God has His way, you, who cannot be satisfied with the husks, shall be filled. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. You have your portion with Christ here, you shall have it with Christ in heaven. You suffer with the suffering One, you shall have glory with the glorified One. But the others!—they shall have what they seek. For the full there shall be a famine by-and-by, for they have lost God. If you can laugh in such a world as this, you shall weep when God's time for blessing comes. They are of the world, and the world loves its own. "So did their fathers to the false prophets." Are the times altered? Is Christ's character changed? It is not a whit more agreeable to the flesh. And if you can find your joy, ease, and pleasure in the world, Christ could not, and you have not His Spirit. He that will be its friend is the enemy of God. Can the disciples of Jesus be merry and gay in a world which has sin wrapped up in it? There is communion with Jesus, joy in the Spirit, while patient in tribulation; but this is quite another thing. It is a serious joy, though very real and blessed.

From verse 27 He shews what must be the conduct of the disciples as such. They were to manifest God, to be the unfolding of what was displayed in Him. Grace

which was in Him in fulness and perfection should be reproduced in them, sadly as we all fail in this—the principle of our path. “Love your enemies,” etc. God loved us when we were His enemies, and we have now to shew practically what God is. Verse 29 brings us into entirely human circumstances, patiently learning in them: or, as in 1 Peter 2, doing well, suffering for it, and taking it patiently. This may seem poor comfort. But Jesus did so, and love must so manifest itself in an evil world. The time comes when God will judge, instead of bearing long as now; but now, at whatever cost to self, shew love as Christ did. Flesh can love for love (v. 32, 33), but the disciples of Christ are called to imitate God, and walk in love. “Love ye your enemies, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.”

What a blessed character of God comes out here! It is not righteousness, though surely there was that; but in the world where God had to do with the unthankful and evil, He shews grace. For the angels He has not grace, but love: but Christ in this world of sin is grace (that is, love to those who deserve it not). “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful,” It is not “with” but “as your Father.” As He loves His enemies, so do you; He is merciful, be ye also merciful. In all this, God’s character is displayed—perfect love in a world of sinners. It must cost us something; it cost the life of Christ. His love was a stream, which, if it met with hindrances in its way, only went on flowing over, and leaving them behind till it reached the cross.

Verse 37. This is not certain things required in order to get life, but the result of certain conduct shewn. “Judge

not, and ye shall not be judged," etc. As though He had said, You will find the consequences of your conduct as Christ did. He took the lowest place, but He has got the highest now. He humbled Himself; "wherefore God also hath highly exalted him," etc. He came not to judge, and now "all judgment is committed to the Son." Thus we not only have the display of grace, but divine character meeting its consequences. It is a question of government —of walking with the Lord; it must cost a great deal in the path, but in the end it will be "full measure, pressed down," etc. There will be God's blessing too in the way; though self is mortified. Grace will abound according to God's way.

Verse 39. See the contrast of those who are utter blindness, and the blind leading the blind. You must let them alone; leave them to go on their own way; but you have to take your place with Me; and the disciple is not above his master, but you shall be as your Master. If your Master suffers, you suffer; if it has cost your Master much, it may cost you much. If Christ teaches you, it is to make you possess the divine learning that He has Himself. And see what a place He gives us! When He gives, what does He give? The very same that He has Himself. "As he is, so are we in this world." "Not as the world giveth," which, if it gives a little, reserves the chief for itself; but as though He said, "I am putting you in the very same learning that is in My nature: the grace that I have you are to have." But people do not like to do those things that Jesus did.

Why is there so much argument about that one passage, "resist not evil"? It is because you like to resist evil. Your will is touched, your conscience is reached; for it is given you as matter-of-fact exhortation; but you do not

like it, and you will rid of it if you can. These things are given as tests for the conscience; they judge the eye, not the path only. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” The object is wrong, if you have not light for the step. There may be difficulties in going up a steep hill, but if the object before you is clear, you get over them as quickly as you can. This is what is meant by the expression, “This one thing I do,” Phil. 3:13. It is having one object, and the mind intent on accomplishing it. If it is so with you, there will be sure to be light in the path—light, not for ten years hence, but for this one step that is before you, and then for the next. It was said to Moses, “Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward”; and when they were out in the wilderness, the pillar was given to be their constant guide. So with us; we are called out to go after Christ on the principle of obedience, and this puts us into connection with Him in the revelation of His will, not giving us to see all the path onwards. A man may see a wall, and say, “I cannot go that way: there is a wall,” while, if he but takes a single step, he will find that there is a path all down by the side of the wall.

Verse 44. “Every tree is known by his own fruit.” Not only bearing fruit, but fruit that Christ produces should be ours. There is fruit that an upright nature produces, such as that of the young man who came to Jesus, but this was not divine fruit—” its own fruit “; and where Christ is the root and the stock, it is Christian fruit, that is, fruit that will remain (John 15:16). Two men may go together up to a certain point, and then some test for Christ comes; one goes on with Him, and the other turns aside. “Its own fruit”— fruit shews itself, springs of itself. There will not be the question of, What harm in

this or that? What harm in being rich? as a person once asked me. If it shuts you out of heaven, is there any harm in that? Oh, I did not think of that! But the secret is, that you like the things. The evil is not the things themselves dug out of the earth, but the love in the heart for them. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” An impatient word betrays the heart. A blow I may restrain and yet utter the word.

Verse 47. In the hearing of all the multitude the Lord speaks now about the house built upon the rock, etc. This is not a question about building upon Christ, the Rock, for the salvation of the sinner. It is the path of the saint. But where Christ’s word does connect with Himself, see the result. The very thing people are called upon to do is to follow Him; and when I follow, it proves that the Master’s words have taken such hold upon my soul that they have power to carry me over the difficulties. “My soul folioweth hard after thee.” A man’s affections, heart, will, are taken and connected with Christ, instead of with himself. Is Christ sufficiently precious to make me leave all beside and follow Him, to do those things that please Him? “If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, but shall have the light of life.” “As when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.” Keeping close to Christ, the light shines upon us. If we have to get into the light, we may be dazzled by it. Thus He has gathered round Himself in light and love, set out in those words, those whom He will have to enjoy Himself, and be as their Master, at length to be conformed to His image in glory.

Chapter 7.

We have seen the Lord, rejected by Israel, gradually, in virtue of His person and rights, breaking out beyond the ancient limits, and gathering the remnant round Himself, the new and only just object of God, the source of a mission in grace, and the full development and exemplification of holy love in an evil world; for, whatever the principles laid down in chapter 6, they are but the expression of God's character in grace, as displayed in Christ here below.

In accordance with this, we have now (v. 1-10) the case of the centurion, and a very full and striking one it is. It is not merely an act of grace, but grace to a Gentile. Nor is this all. The principle on which the apostle rests this question is brought out. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace, that the promise might be sure to all the seed." Faith, as the great turning-point, is introduced. It was no mere theory; it was living faith, and such faith as had not been seen in Israel. Neither was there presumption, but, on the contrary, remarkable humility. He recognised the honour God had put upon His people; he sees, holds to it, owns and acts upon it, spite of their low and debased, and, in every other respect, unworthy condition. Despised and failing as they might be, he loved the Jews as God's people, and for His sake, and he had built them a synagogue. Unfeigned lowliness was his, though (yea, rather, for) his faith was far beyond those he honoured. Consequently he had a very high apprehension of the power and glory of the person of Christ as divine, reaching out beyond Jewish thoughts altogether. He does not refer to the Lord as Messiah, but recognised in Him the power of God in love. This was blessed faith, which forgets itself in the exaltation of its

object. He had not seen Jesus, it would seem, but assuredly gathered from what he “heard,” that diseases were nothing to Him but occasions wherein to display His absolute authority and His sovereign mercy. He was a stranger, and the Jews were God’s people; must not they or their elders be the fittest to bring this wonderful person? For he confided in His mercy as well as His power, and his servant, “dear unto him,” was sick and ready to die. He needed Jesus.

“Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.” There was surely the deepest personal respect and affection. Untaught as he might be in other things, he strongly felt the excellency of Christ’s person, and here again with humility correspondent to the measure in which His glory was seen. This message of the centurion’s friends admirably depicts his character and feeling. He told nothing to Jesus of his service to the Jews, spoke of nothing personal save his unworthiness, and this so consistently, that he begged Jesus not to come to his house, as unworthy to receive Him. There was in this soul the exact opposite of doing Christ an honour, by believing on Him, and far from him was the pretence of receiving Christ to set himself up; both alas! found often elsewhere. The simplicity of his heart is as apparent as his strong faith. There -was none such in Israel, and yet it was in one who loved Israel. It was a lesson of grace, in every way, for the crowd that followed Jesus—for us too most surely.

Along with grace to the Gentiles came the evidence of power to raise the dead, but here it was manifested in human sympathies, in witness that God had visited His people (v. 11-17). It was the power of resurrection, a power which was yet to be shewn more gloriously, and to be the source of that which is new for man according to God—the God who raiseth the dead. It was another and wondrous proof that He is here going, in the character of His action, without the sphere of the law and its ordinances. “For the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth”: what can it avail for one who is dead? “But what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful fllesh,” Rom. 8:3. It was grace, indeed, and divine energy, but withal displayed in One who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And how astonishingly all the details bring this out! The dead man was “the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.” “And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not… And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.” How exquisitely human, and withal how unmistakably divine!

It is manifest that these two cases illustrate the change which the Spirit is attesting in this part of Luke. Nor is it otherwise with the scene that follows, which brings out in fact the hinge of the dispensation. The Lord bears witness to John Baptist, not John to the Lord. John sends two of his disciples, on the report of the Lord’s miracles, to learn from Himself who He is. Are we surprised? He had preached and baptized in the confession of sins and in faith of the coming Messiah. But now all was changed. John was in prison, not delivered, and it was

no longer a people preparing for the Lord. Was it not strange? At any rate John sought a plain answer, and well could he trust the word of One who did such mighty and holy works. But what a comment upon the marvellous change was this very inquiry! It was a sort of turning over the disciples of John to the Lord. “And in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities, and plagues, and evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way and tell John,” etc. At the same time, if He receives no longer testimony from John, He bears it to him, owning John and his work. But they were owned from a higher ground where the Lord in grace and resurrection power had placed Himself; and this was based on entire rejection in and by the world, so that, though He was doing all good, still it was “blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.” Hence in the very verse where the Lord recognises in the fullest way John the Baptist, He marks the change about to take place—“he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” Happy they who justified God in being baptized of John—wretched the self-righteous who rejected His counsel against themselves. Wisdom is justified of all her children. They understand the ways of God, whether in the servant or the Lord. The ways are quite different, but understood in grace. This generation alas! understands none, finds fault with all. John is too righteous for them, Jesus is too gracious. The mourning of the one and the piping of the other are utterly distasteful. Such is man’s wisdom before the ways of God. But the children of wisdom justify wisdom notwithstanding.

And in spite of the perverseness of men, our Lord did not stop manifesting Himself to the world. Accordingly a tale follows (v. 36-50) which shews how God's wisdom is justified by and in those who own it in Jesus. It is a tale of grace, of pure, plenary, pardoning grace, which rests not till its object is dismissed in perfect peace. Jesus is in the Pharisee's house, who failed entirely in the essential point: Simon perceived not the glory of Christ. In this the Lord meets him, and shews, in contrast with the woman "which was a sinner," the point where this Pharisee was exercising judgment to be precisely that wherein he failed. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. What if the despised Jesus were not a prophet only, but a Saviour of poor lost sinners? Ah, God was unknown—that was the secret. The converted soul sees the glory of the Lord as grace towards itself; he who is unconvinced, however interested humanly, judges according to his own thoughts, and therefore necessarily fails to see the glory which is not according to these thoughts. Man's judgment of the gospel must be wrong therefore; his reception of it, as grace, is alone right, and alone the way of coming to the knowledge of it.

This was, then, a direct and distinct example of God's ways. It was a forgiving of sins in grace, sovereignly and freely, to any poor sinner, manifesting and producing love in the forgiven, who loves God, because God is love, and this in respect of his sins, in Jesus the Lord. It was proper grace— the ground on which any one, a Gentile or not, would be received, and God manifested not in requirement from man (and so making man in the flesh of importance) but making God all, and His character in sovereign grace, so bringing in blessing and its blessed

effect upon the heart, developing the fruits of grace in a heart restored to confidence in God by the sense of His goodness.

What a blessed picture! Goodness known not only in the act, but in Him who did it. The discernment of guilt in its gross forms by man was one thing, but the grace of God which could blot out and forgive all was quite another. It was not Christ there to judge, and to sanction Pharisees, but love to a sinner, manifesting God in this new character of grace, producing thankful holy love to God, and a blessed relationship, sovereign and beyond the reach of man. But how has God always to prove Himself right in His goodness to man! so hard is man's heart. But the Lord identifies Himself with the believer, and vindicates him against the haughty world, and this gives assurance. Perfectly regardless of comments, He applies Himself, not to unbelief, which were useless, but to those who have faith, and having communicated forgiveness, shews the soul his uprightness, that is, the right thoughts of God and self which faith has. The last word settles the whole question. The soul's love was a ground of evidence and reasoning—not, of course, the cause. "Thy faith hath saved thee, said the Lord to the woman, Go in peace." All is discharged from the conscience, and the heart finds itself infinitely and everlastingly a debtor to the continual fountain of all grace.

Chapter 8.

We have seen, in what has preceded, the Lord presenting Himself, by His words and His work, as a new centre, to which and round which His people were gathered. Before this, Jehovah had been the centre,

when Israel was the gathering point; for Jehovah was among the Jews, and the temple the place where He met with the people. But now the Son is here, “God manifest in the flesh,” and He must be the centre of everything. But Israel would not be gathered, as the Lord Himself said in Matthew 23:37, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, … but ye would not.” Again in Isaiah 65:2, “I have spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people.”

Israel could not have the blessing, for the flesh could not hold it. The flesh, simply looked at as such, is “as grass “(Isaiah 40). “All flesh is grass.” We have these two great principles running through the latter chapters of Isaiah; first that flesh, as flesh, could not hold the blessing, and be the depository for the promises. For when all grace came, in the person of the Lord, the people to whom He was sent He found withered down like grass. “Surely the people is grass: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” But God was not going to give up His purpose. Therefore in chapter 49 we find Jehovah says unto Christ, “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” Then Christ says, If God is to be glorified in Israel, “I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought, and in vain, yet surely my judgment is with Jehovah, and my reward with my God.” Then saith Jehovah, “Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorified in the eyes of Jehovah. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

This is what Christ is becoming in Luke’s Gospel— “a light to lighten the Gentiles,” etc. And afterwards we find Paul quoting, with the perfect accuracy of the Spirit, this very scripture, so exactly fitted for them, to

the Jews at Antioch. “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you, but seeing ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles,” etc. (Acts 13:46, 47: and again, Acts 28:28). Israel will be gathered afterwards, for Christ will hereafter raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel; but before this He turns to the Gentiles. All this the Lord pictures to us in Luke. In chapter 7 we see Israel refused both John the Baptist and Christ; but “wisdom is justified of her children.” The Pharisees and lawyers did not justify God at all, for they saw no beauty in Jesus, whereas the publicans did; and thus the poor woman, “who was a sinner,” whose heart was touched by the grace of God, is the true child of wisdom, and is brought in here as an illustration of Christ being the new centre of blessing, “though Israel be not gathered.”

The Lord then goes on with His testimony, gathering by the word, first, by parables, as in chapter 8, and then in chapter 9 sending forth His disciples to preach, with this commission, to shake off the dust from their feet, if they are not received, a token of the last testimony being rendered, when they are given up.

Here are two classes of persons gathered round Christ. First, the twelve apostles were public witnesses, fitted by divine grace to be the vessels of testimony, manifesting the electing power of God in calling them, and sending them forth in all the energy of ministry; Christ’s apostles, sent out by Himself— “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” —His chosen ones. “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,” etc. Then, secondly, there were others who were gathered by affection round Him, having no place of office in the

church, but those whose hearts were touched and drawn round Him, not sent out like the first class, but not less devoted in heart than the apostles, for they followed Him and ministered to Him of their substance.

In verses 4-8 we have the parable of the sower; and here, as previously remarked, it is not the kingdom brought out as in Matthew, but the testimony as to what and whom Christ was gathering, and not as to the form the kingdom would take afterwards. The very fact of Christ coming as the sower proved that Israel was set aside; for had it been now to Israel as His vineyard, He must have come seeking fruit from the vine He had long before planted. He had come to Israel previously, seeking fruit and finding none. He now comes in the new character of the sower, which is quite another thing. He comes into a waste world, where there was nothing, and He begins a fresh work. God is not now looking for fruit from man in one sense, because man has been proved to be a bad tree: and the more you dig about and dung a bad tree, the more bad fruit it produces. “A tree is known by its fruits.” Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. ‘ God is now going to produce the fruit He requires. He is not now looking for man to produce anything, for John the Baptist said, “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” Therefore the Lord now comes as sower, not looking for fruit, but doing that which will produce it.

He then goes on to describe the character and effect of the sowing, and the disciples ask the meaning of the parable (v. 9-15). Israel, as such, had forfeited its place, and therefore was “a people of no understanding” (Isa. 27:11). Long patience had waited on Israel. Seven

hundred years had passed since the word was given to Isaiah, “Go tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not.” As individuals they might be drawn round the person of the Lord, but as a nation they were blinded. The disciples had an explanation of the parable, but as a nation the Lord speaks to them in parables (see v. 10), thus fulfilling to the nation the very words spoken by the prophet so long before. Now the testimony is closed as to Israel, though not as to God’s final purpose respecting them.

The seed is sown indiscriminately, and although man rejects it, because his will is opposed, nevertheless it is sown in his heart; for this parable shews how the word of God is perfectly adapted to the need of man, meeting his conscience and heart. “Never man spake like this man.” Christ’s word came with a power that reached the heart and affections; the will is corrupt and therefore resists it. It is not abstract grace here, but the condition of man that is recognised; therefore we find the word so perfectly suited to the need, not claiming righteousness from man, but coming in with power to shew him that he is a sinner, and laying open the thoughts and intents of the heart. When the heart is thus detected, the word comes, with all gentleness and comfort, for healing and rest, because there is grace to meet a soul in whatever state it may be found. The heart is spoken to, and therefore the gospel leaves man without excuse.

Some too received the word with joy (v. 13). This was a proof that the conscience was untouched; for when that is reached it is anything but joy, until forgiveness is known. The feelings may be moved for a time, and the word be listened to with a joy which will give place to sorrow. The reason truth is thus flippantly taken up with

joy is because there is no root, and so it is received in joy, and given up in trouble.

Another class is where thorns spring up and choke the word. The understanding may be convinced and receive the truth; but the cares, pleasures, and riches of this world come in and choke the word. Now these “cares” are most subtle things, because they enter as necessary duties, and there is no sin in doing one’s duty. Nay, it is right that a man should do his duty in his daily calling. But if these duties choke the word, and a man loses his soul through it, what then? The natural tendency of the heart often needs to be met with that word, “Take heed and beware of covetousness” (chap. 12). It is the love of possession. One came to the Lord, saying, “Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.” The heart wanted to keep it. If love of the world or covetousness gets in amongst the saints, it is an insidious thing and most difficult to meet, because it is often not open to discipline; and yet, if covetousness slips into the heart, it checks the power of Christ over the soul and conscience, and eats out the practical life of the Christian, and his soul is withered, withered, withered. It may be checked by the power of God coming in; but this covetous care about earthy things is so subtle that, while there is nothing on which to lay the hand, the practical power of Christian life in the soul is gone, though of course, I need hardly say, eternal life can never be lost in those who once had it.

“That on the good ground are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” They may seem to the world to be fruits bright and blessed, but if people have not got Christ they tire. There will be no enduring,

unless Christ has possession of the soul; but if He has, there will be an abiding motive, and people will go on, and "bring forth fruit with patience." They that hear and keep it go steadily on, having their motive for action in the Lord. Trouble may come in, in the church; disappointment may arise, even from brethren; but they go on just the same, because they have got Christ before them: for the word they have heard and keep connects them with Christ, and He is more than anything else.

This is a question, not of eternal salvation, but of the practical effect of the word as seen in this world (v. 16-18)— the growth of the word in the soul, and that will not be hidden under a bushel. "Ye are the light of the world" and "the salt of the earth." In those who only appear to be Christians it soon comes to nothing. "Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he seerr.eth to have." But those in whom the word works effectually are to be as a "candle" set on a candlestick. Israel being set aside for a season, God sets up a new light in the world; a light lit up by God because of the world's darkness. When Christ was here He was the light of the world, because of its darkness, and now we should be a light in the world, as we are "light in the Lord." The light is here set up by Christ's word, and people are responsible for the word received. Suppose you have heard the word and bring forth no fruit, it will all come out, by-and-by, that you have heard the word and lost it, and the spiritual power accompanying it. For, even if you are saints, all that you have heard without fruit or power resulting therefrom, it will come out; for nothing is hid that shall not be known or come abroad. "Take heed how ye hear."

Christ is looking for the results of His sowing. There must be not only the hearing, but the possessing, and in this rests the responsibility; for if you keep the word which you have heard, more shall be given you. If, on hearing, I possess that which I hear, not merely have joy in receiving it, but possess it as my own, then it becomes a part of the substance of my soul, and I shall get more; for when the truth has become a substance in my soul, there is a capacity for receiving more. Suppose, for example, you hear the truth of the Lord's second coming and see your portion in the bride of Christ, and you do not lay hold of it practically, so as to possess it (have communion with God about it, which is possession); you will presently lose the expectation of His coming and forget your place of separation from the world, and the truth will gradually slip away, because you are not holding it in your soul before God. Consequently your soul becomes dead and dull, and you lose the very truth you have received.

Thus, if one lives daily as waiting for the Lord from heaven, there will be no planning for the future, no laying up for the morrow; such a man will learn more and more, as other truths will open round this one grand central one, and he will be kept in the truth. If, on the other hand, he drops this centre truth by saying, "He cannot come yet; so many things must happen first," then is the progress of such an one's communion with God hindered, for, as we have said, it is according to what a man has heard and holds with God that there can be any growth; for what is the use of teaching me that the Lord may come to-morrow, if I am going on living as though He were not coming for a hundred years? Or where is the comfort and blessedness of the truth to my

soul, if I am saying in my heart, “My Lord delayeth his coming?” Though I cannot lose my eternal life, yet if I am losing the truth and light I have had, I shall be merely floating on in the current of life, half world and half Christ, and all power of Christian life will be dimmed in my soul. If the truth is held in communion with God, it separates to Himself. Truth is to produce fruit, and you have no truth that does not bear fruit. Truth must build up the soul. “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.” Christ becomes precious in and by the truth that I learn; and if it has not that power, it all drops out, comes to nothing, and is taken away. If Christ is precious to me, I shall be waiting for Him with affection, and if it is not so, the bare truth will soon be given up.

Verses 19-21. Here He closes up His connection with Israel after the flesh, for the relations of mother and brethren put Him into connection with Israel after the flesh. Observe, He here distinguishes the remnant by the word “these,” as He did in chapter 6 by the word “ye.” His mother and His brethren came to Him on the ground of natural relationship only; and there was all natural affection in the Lord, as on the cross we find Him remembering His mother, and commending her to the care of John. But He replies here, as much as to say, “I am not on that ground now—my mother and my brethren are these, which hear the word of God and do it.” Israel was now given up as to that position, the Lord owning and acknowledging only those to be His relations on whose hearts and consciences the word of God had taken effect. It was not what was found in nature, but what was produced by grace, and, being thus produced by power through the word, the principle

is hereby established, that it might go out to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, although not fully brought out until after His resurrection. In these three verses we have a judicial sentence on Israel, which closes in verse 21.

In verses 22-26 it is a parabolical display of what we may expect if we follow the Lord, and the opening out of what the Lord would be to those tried by such circumstances. The consequence of being the disciples and companions of Jesus is that they get into jeopardy every hour—they are not on terra firma, but are tossed about on the troubled sea, and Christ Himself absent ("asleep"). There came down a storm of wind on the lake, the ship was filled with water, and they filled with fear were in jeopardy. But the fact was, Christ was in the same boat with them. He who made the worlds, the Son of God, was with them, and yet they are afraid! and cry out, "we perish"; as though He could be drowned, thus shewing they had no sense of who He was that was with them in the boat. To us, now calmly reading the circumstances, what absurdity there seems in such unbelief; when alas! is it not just the same with ourselves, spiritually? Have we no sense of jeopardy, when tossed about, and trouble is in the church? In truth we have, for there is many a heart saying, "Who will shew us any good?" forgetting what God is acting and doing, though man is battling to all appearance against God's purposes; but God is not baffled, and He is calmly carrying on His purposes, through all the storms of men's or devils' raising. In John 16 we find the disciples sorrowing because Jesus was going away; and the Lord had said to them (chap. 14), "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father." In

chapter 16 Jesus says, “Now I go my way to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? but because I have said these things, sorrow hath filled your hearts.” God was accomplishing His blessed purposes in redemption by Christ’s going. You forget that God is acting in all this, for you cannot suppose that God is so baffled as to give up His purpose. The disciples thought, when Jesus was crucified, that all their hopes were disappointed; they say, “we thought it had been he that should have redeemed Israel.” In fact, in that very act and at that very moment, all was being accomplished for them. Where is the Lord going? should have been their question. It is not now that there seems no jeopardy, no confusion, no sorrow; but faith looks at and through it all to God, and asks, What is the Lord doing? Where is the Lord going?

In and through all the trouble the Lord has not turned a hair’s-breadth out of His way. We may be in distress, but faith will not say the Lord is far away, but will know Him nigh at hand. The Lord let them be in jeopardy, the ship filled with water, and Himself asleep, on purpose to put their faith to the test, to prove if they were really trusting Him; and that it might be seen if such foolish thoughts would arise, when they were put into jeopardy. They say, “Lord, we perish”; but they were in the ship with Christ, and could they be drowned? He said to them, Where is your faith? Well might He say thus to them, for though the water was in the boat, He was there too, and could sleep through it all. It was not so much of Him they were thinking as of themselves. “We perish” (said they), and it is just the same now; for the fact of being in danger with Christ in the boat is the same at one time as at another—just as impossible now

as then; and in truth Christ is much more with us now, being more perfectly revealed to us, and we are united to Him, one with Him, so that He is with us every moment in the power of the Spirit.

However high the waves may rise, there is no drowning His love and thoughts towards us. The test is to our faith. The question is, Have we that faith which so realises Christ's presence as to keep us as calm and composed in the rough sea as the smooth? It was not really a question of the rough or the smooth sea, when Peter was sinking in the water, for he would have sunk without Christ, just as much in the smooth as in the rough sea. The fact was, the eye was off Jesus on the wave, and that made him sink. If we go on with Christ, we shall get into all kinds of difficulty, many a boisterous sea; but being one with Him, His safety is ours. The eye should be off events, although they be ever so solemn, and surely they are so at this present time, and I feel them to be so; for none perhaps has a deeper sense than I of the growth of evil, and of the solemn state of things; but I know all is as settled and secure as if the whole world were favourable. I quite dread the way many dear saints are looking at events, and not looking at Christ and for Christ. The Lord Himself is the security of His people, and, let the world go on as it may, no events can touch Christ. We are safe on the sea if only we have the eye off the waves, with the heart concentrated on Christ and on the interests of Christ. Then the devil himself cannot touch us.

Verse 26. We have a solemn picture of the consequence of Christ's rejection by the world! Christ comes and finds them utterly under the power of the devil. A man of the Gadarenes was possessed, but He delivers him, thus

shewing that the Lord had complete power over the enemy. With a word from Christ the demons were off. “The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.” What was the effect of His thus casting out Satan? Why, the whole multitude of the country round about “besought him [Christ] to depart from them.” These Gadarenes, who had borne with the demons because they could not help it, will not bear with Christ, and they beg Him to depart! Man would be glad to bind Legion if he could, for he does not like the effects of the devil’s power; but man’s will is against Christ; he has a deliberate determined hatred to Christ. The Lord came to the world full of love and power, to deliver from the consequences of sin; but man rejeaed Him, cast Him out; and God will not stay where the will is determined against Him. When the Gadarenes request Christ to depart, He immediately went up into a ship and returned back again. And mark, the world in which we live is just going on as having quietly rejected Christ. But does God give them up, though Christ is gone away for a season? No, He did not give them up, but sent amongst them this man, whom He had healed, to tell them what great things God had done for him. This is what the disciples did in the world, and the delivered remnant also are to tell the world what great things God has done for them.

The swine appear to represent the state of the Jews after their rejection of Christ. The Lord, doubtless, permitted the demons to enter the swine (as the swine having no passions of their own, it was their being possessed with these demons which made them run violently to destruction), shewing it was not merely the evil passions in the men, but their being possessed by

wicked spirits, which hurried them on to destruction. And we know historically, from Josephus and others, that one can hardly conceive the infatuation with which the Jews rushed on to their own destruction, when those Gentile powers went and ploughed up the holy city. This is just a consequence of Israel's rejecting the Lord.

Then the Lord gives us two other pictures, through the medium of real events, of His dealings in deliverance. In verse 41 we have Jairus' daughter, who lay a-dying; and here is a picture (dispensationally) of Israel. The Lord was going to heal Israel, who was just like one dying, but while in the way the people throng Him. What He came to do He did, for the world crowded Him while on the way to heal the sick "daughter of my people"; whosoever could touch Him by faith got healing, the activities of grace going forth from Him.

Jairus' daughter "lay a-dying." Man was not pronounced to be dead until Christ was killed. Before Christ came, there was no healing for man. Abraham longed for the day of Christ. There were prophets who spoke of Christ as a healer, blessing was promised, but there was no physician. "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? "There was none; for no physician could be found to heal man's condition until Christ came, and Him they put to death. In Him there was living power, for when the people thronged Him, a woman does but touch the border of His garment, and virtue goes out of Him to heal her. Healing depended not on the condition of those who were healed, but in the power of the healer. Physicians might apply remedy after remedy, but it is of no avail, until One came who could impart life; then the case was changed.

When the multitude press upon Him, and He recognises the touch of one to have been the touch of faith, He says, “somebody has touched me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.” And now, before the Lord comes forth in resurrection power and glory, to bring life from the dead in Israel, there is perfect healing where there is faith; for the Lord is always alive to the exercise of faith. The woman hid herself, for there was shame in her, because of the consciousness she felt of the disease which had needed to be healed. “But she could not be hid.” The heart always shrinks from opening itself, when within itself; but when it looks at Christ, it is opened to Him; for that is always the effect of being in the presence of Jesus. Shame, reputation, character, all give way before the sense of what He is. When grace gets to the bottom of the heart, all else is easily set aside. A link was formed between this woman’s soul and Christ. “Thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace.” He brings perfect peace and comfort into her heart, for His way is not only to heal, but to make Himself known. She is not only to be cured, but to have the assurance of peace from His own mouth.

Meanwhile they come, saying that Jairus’ daughter was dead; “Trouble not the master.” They thought He might possibly heal her, while she was living; but now she is dead, they supposed He could do nothing. This is a picture of Israel, who are dead before God (as are Gentiles too, of course). But Jesus encourages them, and says, “Only believe and she shall be made whole.” When He came to the house, He suffered no man to go in, save Peter and James and John (the pillars of the future glory, when He will come forth as the resurrection and the life

to the dead nation), and the father and the mother of the maiden.

In this chapter we get a picture of what was then doing, and what will come to pass. We have the seed, the word sown, and the effect of it, the use man made of it. We have God's explanation of all that was going on, as being all known and settled in His mind; and if a storm arise, and if Christ appear asleep and insensible to the danger —though "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" —as disciples we are in the same boat with Him. The Lord gives us to rest on that with undivided undistracted hearts: for Christ is in the boat, as well as the water. Only let the eye of faith rest on Christ, then come what may, we shall say, "Who shall separate us," etc.—nay, in all, "more than conquerors." Then the more the trouble, the more the blessing, because of the exercise of faith.

Chapter 9.

After the Lord had given a picture, as it were, of all that was going on in chapter 8, He raises the question in chapter 9 as to who He was, and He tells His disciples some should see His glory; for the mount of transfiguration shews what the glory of the kingdom would be. Peter speaks of the power and coming, "when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory … when we were with him in the holy mount." But it is a closing testimony at that time, though the glory would come; and as a signal that it was, the disciples were to shake off the dust from their feet, when they were not received. It is interesting to mark all the circumstances which bring out the fact of its being the Lord Himself there, and a test to Israel. He worked miracles, and

could confer on others the power, as we have seen. Now we find another thing—He is committing the power to several together, giving to those men, a number of them together, power and authority over the demons, and not only entrusting it to whom He pleases individually.

Three things we have noticed in connection with the testimony of the Son of man; 1, the testimony of God to Him; 2, the misery of man set aside by Him; and 3, demons cast out, so proving that it was really the Lord visiting this world in grace and power. There will be the display of power by-and-by; but He was bringing in, in His own person, the manifestation of that which will be then full and perfect, so being an earnest of the powers of the world to come, alluded to in Hebrews. This was not redemption, but the exercise of power in dealing with the enmity of man against Himself, and they would not have Him in this way.

Verse 3, etc. He is sending out His disciples, and in so doing He disposes of all their circumstances. While He was with them, He supplied them with everything—they lacked nothing. The power of the Lord was there to take care of them, wherever they were. Afterwards, when He was going to leave them, He tells them to take a sword. They would have to shift for themselves, as it were: but while He was with them He was their shelter, etc. As in the demand for the ass to ride into Jerusalem, He proves His authority royal and divine altogether— “the Lord hath need of him.” The disciples depart, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere. Then comes the question of who He was: He would have the conscience awakened about Him. There are two things in man brought out by the question—curiosity is excited on the one hand, and perplexity and dismay on the other.

Verses 7-9. He goes on, and wherever there is an ear to hear, He ministers to them according to the grace of the kingdom.

Verses 11, 12. The disciples ask Him to send the multitude away. Let them go and get lodging. No, says the Lord, “give ye them to eat.” He does not now say He would feed them, but He is committing to others the same power as He had Himself, and He would exercise their faith in what He could do by them. This applies to the church now. Faith uses the power that is in the Head. “Give ye them to eat.” What He expected was for faith to exercise His divine power, that which they saw in Him. We should be so reckoning on the power in the Head. The Lord was trying their faith in Him, “Give ye them to eat.” But no; they had no faith; they began to reckon on their resources— “We have no more but five loaves and two fishes.” So it is with us. No faith! Memory is not faith. “He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can he give bread also?” He gave us water, but can He give us food? We know He has done that one thing, but can He do this other thing today ^ We want to count on the energy of the Lord’s love, and expect Him to be interested for us. When He said, “Give ye them to eat,” they should have expected He would give them the power. Jehovah was amongst them, exercising His own power; but we see in their answer the horrid principle of unbelief. Unbelief shuts out God, and limits itself to what it sees— “except we go and buy meat,” etc. “He made them all sit down by fifties in a company. And they did eat and were filled.” It was said in Psalm 132, “I will satisfy her poor With bread,” and here He was doing it. This was said of their King, and He had chosen Zion; He had desired it

for His habitation. He was here giving a sign that He was the One to accomplish this blessing, for He was feeding their poor with bread. He was not only sending out the power through His disciples, but Himself among them; not only as a man, a messenger, but as it is said in Hebrews, “the word began to be spoken by the Lord.” He was the Apostle. There were others sent afterwards, but He Himself was there first as their Apostle. It is a solemn thing to think that the Lord has really visited this world! He has come and presented Himself first to His people Israel, but they would not have Him. It shews us what the world is we are in. God is now dealing with it in grace, though His Son has been rejected. “Twelve baskets of fragments.” Just observe, in passing, that the number twelve is significant of power exercised in the way of government—twelve apostles, twelve gates to the city in Revelation.

Hitherto we have been looking at Christ presenting Himself among the people as Jehovah, the Messiah; we now see Him as the dependent man praying. He was Immanuel, God with us; Son of David; Son of man. He was to be all. Then the question is started among the disciples, who He was. Some said one thing, and some another; but Peter said, “the Christ of God.” Upon this, He charges them to tell no man that thing. There was faith, however feeble, dictating this answer, and therefore there is no thinking about it. With perfect certainty, Peter says, “The Christ of God.” So it always is with faith. When the Spirit of God brings home the truth with power, there is no uncertainty about it. A man may not doubt whether Christ is the Son of God, or not; but the mind may work upon it, and think perhaps, I do not love Him enough to be saved? then there is uncertainty.

But when the Spirit, with power, shews whoeyer confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him; then I believe it, and I see that my sins and my iniquities He will “remember no more.” It may set a man thinking about the consequences of a truth.

Verse 22. He now passes by the thing that has been already brought out, and He presents Himself to them as the Son of man, and He is going to suffer—to be crucified. They must therefore be content to take up their cross. A new thing was coming in; He was going to be rejected, and to be slain, and the third day rise again. It is no longer Messianic ground, but in another sphere altogether beyond this their hopes must lie. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily.” “Daily” —this is the trial. A man might heroically do it once for all, and he would have plenty of people to honour him, and have books written about him; but it is terribly difficult to go on every day denying oneself, and no one knowing anything about it. It came to this that, if you spare the flesh in this life, you will lose your life in the next; and what if a man gain the whole world and lose his own soul; what should a man give in exchange for his soul? It is not a question of bringing life down to the flesh; but if you lose your life here, you will get it elsewhere— above and beyond this world: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.” It is giving up the world for eternal life, or for eternal misery, that is the real question. “What is a man advantaged?” You must give it up; you cannot keep it.

There is the glory of the kingdom; there is the manifestation of glory coming. Those tastes and dispositions which are attracted by Jesus cannot find

their portion here. “They declare plainly that they seek a country; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God,” etc. “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me,” etc., “of him shall the Son of man be ashamed,” when He comes in the display of His own glory. (See Dan. 7:13.) One like to the Son of man came to the Ancient of days, etc., and there was given Him dominion, etc. Then He comes too in the glory of the Son of God—His Father’s glory, and in the glory of the angels. The angels are waiting upon Him who created them, for they were created for Him as well as by Him, and thus give glory to Him as Son of man; giving Him His proper glory, for He has not lost a tittle of His glory; “Thou hast set him over the works of thy hands.” “Let all the angels of God worship him.” There was the same thing at Sinai. “The law was ordained by angels.” “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels “(Psalm 68).

We are now finding the displayed glory in this triple character spoken of (v. 26). It is that glory when He appears; and it is a question of His being ashamed of those who have been ashamed of Him; they could not deny themselves present advantage. I do not here allude to the Father’s house, which of course has another character. Here it is the kingdom manifested in its glory to the earth.

Verse 28. “He went … to pray.” This is not mentioned in the other Gospels. He was going to shew His disciples His glory, to give the declaration of His power and coming. From the other Gospels we find that, a week after this, He went up to Jerusalem where He was to be crucified. “The fashion of his countenance was changed.” An entire change of things is here. He talks of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem,

where He ought to have been crowned; but there He is going to be crucified. There, where this horn of David was to bud, shall this root of David be taken, and by wicked hands be crucified and slain. This is the deep centre of all the change.

“There talked two men with him, Moses and Elias.” This we may look at in two ways; dispensationally, as representing the law and the prophets; and in this way Moses held a very peculiar place, for it was through Him the law was given; Elijah had nearly as important a place also, for though the Jews were in a right position, they had failed in it, and he goes back to Horeb. The other prophets were never called to work miracles. Except the account of the dial of Ahaz, we hear of no miracle in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Habakkuk, etc. Those prophets, sent of God, gave proof that He was caring for Israel; but there was nothing like the calling back in Elijah, who stood as the maintainer of the law, when the people had departed from it most grossly, though all the prophets, even to Malachi, called back to law.

Moses and Elias were taken away, and Jesus is left alone. Law was gone, prophecy gone, and Christ is alone, and He was going to be crucified. All the fabric built up by law and prophets (not the testimony given by them, but law as given to man in the flesh) is broken up, because man ended by killing the Lord come in the flesh; therefore all is gone. Peter would have had the three established together, taken all alike, “Let us build three tabernacles,” etc. But that moment Moses and Elias disappear, and the voice is heard, “This is my beloved Son, hear him.” It is now the righteousness of God, without law, in Jesus. Law did not send Christ.

What law could have been put upon God to do it? Nothing but divine love could have originated such a thought. “Grace reigns through righteousness.” The law was good and perfect, but Christ was far beyond the law. Moses and Elias, therefore, were not to have any place with Him. God the Father put them aside, when Peter wishes to put them in connection. They disappear immediately. This is the important thing for us. Every word of law and prophets is the truth of God, but these were until John. Now the Son of God is the messenger of the Father’s love, and the accpmplisher of divine righteousness. When He is there, the voice says, “This is my beloved Son: hear him” —and He is left alone.

Mark, too, that they were occupied with His death, while talking with Him. One thing occupies the minds of heaven and earth. He was going to be crucified where He ought to have been King. Under such circumstances, there was nothing for heaven or earth to talk about but His death. And so for us, the great thing to talk about Messiah is, that He died. Though He could destroy all the evil that had come in, He must die—in grace of course. It must all end in death, because the carnal mind is not only under Satan’s power, but enmity against God; therefore heaven has to speak.

Zion, the very place He had chosen, where He had been and is to be—the special place of God’s favour, is to be the scene of His death. There they cast Him out of the world He came to save. The One in whom all human and divine righteousness and perfections were centred must die there. All man’s nature, under the most advantageous circumstances: all man’s wickedness, spite of the public and patient and varied ways of God in government, are brought out here.

Moses could deal with man as man; and bring water from the rock for them, in answer to their murmurings; the prophet the same, “Plead with me,” “Put me in remembrance, let us plead together.” But now, all this was gone. God had cultivated the vineyard—done all that could be done for it. There was yet one thing; His Son—the best of all. Him He sent, and they cast Him out and slew Him. And now the testimony concerning man is, that he has “killed the Prince of life,” and “denied the Holy One and the Just.” We never can have peace then, till we get pardon through Christ on the cross. Then we see a true picture of heaven: but all the intermediate dealings of testimony are entirely short of what we have in Christ on the cross, because short of the ground of what man actually is, which fully came out only when he “killed the Prince of life.”

When the Lord’s Messiahship was given up, we have seen He takes the place of translation from earth to heaven. He, being rejected, was no longer to be looked upon as the Head of Israel down here, but as the heavenly Christ; for He takes His place on high, when cast out by man, and this fact was to give a character to the path of those who follow Him. The two things go together—rejection on earth and a heavenly place. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take.up his cross daily, and follow me,” v. 23. The Lord shews them that this heavenly calling involves the cross down here, as it was with Christ Himself. The peculiar place given Him in heaven was, in God’s counsels, dependent on the cross which He bore as the Man. “He humbled himself and became obedient unto death,” etc.; “wherefore God hath highly exalted him,” etc. It was through the cross that He went there: and, if we are to

have a place in heaven, we must have it too. The cross was for the destruction of sin and for the destruction of self, in which sin dwells. We have the same place; therefore He says, “Let these sayings sink deep into your ears, for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.”

We want the heavenly calling to give power to take up the cross; and it is at the same time in proportion as we are dead to things down here, that the heavenly things are realised. When the blood was taken within the veil, the sacrifice was taken without the gate: so we are to go “without the camp, bearing his reproach”; and if we apprehend the value of the blood, and go within the veil, we get to the place of being where the burning outside the camp was; for while we are in spirit where His blood has been carried in, our bodies are where His body was burned. Judaism only put men between the two: for they did not go in within the veil, His blood not having been shed; and they never went without the camp; v. 18-22. He is going to take another place, and they are to follow Him in it; and then, in order to strengthen them for it, He shews them what the heavenly place was. “He took Peter, and James, and John, and went up into a mountain to pray,” etc.; v. 28. The heavenly part of the kingdom is here represented by Christ, Moses, and Elias—the earthly part by the disciples (and there is one part in which the church on earth is alluded to as down here). Peter speaks of this scene as the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, etc. Christ Himself, in the position of the dependent man (praying), takes them up into a mountain. “Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep”; asleep in the presence of the glory, just as in Gethsemane, shewing what human nature is.

There is no power in it, in suffering or glory, to fix the attention on Christ and His interest.

Moses and Elias were in the same glory (v. 30-32), and we are made the associates of Christ in the same glory (the glory of the kingdom in its broad character), not of course, the essential glory. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly,” even of God’s Son in glory. “We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory.” The portion is not to be under Christ, but with Christ. “We shall appear with him in glory” —with Him in the same glory. We look for the Lord from heaven, “who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned,” etc. We shall be with Him and like Him, and this we shall all alike share, though there will be different degrees of glory for one and another: for example, Paul’s measure will not be mine. What we speak of now is all the same glory, and we are predestinated “to be conformed to the image of his Son.” “The glory thou hast given me I have given them.”

The next thing that we see is the perfect familiarity in this glory. They are talking with Him—not presenting a petition—not at His feet (though this is our blessed place too); but this part of the scene represents communion, familiarity of intercourse, the same as that of the disciples on earth, though better of course. On the holy mount they had a higher understanding about it, but it was the same subject occupied them. This shews us the kind of intercourse we have with Jesus now, for we belong to the heavenly part of the kingdom.

A third point to mark is the subject they talked of. This is quite a new thing, for He ought to have been a king. But man was a sinner, and there was the determinate counsel of God to be fulfilled—redemption. Jerusalem was the place of royalty, and His decease was to be accomplished there, where He ought to have been acknowledged king. There was full intimacy on the theme which occupied His heart, for they talked on this, His decease. Then He told His disciples afterwards the consequences of it to them. They must deny themselves. "Let these sayings sink down into your ears." The great subject on God's heart should be that for us.

Another thing is, it is the glory which enables us to talk on this subject. We cannot talk of it until we have peace with God through the knowledge of forgiven sin. When a man has not this, he has to come in his need and get it: but when he is in it, he can contemplate and enjoy it. Besides this, God saw all that was passing in Christ's soul as to obedience unto death, etc. We shall never cease having interest in this subject: when with the Father in the glory, it will be the absorbing theme. He said Himself, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." How much more shall we not love Him for the same cause? Think what it must have been to be occupied with Christ about His decease! What His knowledge was, of what He was going to do! He knew what man was, what the counsel of God was. He came to "reconcile all things to himself." It was so effectually done that the eye of God could only see the effect of that blood in what was washed away. The rejected Christ a Saviour! and this the subject of intercourse with Christ Himself! "They spake of his decease." Peter says, "Master, it is good for us to be

here," etc. Then immediately there was a voice from the cloud: "This is my beloved Son; hear him." The effect on Peter's mind is a wish to put Moses and Elias on a level with Christ.

We have spoken of this, viewing it dispensationally, law and prophecy mixed with Him; but there is another thing to be noticed in it; namely, that which characterised the Son was peculiar. Nothing could be put on a level with Him. There necessarily comes out, therefore, the Father's testimony to the Son. "This is my beloved Son," etc. When a saint knows Jesus, though he also knows he will be like Him hereafter, and that all the saints will be like Him too, yet Christ has the supremacy in his heart. He is single and alone in blessedness, having supremacy in the heart, as well as being the object of faith. I delight in the saints, but Christ is the alone object of faith. Then I get into this fellowship with the Father. I have the Father's thoughts about the Son, as well as the Son's thoughts about the work. I have fellowship with the Father and the Son. We cannot have communion with the Father about redemption work because He has not been made a man. Notice, the Father does not say, This is the Son whom you ought to adore and admire, but He tells us His own thoughts about Him. "This is my beloved Son." Wherefore "beloved!" "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life"; thus I know that I have one thought with the Father, in delighting in the Son and in His death. The Father communicates His own thoughts about the Son, and by the power of the Holy Ghost they are put into my heart, and I have fellowship; and as a consequence I know that he that hath everlasting life shall never come into judgment.

Mark, further, how they came into the excellent glory. There came a cloud and overshadowed them. The cloud is the Shechinah, the dwelling-place of God, which the people had to guide them through the wilderness, and they were to stay or move according to it. It was the divine presence, and “they feared as they entered into the cloud.” They were not protected by the cloud, as Israel were, and as they will be by-and-by. “Upon all the glory shall be a defence”; but here they enter into the cloud. The fact was, coming into the cloud was coming into the presence of the Father now, a dwelling-place for us. It was thence the Father’s voice was heard. “This is my beloved Son,” etc. Thence they were told who this Son was. He had been with them as one of them. He was the Father’s beloved Son, in a place worthy of adoration, but the companion of their hearts. He brought them to the Father, the only place into which redemption brings us (as to our relationship). Until a man knows redemption and is brought into His presence, he can never know the Father’s love: but when there, he can never know the end of it. It is the kind of love the prodigal never knew till he was in his father’s arms. He had doubts and fears as he went on, and thoughts about the hired servants, but none when he was in his father’s house. It is known only by the teaching of the Holy Ghost in us—in the cloud—God in us. It is in the presence of the glory, realised by faith now, we know the power of redemption; and by its brightness and its truth, it blots out all other relationship.

Notice who are learning this glory. Saints walking on the earth—Peter, James, and John; and so with us. The truths written in this book are not for us to know in heaven. Is the Father’s love not to be known till we are in heaven?

Is redemption only to be known there? Was God less intimate with those on earth than with those in heaven? Not at all. It was to Peter, James, and John this was communicated, not to Moses and Elias. The Father's voice was to men on earth. We learn the rejection of man here and the grace which has brought us to share in the glory.

In what follows we find the Lord coming down into the crowd of this world, not remaining on the mount. We may listen and enjoy, but we have to come down and pass through this world. The Lord comes down and meets three things— a throng of men, Satan's power, and the disciples' unbelief. There was no seclusion here for Him, but He comes to a crowd. What a picture of distress this is! The son of one, possessed with a devil (v. 39); and the father's heart racked more than the son's body. The world will weep till they are tired of weeping, and then go on with the same thing again.

We have seen before how the Lord was come in the display of His power and bound the strong man. The disciples could not do it. The power of Satan remains the same unto this day. He is not literally cast out, but remains the "prince of this world," the character he has gained, not lost, by Christianity. He will be bound; his power will be overthrown as a fact, and not to faith only. The question was to be settled about Satan's right, and what did the Lord say of him?

"Now is the judgment of this world" — "Now is the prince of this world cast out." His title is "cast out," but Christ has not yet exerted this power. Therefore in the epistles we find him spoken of as still ruling in this world. In Ephesians he is called, "the prince of the

power of the air," "the spirit that now worketh," etc. Then we hear of the "rulers of the darkness of this world." When "the powers of the world to come" are in their full display, Satan will be cast out entirely; but these instances and more shew he was here then as be is still. "How long shall I be with you," etc.; v. 41. It was not because Satan was here that Christ said this, but because the disciples could not use the power He had brought in; and that closed the dispensation. So it will be in this. The power and goodness of God brought Christ into the world, but the incapacity of man to believe, so as to use that power, will close it. So we read in Romans 11, "Toward thee [the professing body now], goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off"; but until His grace ceases, there is refuge for us to go to Him. While He was here, the moment the father of the child sought to Him, He cast out the spirit. As long as Christ's grace is at work, if there is only one saint on the earth and everything else failed around, he would find the power of Christ ready to be exercised on his behalf. There can be no failing in meeting the need of a soul, because as there is Christ to go to, there is help in Him. However dark the dispensation may be, there is exactly the grace that is needed for the position. Not that God would have our eyes blinded to the darkness around, for if we do not take heed to the ruinous state, conscience is not in its right place. If I am ready to say, Why should He not stay? when He says, How long shall I be with you? I am insensible to the state of things around me, and I am not awake to the response that Christ's love to the church demands; but, on the other hand, if I am not able to look up and count on the grace of Christ to meet that state, however bad it may be, I am powerless.

Verse 43. “They were amazed at the mighty power of God.” It is very humbling to see how amazed they were about this power. They did not wonder at the power of the evil. But they ought so to have counted on His power as to have been amazed if the power were not exerted. Christ brings them back to the cross. “Let these sayings sink down into your ears, for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men” (v. 44). You ought to have been able to get get this power; but you must now know not only the power of Christ, but the cross of the rejected One. “Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” We have more to be rejoiced at in this than if a miracle were to be performed to-morrow. It is more blessed to know the cross. It was as though He had said, “I had rather you should come now to own the rejected One than be looking for this power even.” Beloved friends, you are not thinking of what God is doing at this present time, if you do not see that now it is not power on the earth, but rejection.

Verse 46. “There arose a reasoning which should be the greatest.” What a tale this tells! What a selfishness runs through and through! Even at the Lord’s supper it was the same thing. In Luke we find it, where there is so much of what man is brought out.

We see then, from what we have been tracing, that we need to come down from the hill; not to be without Jesus, but to learn what man is. It is not necessary to come down from the mount, as some people say, lest we should be puffed up there; for we shall never be puffed up while on the mount. Like Peter we may be afraid, but we are never puffed up in the presence of God. It is when we quit it that we are in danger. Paul was not

exalted above measure when in the third heaven; but after he came down, he needed the thorn in the flesh to prevent it.

Besides, there is an historical necessity for us to get through this world. But Jesus was as much with His disciples when they came down as while they were on the mount, and that is our comfort. Do not let us suppose we have lost Christ. We have to serve Him, walk with Him, learn from Him, and mark His patient grace towards us in and through all circumstances. The Lord give us to know, while passing through this world, what a Christ we have, taking our hearts clean out of the defiling circumstances around, so that, whether we get a taste of the glory, or are passing through the crowd of this world, He may be everything to us, as He is everything for us.

Verse 46, etc. The Lord is now shewing His disciples the place they are to take upon earth. They are not to be in a position connected with Him as Messiah in earthly glory— heavenly glory they could not have till the end. In the meantime they have to take their place with Him in rejection, and this put them to the test, for they were to give up things right enough in themselves, for example, to hate father, mother, wife, etc., all which earthly relationships had a claim upon them, and especially so upon the Jew. “Honour thy father and mother,” etc. But all these relationships would not stand in association with the cross. Everything must be sacrificed, everything that linked man with the earth must be snapped asunder to faith, when Christ was rejected.

The character of the world was fully manifested in His rejection: its deeds were evil and it rejected the light. The incarnation, which should have been the link to man's blessing, is rejected. He accomplishes redemption by His rejection on earth, and He has a place in heaven. This alters the character of everything. It brings in the judging of self. There never would have been this if Christ had been crowned on earth. He was "delivered into the hands of men," etc. He whose very name carried power and authority is to be delivered up. If Christ had had His place on earth, the heart of man would never have been put to the test. Why? Because, if men had seen all the dignity and glory displayed on earth which was His right, it would have gratified their flesh with its greatness. But flesh cannot inherit heaven, and what place has it on the cross? There they go together so blessedly— the cross and heaven; and for the flesh there is no place in either. There was a terrible breach between man and God, and the One who would have healed it they crucified. Then every carnal thought that was in accordance with such an act must be judged.

The disciples were disputing who should be the greatest — not the greatest in the world, but the greatest in the glory. It is self after all. They have not to tell Him much, but their thoughts are judged. When in the light, everything is judged. Jacob had the word from God to go to Bethel (Gen. 35), and he immediately says to his household, "Put away the strange gods that are among you." And why so? Everything is detected when getting into the presence of God. Jacob could get the blessing before he went to Bethel; but when he goes into God's presence, the idols are judged. When he has got rid of the idols, it is "El-bethel," the God of Bethel. The

disciples were reasoning which should be the greatest, and when He detected their thoughts He “took a child and set him by him,” etc. This shews us our place: we ought to seek the lowest place. We never can have it, because Christ has taken it. He went down under sin, wrath, death. He took the lowest place, because the servant of all. This is the truly happy place for us, but how it judges self! This is what the cross does. Not only are the idols judged, but self is judged.

It is a blessed thing to have done with self. When there is room for God, we can be full of joy and happiness. We are not humble, even when we are occupied with our own nothingness, or how bad we are; but we are humble when we do not think of ourselves at all. When we have to learn our nothingness and badness, that is being humbled. If we get away from the Lord, we have to be brought back, and that is a humbling process. We want to judge the flesh in ourselves. It is pretty easy to judge it in another, but it is in ourselves we miss it (v. 50). Things are brought to a crisis. “He that is not against us is for us.”

Mark how conscious the Lord was of His utter rejection by man; so utter that He said, he that is not against us is proved to be for us. Christ was perfect; therefore He was a perfect test to men’s consciences; and, as far as He is manifested in us, we shall be so also. Paul could say, “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” Why could he say so? Because it went out from him as pure as it went in. John said, “We forbad him, because he followeth not with us.” That tells the whole tale. They were thinking of themselves, not of Christ; of their own importance, and not His honour. If it had been His importance, they would have thought how blessed it was

to find the effect of His name, and rejoiced to know how His power was being exercised by man. But no; they were looking at themselves as well as at the Messiah. Even John was thus using Christ Himself to further his own importance. And is there not something in us of the same thing, a satisfaction at that which aggrandises self as well as Christ, instead of seeking the honour of Christ alone? The Lord takes him up and answers him on the ground of His utter rejection, which was coming. “He that is not against us is for us.” And mark that the very selfishness of John brings out the grace of Christ. He says “us.” You do not know the lot you have with Me. If you find one who can use the power of My name, rejoice in it.

Verse 51. “It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” I am going to get a portion in heaven, and you are to have the same portion, but it must be through rejection here. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily,” etc. “When the time was come that he should be received up, he set his face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem.” In Isaiah, “I set my face as a flint.” He was accomplishing His Father’s will here, as in all His course. Redemption must be accomplished through the cross. He “learned obedience by the things which he suffered.” It was the same obedience as at the beginning, when He was coming amongst them with “Blessed are the poor,” etc.—more painful, and of course, He felt the difference; but still He goes in the same blessed spirit and earnestness. Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, etc. He had found it His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. There was joy to Him in this; but in the cup of wrath which He was going

to drink there was no joy. He had met with scorn here, smiting there, rejection all through, but nothing like this cup, and therefore He cried, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” etc. Christ proved His perfectness, for He felt what it was to be “made sin,” etc. His holy nature shrank from it, yet there was the same quiet, steady, patient obedience, for “He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,” as all through. He knows His Father’s will and He does it. He sets His face there, where His Father’s will is to be done, not looking to this side or to that, but there—Jerusalem.

We, according to the measure we have of the single eye, shall be following in the same course, going to the cross steadily, with one purpose: and, in proportion as we do so, will those who do not so set their face oppose us. But the Lord says, “If any man serve me, let him follow me.” Service is not doing a great deal, but following the Master, and the world and half-hearted Christians do not like that. There is plenty of doing in the world, but “if any man serve me, let him follow me.” Paul wanted to serve every way, but we find the Spirit forbidding him to go into Bithynia or Troas, and yet two years afterwards we read that” all Asia heard the word.” God’s work was to be done, but it was to be in His time and of His ordering. His servant had only to follow in obedience. It was the same with Moses. Nature would say of him, Why not stay in Pharaoh’s court that the people there may be converted, instead of leaving it? Flesh cannot understand what faith leads to. Afterwards he goes out in all the earnestness of his spirit, natural energy comes in, but then there is no deliverance. Moses has to go and keep sheep, for forty years, to be broken down, and made nothing of, and what were Israel to do all that

time? To wait. Then when he comes back to serve them, how is it done? There is the flesh appearing in another way. “Lord, I am not eloquent.” Then Aaron is sent back with him, and the work is done in the power of God.

Verse 52. “They went and entered into a village of the Samaritans,” etc. (v. 53). We see the reason why they did not receive Him was because His face was set towards Jerusalem. His obedience and singleness of eye, going to do God’s will without honour or attractiveness or repute, going to Jerusalem, is the very reason they would have nothing to do with Him (v. 54). See the religious opposition of the disciples to them. The Samaritans would not submit to God’s way: Christ did. That is the difference; and the disciples want to command fire to come out of heaven as Elias did, and at the very place where Elias worked the miracle. In fleshly reasoning they think Christ was as worthy as Elias to call down fire. This is a more subtle kind of self than the other. It seemed like direct zeal for Christ, but they did not understand the zeal of Christ. He was not come for judgment nor to destroy men’s lives, but to suffer Himself for them. If they had known God’s thoughts, they would have submitted quietly. Peter again understood not the Lord’s mind when he drew his sword and smote the servant of the high priest. All the miracles of Elias were characterised by the spirit of judgment, not like Elisha who had his commission from heaven. Elijah stood in the place of judgment and righteousness, like John the Baptist who came in the spirit and power of Elias, saying, “Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit shall be hewn down,” etc., and “the axe is laid to the root of the trees.” Elisha had lifegiving power, on the contrary, and was a type of grace. Elijah passed through

Jordan (death in type), while Elisha starts from the other side of Jordan in resurrection.

Verse 56. He turned round and went to another village. It is not pleasant to be trodden upon in this world, but Christ was. To do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently, is what we have; and is it to end there? Yes, and that is "acceptable with God." Christ came to suffer, to bear anything for the sake of others; and He would not have been doing this, if He had called down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans. We have to follow Christ in carrying the testimony of God's love into the world in all our walk through it. The world needs it. We must not be seeking for ourselves, but have Christ the object. At the end of the chapter He goes on to shew how the links with this world are to be broken.

Verses 57, 58. One says, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," but Christ puts him to the test. You cannot go if you do not take up your lot with One who had not where to lay His head; for you may sooner go to the birds of the air for a nest, or to the foxes for a hole, than to the Son of man for a home in this world. They were not now to come to Him as the One who had the promises, etc., but to One whose portion was utter and entire rejection. Following Him could not be accompanied with ease and comfort here. He was to be delivered into the hands of men. At His birth we see the same thing. Every one found room in the inn save He, but any who wanted to find Him whom angels celebrate must go to the manger!

Verse 59. He says to one, "Follow me." The first one wanted something with Christ; but here where He says, "Follow me," then immediately a difficulty is started;

and it is when He calls a man that difficulties are felt. There was no sense of the difficulties of the one who said, “Lord, I will follow thee,” without His call. But this man who is called says, “Let me first go and bury my father.” He is going presently, but there is a link felt. Jesus says, “Let the dead bury their dead”; you must leave them to follow Me. You may be ready to say, the things of the earth have no power over you; but just try what it is to have them, and you will learn the extent of their power. A man may go to the length of his cord, but when he gets to the end he is checked. A father had the first claim in nature, and especially to a Jew, but Christ says, I am calling you out in the power of life; I am putting in My claim for the life I give you, and it breaks every bond here. It is a question of life in the midst of death. The word “first” (let me first go and bury my father) shews something put before Christ, as though the man said, There is something I put before Your calling. Death had come in, and this very plea told Christ they were all under death. It was quite a right thing for the man to bury his father; but if life has come in, and the question is one of redemption, to be lost or saved, you must give yourself up to it. In the divine light which is in the cross, He saw all dead, and therefore He said, “Let the dead bury their dead.” The one thing to be done now is to follow Christ. The question is, Death in the world or life in Christ? Where are the affections?

Verse 61. “Another also said, Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house.” In the previous case it was just this: When my first affections are settled, then will I come and follow Thee. There is no good in that: the Lord says, “Let the dead bury their dead.” But this case shews that

those at home were not left in heart. He felt he had to break with them, and yet his heart lingered. “No man looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.” “Remember Lot’s wife.” “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” If Christ be not first and last, He will always be last, for faith is not in exercise. The question is, whether we are walking as seeing what the cross tells us. The cross lifts the veil, shewing the skeleton of the world, and when I see this sentence on all that is in the world, on self, as well as what is outside, and our links of affection with it, I learn that all is to be given up: but there is Christ Himself and the. love which is in Him to meet it. It will and must judge self: and it brings out the will too, for there is a great deal of will in all this shunning of the cross. People may speak of the claims of affection, yet it is not really and only family affection, etc., but the end which connects with self is felt. Natural affection there should be—indeed it is one of the signs of the last evil days to be without it; but if you have power to judge yourselves, you will find that many an excuse you make has this secret at the end. So in affliction, bereavement, etc., it is not only the affection that is touched, but the will. There is sweetness in the sorrow, so long as we realise Christ in it, and affection only is sorrowing. But if the will is touched, there is rebellion, resistance, struggling; and all this the Lord must judge, for a mass of flesh and self Can never follow Christ. What a wonderful detail all this is! It is God going through our hearts entering into every corner and crevice. Why? Because of the constant undeviating stedfastness of His love; and as a father loves his child when it is naughty, as well as when it is good, so our God takes pains, as it were, with us all, even when so bad.

The effect of all is not only to make us practically righteous, but happy— “imitators of God as dear children.” It is well, on the one hand, for us to judge ourselves and see what there is to detect in us, and, on the other, to see the fulness of His grace in Christ.

May the Lord give us to feel more and more that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God,” and that the energy of the flesh cannot accomplish the work of God, so that we may learn to work from God, for God, and with God.

Chapter 10.

The Lord pursues the subject we have been looking at in the preceding chapter, connected with the change that has taken place in His own position amongst them. It is no longer the Messiah on earth, but the heavenly Christ, they are to look to. There is another thing brought out here in the amazing importance attached to that moment, the last testimony being applied to them: and those who heard it would be more the subject of judgment than Tyre and Sidon. Any among them would have repented with the truth you have, but they had it not. The blessing now was the Lord Himself being there; and He was so glorious and excellent that to hear Him was the prime source of blessing. All hung upon their reception or rejection of Him. In the sending out of these seventy, we see the same patient grace at work as when He sent out twelve. If they were not received, they were to shake off the dust from their feet, etc. God’s love never stops, whatever the wickedness of man, until His work is done. His grace never fails. Christ looks at the power of grace in God, more than at the wickedness of men, and He went patiently on, and said, “the harvest

is great," though knowing what there was all around Him. The Lord was not like Elijah who needed to be reminded of the seven thousand, who, as God knew, had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. He came in by the door, and went through everything with God. Nothing stopped Him from seeking out His sheep, scattered on the dark mountains. He laid down His life to save His sheep, and not one should be lost. To gather them, He went on in the power of grace. Paul was of this spirit when he says, "I endure all things for the elect's sakes."

Did Christ suffer nothing in it? Look at Him, weary with His journey, sitting at the well, and a poor wretched vile sinner coming to meet Him, to whom He gives the water of life. There He finds meat to eat that they know not of; and He says, "the fields are white unto harvest." He was as fresh and happy in His testimony, while sitting at the well with this poor woman, as if all Jerusalem had received Him; because the fountain was within. In Him was "a well of water, springing up," etc. So with us. If we are going on with Him, we shall be "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed." The testimony is in the earthen vessel, it is true, but the fountain is within; and they were to be perfectly dependent on God, and independent of everything else. They were to expect to meet enemies, wolves. "Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." You cannot turn a lamb into a wolf to defend itself. Peter was for taking a sword to smite off the servant's right ear, but the Lord forbids him, and says, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." It is difficult to receive everything and do nothing, to be a lamb among wolves—

like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in prospect of the fiery furnace, saying, “we are not careful, O king, to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver,” etc.

“Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes; and salute no man by the way.” Not be uncourteous, but waste not time in useless ceremonies, etc. When in God’s service, and among God’s enemies, God must be everything. It needs concentration of heart in Him, as knowing that the world has rejected your Master, and will reject you, if you are faithful to Him. Faith knows this, and goes on, not with carnal prudence and worldly wisdom, but as knowing what to do and going on to do it. Faith always carries peace to the house; it produces enmity—two against three, and three against two—because some will receive it, and some not; but the thing brought is always peace (v. 7-9). “The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” Not merely such and such a thing is God’s will, but whatever you do, whether you receive or reject it, “the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” The condition of the world now is, that it has rejected Christ. The Son of God, the King, has come into the world, put it to the test, and it says, We will not have Him. This fact has not lost its solemnity now, for we are walking through the world that has rejected Christ; we bring the testimony of peace to it—peace that has been made, for the sacrifice has been offered. It is also true that the testimony has been rejected. “Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you” (v. 10, 11). Faith carries things in its own sphere, needing nothing but God’s word. The sight of the eyes is constantly tending to dim the estimate which faith forms; and if faith is not nourished by the word, it sinks down and

fades away. If I am not feeding on the word, faith is not fed, for it cannot be fed by sight of things all around. When the Lord spoke to Jerusalem, saying, Their house shall be left unto them desolate, and there should not be one stone left upon another, they could not actually see the stones then falling, but it was Christ's word for them to believe. Natural reasoning is fed by what we see, but faith is fed by what God has revealed to the soul.

Verse 15. "Thou, Capernaum, shalt be thrust down to hell"—in God's eye, not man's. In man's eye it might be exalted to heaven. So with this world. And what does that prove? That it may last as long as God permits, but that His word will be fulfilled, "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." There is nothing stable here. When God comes in, where will it all be? though there are scoffers who say, "Where is the promise of his coming?"

Verse 16. "He that heareth you heareth me." That is where faith has its resource. In hearing the word the disciples spoke, I am hearing Christ Himself. That is where faith walks. I know it must be true, for Christ has said it. Everything may go wrong, the world, Jews, the church, etc., but God's word never. And it has been given. It never changes, for it has been given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, etc. The church, as ground of confidence in testimony, is gone (though we know it is founded upon a rock, and as to its security, it can never be destroyed), but God's word will not fail. Whatever we see tends to weaken and deface faith puts to the test what the affections of the soul are, because it is not to be what I like, but what God says.

Verses 17-20. “Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” This shews the change of everything. Demons may be subject to you, but the Lord says, That is not the portion for you to rejoice in; I am now shewing My power in another way. This word, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,” alludes to the time when Satan the “accuser of the brethren,” will be cast down. Now he is in heaven, not in God’s presence, in light inaccessible, but before the throne of judgment—two different things. “Hast thou considered my servant Job? “It proves that when others came before the throne, Satan came also. Contract verses 19 and 20. The one speaks of what can be seen, the other of what could be known only to faith. The unseen thoughts of your heart are much more important than what can be seen. The invisible is always more important than the visible.

In this world, it is not merely that man is a sinner, but there is the introduction into it of the power of evil. Satan has got hold of this world through man’s sin. So in the case of the poor woman it is said, “whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years.” But when the church has been caught up, Satan will be cast down. There was war in heaven; but when he is on the earth, he will for three and a half years be raising up the man of the earth against the Lord from heaven. When He comes, Satan’s power will be put away. He is not put into the “lake of fire “until the close of the thousand years, but into “the bottomless pit.” That is just what the demons asked to be saved from when cast out of the man whose name was Legion (chap. 8:31); “deep” meaning “bottomless pit.” The Lord did not cast them down to it, because the time was not then come.

This ability to cast out demons was a great thing. The communicating of the power by the Lord was a power above the immediate working of the miracles themselves. It required divine power, and none but that could give the power to others. In the millennium there will not be the power of good and evil together; the latter will be cast out. “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?” etc. The pit shall be digged for the wicked. Satan must be cast out. And when Christ was upon earth, He was presenting Himself in the power of God to bind the strong man, and spoil his goods, etc. It was a wonderful thing to meet a man under the power of Satan, and to cast Satan out. It was an earnest of the “powers of the world to come”; “the world to come” referring, not to heaven, but to this earth being renewed. He was then putting forth the same power that He will exercise fully in the coming kingdom.

Verse 19. “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents,” etc.; and it was at the point when He was rejected that He says this. He knew what was really going on, and though He said peace, they did not say peace to Him. “I give you power “over all the power of the enemy.” Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” That is the church’s place. When Christ was manifested on earth, it was a blessed thing; but it is better to be His companion in heaven, as we shall be when He comes to take us. Far better to be with Himself and as Himself in the Father’s house. We have nothing to do with earth—our names are not written in the earth—kings in it indeed, but our portion is not in it. “He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.” We shall have the

inheritance with Him, but it is below us; our hope is to be with Himself above it. The inheritance is the consequence of having this place with Him (Eph. 1). We are children of the Father, to be “holy and without blame before him in love.” Now we have our portion according to the riches of His grace, of poor sinners whom He has saved; and we shall be to the glory of His grace in the manifestation of it. The inheritance comes in afterwards.

“Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” As though He would say to them, Do not let your minds be filled with things down here, but think of what you have in Me and with Me. We find two things brought before us in God’s ways; first, the government of this world—that which is still prophetic, connected with the kingdom; and then the church up in heaven. When the inheritance is spoken of, it is always future: but when our place is spoken of, it is always up in heaven. The Lord saw that the present setting up of the kingdom would all fail, and He was bringing in a better thing than any kingdom, and He rejoiced in that; for when He gives joy to another, He cannot help having it also Himself. When the thief on the cross asked Him to remember him in His kingdom, He said, “this day shalt thou be with me,” etc. He was gratifying the thief and also Himself. So with these disciples. He would have them not be rejoicing in the good down here, for it is not good enough. Not only do not be troubled with the bad, but rejoice not in the best thing in this world. “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit.” “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” He felt the circumstances deeply, but His soul was up to the source, and He would say, It is quite right that these proud and haughty ones should see they are nothing, and that these poor

despised lambs should get the glory. “Even so, Father.” He must bow to the evil, because the time to judge it was not yet come. Evil is going on; people are saying, Where is the God of the earth? We have to bear it—the Lord did. We must get our thoughts away from the expectation of having things better down here. The soul that enters into God’s thoughts and purposes bows to His will. “Even so, Father.”

Then He, as it were, retires into the glory of His own person. The Son has to reveal the Father. The world rejects Him, and He submits to the rejection of the kingdom, and brings out, instead of it, the blessedness of the heavenly thing, and now speaks of Himself as the Son, and glories in that. The present result of His coming is the Son revealing the Father; and this is even better than the kingdom. The testimony is brighter as to what God is about, when I take things quietly and submit, not desiring to be a wolf among the wolves. It is exceedingly difficult for one’s heart to bow and say, “I will be nothing but a lamb”; but that is our place, for the Lord says, “Vengeance is mine”: “rather give place unto wrath” (Rom. 12); and “neither give place to to the devil “(Eph. 4). But if you do not give place to wrath, you will give place to the devil. Shall we lose anything by being quiet, and taking things patiently? No, “all power,” He says, “is given unto me in heaven and on earth.” We must bow to what it is, without, and be satisfied with what is written. If not we shall be only wearing ourselves in the greatness of our way. May we be satisfied to have our “names written in heaven!”

Verses 23, 24. “He said to them privately.” These things could only be enjoyed by faith. He would have them in consciousness of present blessing.

Verse 25. Now that the Lord has shewn out the dispensational change, He shews the moral change. A lawyer comes and asks how he is to get eternal life. The Lord brings him to the law—Keep the law, and you shall live. But he is stopped directly with the simplicity of this, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He does not love his neighbour as himself! He asks, "Who is my neighbour? … This do and thou shalt live." Who does love his neighbour as himself? The good Samaritan is the one who does not ask who the neighbour is, but acts in grace, without asking what title the other had. Christ has the title of doing good to him that is in need and misery. This is grace that gives without a title.

See how thoughtful this grace and love is. He went to him—did not send some one else, but went, bound up his wounds, poured in oil and wine, set him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, took care of him, gave him in charge to the host, and said, "When I come again, I will repay thee." How beautiful are all the details of the actings of this love which flows from what is within, and acts according to what is working there, and not according to the claims upon it!

In the closing part of chapter 10 (v. 38-42), we see the one great thing was to hear Jesus' word. Hence the approval given to Mary above Martha, who, in a certain sense, was doing a very good work. She received Him into her house and served Him; but there is something better than this: "Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." He wanted His words to enter and to have power in the heart. The only thing that endures for ever is "the word of the Lord." The wisdom of this world is against it, and so is human reasoning; but it is the only thing worth waiting upon

diligently; and if Christians reason about the things of God instead of appealing to the word, they are sure to be going down. We want to have the word in our hearts, to sit at Christ's feet that we may understand and treasure it up. To hear Jesus is the "one thing" needful. No attention, even to Himself in the flesh, though it were from one who loved Him and whom He loved, could replace this. The "many things" end only in disappointment and death, instead of leading into life eternal, as did the words of Jesus, issuing from a heart broken, that it might let forth the stream of life. The hearing ear for His word delighted Him. He was bringing in truth to people's souls.

"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." "Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken to you." Truth sets everything to rights; it sets God and man in their place, or it is not truth. Sin, and righteousness, and love —these never came out fully by the law; but "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Everything was set morally in perfect light by Him: but men saw it not, because they knew Him not. The word now is the instrument of revealing truth. The law was perfect because it was of God, but it did not tell what man was, much less what God was—it told what man ought to be. Christ comes in as the light and says, You are all dead, but I can give you life. His coming into the world shewed out everything exactly as it was. As the living Word He came and revealed to those who could see God—not at first in redemption, but in testimony. What value to Him was it that Martha cumbered herself about serving, in comparison to a soul listening to His word!

It is the same now to a Christian. When God's word comes with nothing else, it has a right to have power over the soul. It makes its way by its own authority and its attractive grace to the hearts, and where received it gives life in Christ. There is no living power in a miracle to quicken a soul, but there is living power in the word. It is by the word that any soul can get into heaven. We are begotten by the word. If the word cannot do it, it will never be done. There are three things constantly pressed in connection with the power of the word, 1. The words spoken will all come up against them another day (John 12:37-41). 2. Though perilous times come (2 Tim. 3), the word is able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. There is another thing also. When a soul is quickened by the word, the moral effect is to make it dependent and obedient—" sanctified to obedience." Such is the character of the new man, as the old man would be independent.

Chapter 11.

Verse 1. At the beginning of this chapter we have another instance of our Lord praying, the expression of dependence. And there the disciples ask Him to teach them to pray. They had not learnt the simple confidence in the Father that would go up naturally to Him and tell Him all. There may not always be wisdom in asking, but there should be confidence of communion by the Holy Ghost. Even Paul had not always intelligence of God's mind, or he would not have asked to have the thorn in the flesh taken away; but he was not afraid to make his request. The disciples had not this simple-hearted confidence. They understood not their place as children of the Father. He condescends to teach them when in

this condition and gives them this prayer. The Lord teaches them to pray for things about which His own heart was occupied. “Father, glorify thy name,” was expressive of the grand desire of His heart. “Hallowed be thy name.” He first tells them of Him with whom they are brought into relationship. Not that they had the present power of the Holy Ghost, giving them the consciousness of their relationship—this they did not get till the day of Pentecost; but He teaches them to say, “Father, hallowed be thy name.” There we have perfection. It is the desire for Him to be glorified, though I cannot tell what it may involve me in. There will be the desire not to sin, etc. This was the expression of the perfect desire that was in Christ Himself—“Hallowed be thy name.”

“Thy kingdom come.” There will be the removing of those things that are made, that, “those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” Are you quite sure that you would like Him to come in this kingdom that will involve the shaking out of everything that may not remain? Surely that will wrench the heart from a quantity of things that are attaching you to that which does not belong to the kingdom to come. There may be the desire for these things, while at the same time the consciousness that I have not the sense of the object, but a sense of distance from it which hinders my enjoyment, though I know Him to be “the chiefest among ten thousand,” and the “altogether lovely.” There are often complaining prayers, because there is not the present enjoyment of seeing Him in the sanctuary, though the remembrance of it. We may have the hope of the Lord’s coming, being glad to get to the end of this desert, because it is a desert; or we may long to get out,

because Canaan is at the end. If it is not the latter, we shall be in danger of being tired with running, which is always wrong. We should be in the spirit of waiting pilgrims, not weary ones. We ought not to be weary; I do not say we are not, but we ought to be ever desiring His coming, because He is precious. In Revelation 22:17, the bride says “come,” in answer to what He is, when He says, “I am the bright and morning star.” God does not reject the cry which comes to Him as “out of the depths”; but there is a difference between the cry of distress and the cry of desire.

When Christ was on earth, there was an answer in Him to all God’s will, for He always did the things which pleased His Father. He did it as no angel ever could. Then He comes down to notice our daily need, and there is dependence, indeed, in this. “Give us day by day our daily bread.”

“Forgive us our sins,” etc. This chapter does not go into what we may call proper church privileges; the desires are perfect, but the place is not known. The Lord touches upon all the circumstances down here. Man is looking up from the earth, he is walking there, and needs his feet washed. There are trespasses to be forgiven, and the spirit of grace is wanted. There is no sin imputed to us now; it is all put away. But will that make me hard when others fail? No; my seeing that Christ has agonized on the cross for me, will give me a sense of my freedom, but not indifference about sin. Instead of hardness, it will give us tenderness and softness of spirit.

“Lead us not into temptation.” Why should God ever lead us into temptation? it may be asked. Sometimes the

Lord has need to put us through a certain process to make us learn our weakness. Look at Peter. The Lord saw he needed to be sifted, or He could have prayed for him to be saved from that fall. A soul would always desire that he may not have this sifting. Christ Himself, though it was a different thing for Him, desired to be delivered from it when bearing sin. Paul prayed for the thorn to be removed. But Paul did not get a fourth heaven—that would have made him worse, but a "thorn in the flesh"; something to make him despicable in preaching (otherwise people might have come to him and said, Paul, you must be better than anyone else, for you have been to the third heaven), to prevent his being puffed up, and to keep him even. It was a gracious provision for him, though it is a right thing for the soul to desire not to be led into temptation, but to be delivered from the evil.

Verse 5. "Which of you shall have a friend," etc. This is another character of prayer—earnest waiting upon God. There is majesty in God's goodness, and yet He takes knowledge of all our wants, and we must await His will and pleasure. Suppose one asks his father for anything, and he says, "you must wait five minutes," is the child to say, "No, I cannot; I must have it directly?" Meantime, while waiting, faith is exercised, and the spirit broken down in the sense of need. Look at Daniel, and see another thing. God gave him a deep sense of his identification with Himself in what he was doing; so He must make him pray three weeks before he has his request granted. This is a great privilege, for it is to have fellowship with God. In the case of this friend, there is a depth of interest excited in desire for the thing, and.because of his importunity he gains it. There

is a certainty of God's answering in blessing, though He delay.

Verse 9-13. This is prayer for the Holy Spirit, whom they, though believers, had not then received. In one sense a man may pray for this now, when he has not the Spirit of adoption, like the disciples then. But now the Holy Ghost has been given, consequent upon the Lord's ascension to the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33). There could be no union with the man Christ on earth. It is as a heavenly people that there is union with Him. Christ was looked upon alone until His work was done. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." The Holy Ghost was the seal of Christ's work, not of John's preaching righteousness. The second time He received the Holy Ghost was for the church. He received for Himself (Matt. 3) at His baptism, but for us when He ascended, having finished the work of our salvation. The fruits of the Spirit in us are the consequences of the grace and righteousness in Him, He being the only righteous man. The firstfruits of the Spirit in us are love, joy, peace— then come the practical fruits toward men. The first-named fruits are toward God, then patience, temperance, etc., towards men. The Holy Ghost cannot be the subject for the church, as such, to ask for now, seeing He has thus been given. Christ received Him for us. We pray by or in the Holy Ghost, not for Him now. We should pray for more of the working of the Spirit in us, and desire to be filled with the Spirit—poor little hearts indeed, but they may be filled. It does not at all follow that we are filled with the Spirit because sealed with the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit would keep out evil thoughts. It will not take

away the evil nature, which ever remains, but thereby that will be kept down.

Verse 14, etc. See the dreadful opposition of man's heart against Him, which brings out a very important test. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." When Christ is manifested, it is for or against Him that people take their stand. We have spiritual enemies to contend with, and Joshua leading the people in conflict was figurative of the Spirit leading the soul against our spiritual enemies. It is not Christians but Christ who is become God's centre. We may gather Christians together, but if it is not Christ in one's own spirit, it is scattering. God knows no centre of union but the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Himself the object, and nothing but Christ can be the centre. Whatever is not gathering round that centre, for Him and from Him, is scattering. There may be gathering, but, if not "with Me," it is scattering. We are by nature so essentially sectarian, that we have need to watch against this. I cannot make Christ the centre of my efforts, if He is not the centre of my thoughts. It is a great thing for a man to say, I have no other object but Christ—no other activity in my heart but for Christ; not only that He is the chief object at bottom— every Christian has that— but there may be a quantity of middle things in our hearts between the inside and the outside. These must be judged in the soul. Besides love to Christ, there may be love of company, etc.; and we must judge all that is between Christ, the root, and the offspring.

Verse 27, etc. "Blessed is the womb that bare thee," etc. They speak of the honour of being His mother. No, we would say, that has nothing to do with it. The closest connection with the Son of man is not equal to keeping

the word of God. Religionists make a great deal of natural affection, but, though blessed in its way, it is nothing to the life of God in my soul. Of course it was a blessed thing to be the mother of the Lord; yet it was but a natural relationship, though a miracle; nor could it have been a light thing to her heart. Still, it was not equal to the blessing of the word of God bringing a soul to Himself. O! beloved friends, if you will only let the pure word of God abide in your hearts, you will find that it will sweep away all the cobwebs of the flesh.

Verse 29. They are seeking a sign, another natural thing; but He says, “There shall no sign be given.” Jonah is a sign; he preached, and they repented. Now My word has come to you, and that is the test to you. “The queen of the south,” etc. The word of God is so perfectly suited to man’s heart, even the natural feehngs are touched by it. The word is sown in the heart, though it may bring forth no fruit.

Verses 33-36. Light is there, and the question is about the man’s eye. If a man has bad eyes, the light is painful. So the word to one who has not clear eyesight or the eye single. This is a solemn word; but if a person was converted only yesterday, it might be true of him; he might be full of light. It applies as much to the babe in Christ as to the grown man. Where God is in the soul, His light is seen. “If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not.” “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light, having no part dark,” etc. When the candle is there, we see all around. It shews itself and thus shews all around. The eye receives the light, single or evil. It is not single or double, but single or evil. If Christ is not the object, there is some evil object. If the eye be single, it is all simple, though there will be difficulties in the

path, as with Paul. The light is set on a candlestick, that all who come in “may see the light.” The man is forced to the question, Do you see it or not? Christ has set up the light in the world. God has displayed Himself in Him, and the effect of that is to shew your condition. Do you say, “Suffer me first to go and bury my father?” Ah, you have something first. If my body is not full of light, there is something not single in my eye—something has not given way before the power of Christ—something not given up. People say, I cannot see. No, of course you cannot; you have some other light. Further, what you do see now will presently be given up if you do not walk in the power of what you have.

“Take heed that the light that is in thee be not darkness.” Our manner of judging may be wrong, because the standard is not Christ, and then the light becomes darkness: we are guided wrong and mistaken in our path. If the eye be full of Christ, and we judge everything by that light, when I see anything that would not glorify Christ, I say, That will not do for me. I may be a little vessel, but I must be wholly for Christ. May we be walking in the power of the Holy Ghost, and by the divine teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, content to follow Him, and desire no other path, having the eye upon Him, and only upon Him, so that when other objects are put before us, we may be able to say, “This one thing I do!” While walking through the world, may we be occupied with Christ, not making it our business to judge evil, but simple concerning it.

From verse 37 we have the sure judgment of the Lord on the various forms which the lifeless religion of those who led the people took up, expressed in different ways, but His constant and unmingled judgment upon it all.

The first ground of condemnation is the substitution of outward clean-sings and services, which the flesh can render, for purity of heart and the spirit of love: where these last are, external things are clean. Thus money occupies the heart, where there is only a religious form, for it represents the world; and pre-eminence is another expression of the same thing. Next (v. 45, etc.), the doctors of the law are sentenced, and with them the imposing of burdens on others, while they spared themselves from the trouble. It might not at first appear why building the sepulchre of the prophets shewed approval of those who killed them ‘, but the truth was that the lawyers sought in this their own honour, instead of receiving the testimony of the prophets, which would have humbled them, for the moral and utter ruin of the nation. But they were adorning, as if all were right, the tombs of the righteous and good. It was the spirit of the world, arrogating credit to itself for piety to the dead, not holy fear at the prophet’s rebukes. But a clearer proof should be in the wisdom of God that they sympathised not with the word of the prophets, but with the works of their fathers. Prophets and apostles would be sent, and once more be slain and persecuted. The Pharisees were hypocrites, and so judged; the expositors of the law perverted their nearness to scripture in their hatred of any real testimony to their own conscience. These could, least of all bear, what detected their evil. Hence, in pride and fear, they took to themselves all the springs of knowledge, neither entering themselves (for they must do that as learners, and needy, and lost), nor allowing those to enter who would (lest they should condemn themselves, and besides, their honour and characters go for nothing). The closing verses shew us the invariable conduct of false religionists. Having no

answer of moral truth to the evidence of deceit and evil exhibited in their ways, their effort was to perplex and to entrap. Convicted of sin, and incapable of truth, they sought to make void God's goodness in accusing even Christ of error. It was mercy toward others to be plain as to these false guides, and therefore the Lord denounced them unsparingly.

Chapter 12.

The last section of this gospel (chap. 10:38; 11) shewed the two great means of blessing to the soul—namely the word of God and prayer, the precious gift of God, and the true need of man in the presence of a rejected Messiah. It shewed withal the doom of the people who refused every testimony of God. Chapter 12 presents the disciples carrying on their testimony in the midst of hypocrisy and opposition, but in the power of the Holy Ghost. The Lord addressed His disciples first of all; but fearlessly, and without compromise, before a vast throng, as one who acted in the spirit of what He taught. He warns them against that religious formalism which consists of what could be presented to man, and insists strongly and explicitly upon the sure bringing of all things into the light (v. 1-3).

But just as the breaking down of forms and the revelation of the full light of God had its highest operation and effect in His own death, so the disciples must look for the world's hostility, must be prepared for it in their own case, it might be up to death itself. If Messiah were rejected and slain, what could they look for in the same scene, while Satan's power is not set aside? Hence, also, in these chapters it is a question of the soul's relationship with God. It was not the unfolding

of the church yet, but the kingdom in its Jewish application is set aside, and the consequence is that the disciples are to look for the Lord's coming again, and until then, trial and violence. His return would have two aspects: one for such as are in relationship with Himself, and the other for the world; and both are taken up here. They were to beware of hypocrisy, and to remember God's necessary determination to bring everything to light. "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

Verses 4, 5. Next, as to the importance of walking in the light. They were not to fear them who kill the body but God, who could cast into hell. Jesus perfectly feared God, and called on His friends to fear none but Him. "Yea, I say unto you, fear him." But further (v. 6-8), not even a sparrow is forgotten before God; and the very hairs of their head were all numbered. Therefore they were not to fear. Our God has made it of faith to be assured that He cares much for us.

On the other hand, they were not to trust in themselves — in their own courage or their own wisdom, but to confess Christ. There was the result in relation with the humbled, but yet to be exalted, Son of man. There would be a return of love or shame before the angels of God, according as He should be confessed or denied before men {v. 8, 9). He had hidden His glory to effect grace. He had come among men and into the midst of evil, that God. might be fully glorified in His humiliation. This was the patience of God, for Christ claimed nothing. But the Holy Ghost would come asserting the glory of God, and

claiming subjection to it, witnessing the grace, and proving the glory in power. Hence a word spoken against the Holy Ghost would not be forgiven. Wonderful to say, this is attached to the disciples (v. 10) to console and strengthen them in their weakness. The Son of man might be slighted, and yet there was forgiveness; but if He by whom they would speak was blasphemed, it would be unpardonable. Further (v. 11, 12), the Holy Ghost would speak by them, whatever the power, ecclesiastical or civil, that arraigned them. Such were the principles, the warnings, the motives, and the encouragements the Lord attached to a mission which, rejected by and outside Judaism, was the introduction of light by grace into a world of sin and darkness.

Thereupon in verses 13, 14, the Lord, by positively refusing to adjudge in Israel, shews that Jewish blessing had lost its place. It was no longer a question of dividing the inheritance, but of the soul in its position before God. Only He warns against the folly of loving the things which gave occasion to such disputes. Righteousness on earth is not looked for now: Jesus declines the place of regulating it, and proceeds to shew the inward principle of the kingdom in contrast with the world. Hence He told the multitude to beware of covetous-ness, for a man’s life is not in what he possesses, adding a most solemn parable as to the doom of the rich man, who was not rich toward God. Whatever he might say to his soul, God required it that night. “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself” (v. 16-21).

Verses 22-31. If it be thus with the world, do you who have a father, even the Father, not be anxious for your soul or body. Food and clothing were not just objects for disciples’ care, but rather to put on the Lord Jesus

Christ. Their thoughts should be in another channel, rising above a mere natural view of the life and the body. But He proceeds to assign positive grounds operative upon them as believers. Needful things were subsidiary which God provided, for they were His and under His ordering. He cared for much less than they were. The fowls of heaven and the grass of the field read them no uninstructive lesson, as interpreted of Christ. And if there was, on the one side, God's provident care for the least of His creatures, on the other side let them bear in mind the utter weakness of their anxieties. Whatever might be natural to those who knew not God, they were not to be seeking what to eat or drink: their Father knew they wanted such things. Let them seek the kingdom of God, and all the rest should be added.

Verses 32-40. The Lord now takes higher ground for them. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Therefore were they rather to get rid of what they had as men, and to provide things such as the Father gives to the heirs of the kingdom. They were to act the part of kings called to and having an higher inheritance. The heart follows the treasure. Let them provide a treasure in the heavens, and their heart will be there also. To be great saints is not by the value of what they gave meritoriously, but the effect internally suitable to their position and their calling. God is not ashamed to be called their God. Further (v. 35, etc.), they were to wait for their Lord. This was especially to form their character, and to be continually and outwardly expressed—the habitual expectancy of the Lord. Their loins were girded, and their lights burning, as if Christ was actually on His way. And He that shall come will come; and "blessed are

those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

They were now associated with the heavenly character of the kingdom. This world was nought; what they had of it they could turn into the privilege of doing good unselfishly, and have their treasure above, where there would be no losing it, and so their hearts would be kept there. Thus their character would be heavenly. Meanwhile they were to be as men who waited their Lord returning from the wedding. The general aim of the heavenly effect of the calling is here in question. They were to be on the watch. It is not prophecy, but character and position. There are no signs or historical circumstances, as in chapters 17 and 21, for people on earth; here there is heavenly separation from it. For those who thus wait Jesus is still a servant. He will make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them. Girded to serve as man, His ear bored in death, in joy He comes forth delighting in disciples so walking. Gladly He releases them from their endurance and watching and service; He sets them at the feast, and honours their faithfulness thus. They were therefore left in uncertainty; and so the church, when formed, was left. The church is always to wait for Christ, having no special time: every moment is its time in desire and duty, as alas! it is the world's for negligence. The Jews have a time; days, years, and earth computations belong to them, and therefore signs. To us it may be second watch or third watch; blessed only if we are found watching!

Verses 41-48. Peter puts the question of the application of what goes before, which brings out the portion of

those who serve faithfully. They will be set over all the Lord's goods when He returns to take possession of all He made and will inherit; a very encouraging thought, though not the highest. On the other hand Christendom apostatises by putting off in heart the Lord's coming. The great stay of heavenly-mindedness is lost thereby, and so our peculiar calling and hope. To expect the Lord detaches from the world; putting it off left the servant to his own will. It is not doctrinal denial; but he says in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming"; and then he acts with violence towards the fellow-servants, and his fellowship is with the world. But that servant has a Lord, let him act ever so independently; and He will come when not expected, and set that servant's portion with the unbelievers^ whatever may have been his boasted rights and privileges. Further in detail there would be a righteous adjudgment (v. 47, 48); for here we have the principles of service, as before of position. The ignorance of heathenism, etc., will not be spared, but far more tremendous will be the doom of Christendom. Most righteous, but oh, how solemn!

Verse 49. There is another thing to be noted—the import of our Lord's coming then into the world. Had man been what he ought, peace would have been the result; but man saw no beauty in Christ to desire Him, and the effect was hatred—not peace, but a sword. The nearer the relation, the deeper the grievance. The will of man comes out, and is utterly opposed to God. They would not endure to be told that they were under God's judgment. But there is this peculiarity in the character of division which the entrance of grace makes. He who is converted in a family becomes generally, and at once, the slave of the rest. Nature even is subverted in such

cases. How often thus a husband or parent loses his authority! There is a fire kindled before Christ comes again in judgment to kindle it. He was not then come to judge, but they, by their rejection of Him, kindled the fire of judgment.

Now look at the Lord's part. "I have a baptism," etc. What could straiten the Lord's heart? The perfect infinite love of God in Him was, as it were, shut up. If He spoke to His disciples of His death, "That be far from thee, Lord "was all the response He met with even in Peter. How painfully was He thus shut up into Himself! But on He went in His service of living love through the world, looking forward to the baptism of His death; and His being straitened shewed the fulness and strength of His love. Till then there could be no letting out of heart; for who understood Him? The Jews said, "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! "They were shut up within the walls of Judaism; so that, though One was there with a flowing river of blessing, they would not receive Him. Divine love was, we may say, pent up and driven back into the heart of God. But all is met. "How am I straitened till it be accomplished?" He is not straitened now. The barrier is broken in His death.

How could they as sinners have communion with Christ? There could be none. When He came to meet man's need, they hated and rejected Him. But on the cross He has put away sin, and now grace can flow out without hindrance or measure: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Man is not changed, but God can act in His own way through redemption. Christ's love and glory did come out in a measure before, for "He could not be hid." But at the cross all overflowed; and

looking back from that over His life, we see what infinite love, and sorrow, and suffering, filled it up.

In verses 54-57 the multitude are addressed on the principle of personal responsibility—first, upon the evident signs of God's dealing with the world, and next, from their moral judgment of what was right. The conclusion was, that God was in the way with the Jewish people; and if they did not agree with Him then, they would turn Him into a judge, and must incur the full penalty of their iniquities. In human affairs man would be prudent enough to come to terms with his adversary, knowing himself wrong and anticipating the judgment. If they did not submit and be reconciled to the Lord now in the way, they would soon be delivered to His judicial dealings and not cease from them till they had received of His hand double for all their sins.

Chapter 13.

There are two great principles or subjects in connection with man on the earth—the church of God as such, and the government of God in the world; and these are very distinct. In the church the riches of His grace are manifested. In His governmental dealings we see the display of His justice, mercy, and goodness. An example of God s governmental power as to Israel we have in Exodus 34:5-7. This is not sovereign grace, bringing a soul to eternal life, but government of the same character as we may see every day around us. If a man wastes his fortune or ruins his health by intemperance of any kind, his children suffer for it. "What a man soweth, that shall he also reap." See God's dealings with David, because of the matter of Uriah. "The sword shall never depart from thine house… Thou didst it secretly,

but I will do this thing before all Israel… Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme, the child that is born unto thee shall surely die." And we know that this judgment for his sin was accomplished in David's after-history. This is not grace, but government. God deals in the same way with a saint now—that is, both in grace and righteousness.

In Luke 13 we see the Jews had this thought of government in their minds, nor was it wrong in itself. They thought that God could not let such a guilty fellow live as this Pilate, who had been mingling the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices. But Christ brings them to a new principle by which to judge, and tells them judgment was coming upon themselves if impenitent. "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners," etc.? "I tell ye nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." It refers to judgment in the government of this world, which would overtake all who repented not. They had God's Son there, and they were practically rejecting Him; and how many of the Jews had their blood mingled by Titus? Christ had said to the Jews at the close of chapter 12, "When- thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate … give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him, lest he hale thee to the judge," etc.; but of the state of the Jews, who were under God's dealings and would not escape till the chastenings of the Lord upon them are complete. Thus it is very evident that this passage refers simply to God's government of His people. Natural conscience ought to have told these Jews not to reject the Messiah, for God was going all the way along with them to the magistrate, dealing with them in patient grace, and He would say to them, If you do not repent and be reconciled, judgment

must come upon you, when it will be the same with you as with those whom ye think to be such sinners.

Verse 6. The Lord is dealing here with the same state of things. The fig-tree is Israel, and God comes seeking fruit in them and finding none. In the gospel there is this difference, that grace, instead of seeking, sows in order to produce fruit. He found none, and the sentence therefore upon it is, “Cut it down.” He not only found it useless, but His vineyard was encumbered by it. “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.” Then comes in Christ’s mission. Last of all “He sent his Son.” God had planted a vineyard and pruned it, but there was no fruit. Then a new gardener comes in, and He says, “Spare it this year also, till I shall dig about it,” etc. It must bring forth fruit then, or be digged up. He has done as He said, but still there is no fruit.

Verse 11. The woman with an infirmity, whom Jesus heals on the sabbath day, brings out another thing that was working in their hearts, in the place of the law which left room for hypocrisy. They would lead an ox or an ass from the stall on the sabbath, but they would not bear that a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound these eighteen years, should be loosed on that day. One of the infirmities of man’s mind is to use possessed truth to resist revealed truth. Paul was an example of this— “as touching the righteousness of the law, blameless”; still he “thought he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth.” So also Christ says of the Jews in John 16, “These things will they do unto you,” etc. They were using the name of the one true God, which had been given them (“Jehovah thy God is one God “) to reject the Son; for when Christ came in humiliation, they would not receive Him. Orthodoxy is

used to stop the reception of truth. When truth is the ground of a man's standing, it gains him credit; but when a new truth comes in, it puts faith to the test. Truth that requires faith to walk by is resisted by the natural heart; and the root of this is hypocrisy. The ruler of the synagogue said, "There are six days in which men ought to work; in them come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." But he ought to have known that the Lord of the sabbath was there; for that single word "daughter of Abraham "ought to have told him who He was that stood there. The Lord answered him, "Thou hypocrite!" A solemn word this!

Verse 18. He goes on to shew what the kingdom will be like when the king is rejected and gone away. A kingdom without a king! who is sitting on His Father's throne, until He comes to take His own throne. The kingdom is like a little seed thrown into the ground, which springs up and becomes a great tree—just what we call Christendom. This fills up the gap between His rejection and His coming again. There is no power exercised while the King is away; as in Mark's Gospel it sprang up, men knew not how. When the harvest is ripe, He will come again. He sowed the first time, but He will put in the sickle the second time. He is looking for heavenly fruit now; but when He comes, He will find Christendom a great tree with the fowls of the air lodging in its branches. Pharaoh was a great tree; Nebuchadnezzar a greater still: they were the high and mighty ones of the earth, representatives of worldly power. Even Israel, which had been planted a noble vine, wholly a right seed, was bearing no fruit. Therefore, as it is said in Ezekiel 15, "what is the vine-tree more than any tree," if it bears no fruit? It is only fit to be burned. Otherwise

useless if it does not bear fruit, it only makes the best firewood.

Verse 21. Here the kingdom is likened unto leaven, and leaven is that which spreads throughout the whole mass, and also gives a character to that in which it works. It is nominal profession of Christianity which is spread into a vast system. There is not a word here about the Holy Ghost, but about the effect in the world. In Matthew 13, in the first parable, there is individual result, and not the kingdom spoken of. In the first three of the six similitudes, it is the public appearance; in the last three, the inward character is described.

Verse 23. “Are there few that be saved?” The word used here is the same word that through the LXX signifies a remnant, or “such as shall be saved.” The question really was as to whether this remnant would be few or many, who were to be spared when the judgment came; but, this being a mere idle question, the Lord does not answer it, but says to them:—

Verse 24. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” The strait gate was receiving Christ at that time—the real but narrow entrance of faith in Him and conversion to God. There will be some to come and knock when the door is closed, to whom He will say, “I know you not whence ye are”: you are not changed, Strive to enter in at the strait gate, through which Christ goes before you —that is, rejection. “Many shall seek to enter into [not at the strait gate] and shall not be able.”

It is most simple when we see the rejection of Christ. Those who reject Him in the day of His humiliation will themselves be rejected in the day of His glory; and, instead of being His companions in the kingdom, they

will be thrust out. The unbelieving Jews will see the Gentiles come into the glory of the kingdom, while they, remaining in unbelief, will be cast out.

Verse 31. The Pharisees say to Him, “Get thee out and depart, for Herod will kill thee.” Now Herod was an Idumaean, and what right had such a stranger to be their king? What had he to do with the promises to Israel? Nothing. In Herod we have a figure of the wilful king. He tried to kill Christ, and therefore the character of opposition-king belongs to him. He had no faith in God’s purposes or in Christ’s glory; and the Lord says, “Go and tell that fox.” I shall do My Father’s will till the moment come for Me to be glorified. I am here as long as My Father wills, and then I shall be perfected. The power of God must be fully known. What divine contempt for the apostate king, but what perfect human obedience combined! “Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets,” etc. After all, Jerusalem is the guilty place. Let the Edomite king do and say what he will, it is “the holy city “that is guilty, for it was nearest to Himself. The nearer I am to God, if I reject Him, the worse is the sin and the more dreadful the judgment. See Psalm 132. “The Lord hath chosen Zion,” etc., and Psalm 88:65-68, the same election of Zion. Christ does not put the sin upon them till they have rejected both Him and His Father. He brings out a purpose of grace in these closing verses. The old man is condemned and profitless—Israel and all of us. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” The gospel begins with seeking and saving that which was lost. Here we see that, though they have rejected Him in

responsibility, He has not rejected them in the day of His grace. Grace shines out in His yet choosing Judah.

Notice how the divine person of the Lord comes out here. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered,” etc. A prophet could not say this, and He was a prophet too, and more than a prophet: He was Jehovah, for none but Jehovah could gather Israel; as “He that scattereth Israel will gather him.” Israel under responsibility had rejected Jehovah; but Jehovah will own them when He comes in sovereign grace. How blessed is the way! The circumstances through which He passed in His path down here did bring out in a far brighter way who He was than any text to prove it, important as that is in its place. For suppose you believed there was a God, yet if He were to come down by your very side and say I am, would not this be a very different thing? Christ was the humbled man all through His path down here, for He was ever the servant of all; yet when the service was done, and rejected as of no use, His glory shines out. “Before Abraham was, I am.” See in this chapter of Luke the connection between verses 33, 34, and 35 as illustrative of this. “How often would I have gathered thy children … your house is left unto you desolate … until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

The complaint in the Psalms is, that there is none to say “How long” —none to count on the faithfulness of God to His people. See Psalm 74:9. This expression is often used in the Psalms and in Isaiah 6 and refers to chastening, not retribution. How long is Israel to stumble and fall? (Rom. 11). In Isaiah 6 the prophet, having uttered these words, “Make the heart of this people fat,” etc., taken up by the Lord in John 12, then

says, “how long?” He waits in faith, and reckons upon God, and having God’s mind, he cannot believe that God will give them up, and therefore asks, “how long” is the chastening to continue? To which the Lord answers, “There shall be a great forsaking in the midst of the land, but in it there shall be a tenth, and the holy seed shall be the substance therefore.” The sap is still there, though there are no leaves. So in Psalm 118, “He hath chastised me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death.” In the same way the Lord does not say, “Your house is left unto you desolate, and therefore you shall not see me again.” No; but He says, “Ye shall not see me until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” He can give, as Jehovah, the answer in grace, and when He gives repentance to Israel, then He will send Jesus, whom until that day the heavens have received. Meanwhile our connection with Him comes in. The prophet spake only of earthly things, though divine; but to the church it is, “Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,” and “hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”: that gives security. How did I get there? By virtue of Christ. He is my title. My desire is to be acquainted with this, that I am one with Christ in heaven— an everlasting portion. This the Holy Ghost seals upon my soul, and would have me enjoy more and more.

When Israel is brought to repentance, “the stone which the builders rejected” will be “the head of the corner,” and owned of them. They will say, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever.” Alas! they will receive another first; but when their hearts are turned, and grace works, they will use the language of Psalm 119 and find the expression of the law within

their hearts; and when faith is thus exercised, and their hearts are broken, and open to receive Him, then He Himself will come to them. If there is not a prophet to say “How long?” Jehovah will give the answer. He never changes; and though He executes judgment and righteousness, grace is found in Him still. “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? “Well, if there be not faith to be found, or a prophet to say “How long?” there is One who will lay up, in His treasures, something for faith to lay hold on, in the sovereignty of His own grace.

Thus we see Jehovah in that humbled One, and how He is able to rise above all iniquity. How precious does all this make Jesus to us! and we are one with Him. May we learn of Him, and so follow Him, remembering that all that is left outside the narrow way is the flesh and evil.

Chapter 14.

This chapter shews out the distributive justice of God. First, it is toward His saints, the consequence of conduct with God, and the place a man will take in view of that. Next, we have responsibility connected with grace, the moral position of the soul, because of having grace presented to it. Slighting God’s grace fills up the measure of man’s sin. But here it is the presentation, which is a different thing from the possession, of grace. This is brought out in those who refused to come to the Supper.

Verses 1-6. The Lord, in bringing the dispensation to a close, constantly brings before Israel the sabbath. The question was, Could man, as man, find rest with God? Could man ever enter into God’s rest? We know man broke God’s rest directly—how soon we are not told:

but, perhaps the very day he ought to have rested, he ate the forbidden fruit. Man never entered into God's rest; and now the question was, how to enter in—by his own work or Christ's? It was essential to the rest after creation, to have it at the end of the six days of work, and therefore it was on the seventh day. So afterwards, when the legal ordinances were given, the sabbath became a sign of the covenant. The Lord, when here, constantly trenched on the sabbath, to shew that, sin being unremoved, He must work. He could not rest, the sabbath being a sign of man's getting rest after work, and the law shewing that man constantly broke that covenant. The Lord presses home to their consciences their sin, by shewing them that He must work if they were to have rest. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." If man had kept the law, he was entitled to the rest, but he neither did nor could keep it. All that was the sign of God's rest, for man, after work done, failed; but "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." The sabbath continued as a sign; and all through the prophets, we find it insisted on, but they did not get rest. Paul, reasoning upon it in Hebrews 4, says, "We which have believed, do enter into rest." But Canaan, the nominal rest, they of old did not enter, save the few faithful ones, and these did not get rest, for if they had, another day would not have been spoken of; and so it is said by the Psalmist, and quoted in Hebrews, "If they shall enter into my rest." "If" means "they shall not." This being the sabbath was no rest to them. The sabbath was still the sign, but no real rest. The whole thing being therefore gone as to man's getting into God's rest, it must be now on an entirely new principle, by faith and not by works. When Messiah came, He would have been rest to the people, but man would not have Him, as we

find it here. Man could not have God's rest by law, and they would not have it by grace, and this proves man has altogether broken with God. If I have got to God, I have rest, and need not journey farther for it. I have my rest in Himself; for grace, not law, has given me a capacity to enjoy what God is. But when the creature had broken the rest of his Creator, there could be no relationship between them. Sin has come in and caused God to be towards me as a judge, and there can be no link of heart between a judge and a criminal. If God judges me as a sinner, the only word I can have from Him is, "Depart from me, ye cursed." Therefore all that man can say is, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord." There is a link between a father and a child that brings them into relationship; but it is a new thing. All must be put on a new footing, for there is no rest in the old creation.

In chapter 15 we have grace at work to give rest, the Shepherd bringing the sheep home, etc.; and in this chapter we have a case of misery brought out in the man who had the dropsy. Christ said, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? But they held their peace. He puts the case to themselves. "If you shall have an ox or an ass fallen into a pit, … and they could not answer him." There was no present rest, no hope of rest, no possibility of rest for man as a sinner, and there could be no rest for God, for God could not rest where sin was. There was no sabbath for righteousness, for man had no righteousness. There was no sabbath for love, for love could not rest where judgment must be exercised. Love might come in and work, but work is not rest. Man has lost his communion with God, through his sin; and this is a solemn thing, for he has made God a judge through his

sin. The very thought of judgment connected with God shews man a sinner, for there was no necessary association of judgment with God; but when sin came in, judgment must follow, for God is holy. If brought to the consciousness of there being no relationship between us as sinners and God, we learn what a place becomes us, when once we have faith in His grace.

Verses 7-11. “And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms.” It is just the place that nature likes. The world which has no relations with God delights in exalting self and shutting Him out. Self gets for self what it likes and forgets God. Man is always setting up self, pushing for self, against God. ‘ He does not think so, for he says he is only using his faculties. But so Adam did to hide himself from God. Do not we use our faculties to please ourselves, rather than for God? While the master is away, the servants go on their own way and do their own will. A man is naturally hurt when he is put down in a corner and despised. Flesh does not relish being thrust aside, but this seeking for a place is to seek for it where Christ had none. “Therefore,” He says, “when thou art bidden to a wedding, sit down in the lowest room.”

The point of this parable is seen in verses 8-11: it refers the heart to the Master, to “him that bade thee.” If I am conscious of being a sinner, and therefore deserving no place, I shall take none, but wait till God bestows one on me. I shall have honour indeed, when God gives me a place. The point is, What does He bestow upon me? Having the eye upon God, and referring to Him, seek for the lowest place as Christ did. It will not do to say, I will not have a place in the world; the great thing is, the

heart resting on God's place in the world. When the eye is thus upon God, self is forgotten; if not, I am thinking of the slights I receive, and neither faith nor grace are in exercise. If I could think nothing of myself, I should be perfect. The man who bade the guests has the right estimate of each and the honour due to them. The evangelist's place, the pastor's, the apostle's, etc., will all be appointed by God. When God gives me a place, it is one of power and nighness to Himself; but when a man takes a place for himself, it is one of weakness and alienation from God, because self is the object.

Then, again, we must guard against the mere refusing to take a place in the world, because we know it is wrong, as followers of Him who has been rejected. A mere legal estimate of what is right can never last. A thing may be very right; but there is no stability in pursuing it, because there is no power to subdue the flesh in merely doing what one knows to be right. There was the sense of obligation with the law, but the law did not set an object before me to attract my heart; it did not bring God to me nor me to God. That lasts which feels that we are nothing and that God is everything. Many have begun very energetically, and taken a certain place, right in itself; but if legality be the source of it, there will be no power of perseverance, for that which is taken up under law will be sure to be lost in the flesh. When God is the object, the low place here is sufficient. He Himself carries me on; and whatever it be, if the mind and affections are upon Him, what was hard at first is no effort as I proceed. His love, which attracted and gave me power at first to take such a position, becomes brighter and brighter when better and longer known; and what was done, at first tremblingly, is easy with

increasing courage. The only thing which can enable me thus to go on is to have Christ the object before me, and just in proportion as it is so can I be happy. There may be a thousand and one things to vex me, if self is of importance; they will not vex me at all, if self is not there to be vexed. The passions of the flesh will not harass us, if we are walking with God. What rubs we get when not walking with God, and thinking only of self! There is no such deliverance as that of having no importance in one's own eyes. Then one may be happy indeed before God.

If we look at Christ, we learn two principles: first, that He humbled Himself, because of the sin of the world all around Him; second, the world did all they could to humble Him, for the more He went down, so much the more they sought to pull Him down.

No one cares for another; so that if a man does not care for himself, he will be sure to be pushed down low enough. Then again, so deceitful are our hearts that it is possible we should be willing to humble ourselves, if we could get anything by it, even the approbation of men. On the other hand, if we, in the usual sense of men, merely seek to imitate Christ in this, it will be but legal effort. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." He humbled Himself. First, "He made himself of no reputation"; that is, He emptied Himself of His glory to become a man. In doing this, He left the Father's glory to become a man. This was a great descent (though we think a great deal of ourselves). But was that all? No. He humbled Himself to death, even the death of the cross. It is the same principle which is put before us in this chapter in Luke. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Real lowliness is being ready to serve any

and everybody: and though it may to the eye of man look low, it is in reality very high, being the fruit of divine love working in our hearts. God, operating in our hearts, makes us unselfish. The only thing worth doing in the world is this service, except it be enjoying God. We should be ready to serve our enemies. “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” This is not only being humbled but humbling one’s self, and not doing it before those who would honour us all the more for being humble. Paul could say of himself and others, “ourselves your servants for Christ’s sake.” He felt they had a title to serve in grace; and in proportion as he took the humble place, he will be exalted in the day that is coming.

Verses 12-14. The next statement in the chapter goes on to speak of him who bade. Before, it was about the guest; but here it is the principle on which feasts are made. “Call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind … and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” Thus He takes them all out of the world again, to the time when they shall meet God, and makes it a present guide for action. They must not act on the principle of getting reward here, but must wait for the time when they are to meet the Lord, as it is not till the Master of the house returns that the servants receive their wages. This is not a question of salvation, but of reward for service. “Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”

Mark how the Lord brings out the just as a separate class. The resurrection is not a common one; there is no such thing in Scripture. There is no thought of confounding in another world what God has separated in

this. Grace has separated the believer, so that he is risen in his soul now; but he does not get the reward of his service till “the resurrection of the just.” A sinner is quickened here, though not judicially manifested here; because we are in a dispensation of faith, and the portion is in glory. There is no “general” resurrection to good and bad alike; but there is the “first resurrection,” which is God separating in power those whom in grace He has made His own. It was the “resurrection from among” or “out of the dead” that awakened such wonder among the Jews. The Pharisees could teach resurrection though the Sadducees denied it. A resurrection was commonly believed, as Martha said, “I know that he shall rise again at the last day.” But they could not comprehend divine power corning in to Satan’s house, and taking the righteous dead out from among the rest of the dead. Jesus replied to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life” —speaking of the living power that visits a man when he is in a state of death, and takes him out of it. They knew nothing of the discriminating process of the one to life, and the other to judgment (John 5).

The Master of the house will shew His approval of the faithful servant. There will be degrees of glory given according to the service done. Not that I shall be saved for what I have done; but my service will be rewarded, whatever may have been produced by the Holy Ghost answering the desire of Christ in working in me; for it is service of which I could not do an atom without His power. It is likewise the answer of God according to His counsels; as we may see in the reply to the mother of Zebedee’s children, “It shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of my Father.” The service of love is never

influenced by recompense. Reward is not set before the soul as the motive for doing anything; but when we find difficulties in treading the path of service, then the crown is set before us to encourage us to go on. So, even Christ, for the joy that was set before Him, "endured the cross, despising the shame." So also Moses, while esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, had respect unto the recompense of the reward. If the recompense and not love be the spring of our service, it would just amount to this, "Take thy penny, and go thy way." But if the world is broken with, no recompense can be looked for from that source, which is as great a deliverance as the deliverance from self.

Now (v. 15-24) see how grace, when brought in, is rejected. The Supper was ready; the guests were bidden, but they would not come. The Lord had before spoken of the kingdom, and here He shews what the reception of the kingdom would cost. All things are now ready; but they all make excuses. They do not care enough for the Supper to leave their yoke of oxen, the piece of ground, etc. The Supper was in God's thoughts from the beginning, and it was to be when He came to the Jews, as their Messiah, at the close of the day; but they rejected Him—they did not want Him. It does not say that their sins shut them out from the Supper, for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Neither was it the piece of ground, the oxen, or the wife that were in themselves the evil; but in their case they became so, because their minds were intent on them to the slighting of the Supper. And is it not just the same now? What harm is there in these things, do you say? If they have

occupied your heart, and made you slight God, that is the harm. In the kingdom of God where are you? There was not one link of heart between Christ and the people He came to, and therefore they rejected the Supper. This is also a test to our souls all through the day. It is not a question of whether a thing be right or wrong, but what savour have the things of Christ to our souls in it? It may be a very small thing. If we find the reading of a book makes the manifestation of Christ to become less precious to us, we have got away from God, and we cannot tell where the next step may take us. Satan often cheats us in this way. The soul is put to the test day by day, whether the things that are revealed by God in Christ have so much power over us as to engage the heart; but if other things have come in between when we want the enjoyment of the things of Christ, we shall not have it, and this will shew us how far we have got away. If anything comes in and takes the freshness of Christ from your soul, take heed! for, if the oxen, etc., are thus cared for, when you have opportunity for the things of Christ, you will have no taste for them.

In verse 21 the Lord turns to “the poor of the flock,” those who have no yoke of oxen, and are glad of the feast. The priests and chiefs of the Jews had the first invitation, but, they rejecting it, the Master of the house sends out into the streets and lanes of the city, to bring in the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind of the people. Still the house is not filled; and then He sends outside the city, into the highways and hedges, and compels them to come in, that the house may be filled. These are the Gentiles. In this Gospel the poor of the flock and the Gentiles are distinguished from each other. But in Matthew, whose aim is Jewish, there is no

mention made of both classes as distinct. “The wedding was furnished with guests” includes the Gentiles, gathered in after the Jews are brought into the blessing. Then mark the lowliness of the servant and the patient grace of the Master; that goes right on to the end. He cannot rest till He gets His house filled with guests.

What perseverance there is on the part of God! and we are called to go on in the same spirit. It does cost a great deal, to go on, and on, and on, in spite of everybody and everything; and for us to do so, marks the presence of divine power in us, for God’s grace is unwearied. There is indeed judgment at the same time, for it is said, “Not one of those that were bidden shall taste of my supper.” But God’s acting thus shews us what lowliness there should be in us, as regards self, and grace as regards everyone else, and all grounded on this one fact, that all man’s relationships with God are morally broken; and if you are really going to take such a path as that of following Christ, you must count the cost. It is all very well to see such grace and admire it; but there is no power to persevere in it, without such love in the heart as the establishment of a new relationship with God gives. There must be a link in the heart with the new thing; and Christ must have such strength in the heart as to give power to break with old things.

Verses 25-33. Multitudes were attracted by the hearing of such grace: so in verse 26 He tells them what discipleship will involve. There may be an allusion here to Micah 7:5, 6. Friends must be given up for Christ. A man may have to leave everything else, but the question is, Am I to leave God? What! life too? Yes—no matter. In that life you are linked with the world, and that must be

given up too, if I am in question: you cannot have two hearts—a heart for the world, and a heart for Me—Christ would say. I tremble when I see people who have not counted the cost, setting out in the profession of following Christ. It is God's way to put the barrier at the first start. If you can leap that, you will do.. Legal obedience will not stand, but following Christ. If He is in the path, it is happy and easy; but it is a path between two hedges. If Christ is not with you in it, there will be nothing but trouble and difficulty.

Verses 34, 35. "Salt" is grace in spiritual energy; that is, the saints being witnesses in the world of the power of holy love, instead of selfishness. Salt is the consecrating principle of grace: if that is gone, what is to preserve? Salt is rather grace in the aspect of holy separateness unto God, than in that of kindness and meekness, though of course these are also inseparable from grace. If the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? If I have meat without salt, I can salt it; but if there is no saltness in salt, what can I do? What a character we have here of an unspiritual church, or an unspiritual saint! Like, the vine which represented Israel, good for nothing at all but to dishonour the Lord its owner and be destroyed. Mercy, it is true, may recover us; but as saints we should have the savour of Christ. Whatever enfeebles attachment to Christ destroys power. It is not gross sin that does it, which of course will be met and judged; but it is the little things of every-day life which are apt to be chosen before Christ. When the world creeps in, the salt has lost its savour and we shew that a rejected Christ has little power in our eyes.

The Lord keep us in the path with Christ, where all is bright and blessed. If the film of this world has been

drawn over our spiritual vision, hiding Christ from us, He alone can remove it.

Chapters 15, 16.

We have seen the Lord shewing out His own rejection, in grace, followed by an entirely new order of things. The church, brought in subsequently, is not an age, properly so called, but a heavenly epistle between the ages. There are three ages spoken of in Scripture: the age before the law; the age under the law; and the millennial age. Christ was “made under the law,” and that age is not finished yet. The disciples said to Him, “What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?” That was the age when He was there, but when they rejected Him, the age was suspended. As He straitly charged Peter to tell no man He was the Christ, saying, “the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected,” etc. Therefore He says to them, “Ye shall not see me, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” We, who form a part of the church of God, and not having anything to do with the earth, are in no sense an age, but are a heavenly people united to Christ above, during the suspension of this age, filling up the gap between the Lord’s leaving the Jews, and His return to them again. So in Romans 11 we have the olive tree with some of the branches broken off, and others graffed in. This is the tree with its root in the earth, and consequently it could have nothing directly to do with the church in heaven. Some of the branches were broken off, and some left; but this could never be said of the church, the body united to its head, at the right hand of God. The church, of course, does fill up a certain place and time, but it is during the suspension of the age

to which Christ came. Characteristically we belong to that which is above and beyond anything connected with this world. It is grace that has set us there, and that is not of earth but of heaven.

In chapter 15 we find the Lord rising above Jewish dispensation altogether, to the full display of God's own nature—love— in the gospel. At the close of chapter 14 He takes up the professing system in its responsibility. "Salt is good, but if the salt have lost its savour," it is good for nothing. Thus He shews what man is. Then in chapter 15 come publicans and sinners, and we have the display of what God is. Here God is dealing with lost man, in grace. Sinners, who owned their sins and came to repentance, were those who justified God. "Wisdom is justified of her children." God is vindicated in His ways, whether in the condemnation or salvation of a sinner. The publicans and sinners justified God, being baptized of John, while the Pharisees rejected His counsel against themselves. All that is wanted to justify God is that He should shew Himself; and this is what the Lord now does. He manifests what God is in grace, and this it is which makes the chapter ever so fresh and full to our souls; the heart that has been awakened never tires of such a chapter.

Then, in chapter 16, He shews the responsibility of those who are thus dealt with. The earth was given to the children of men, and God looked for fruit. He first dealt with man as to what he ought to have been on the earth, but there was entire failure. Now there comes out another thing, entire grace, which is irrespective of all that man was, and takes an absolutely heavenly character. Divine love is its source, and its character is heavenly. Revealing heaven, it puts man into connection

with it; and the people so put must be a heavenly people. Why so? Because this world is all gone wrong; it has fallen from God, and is become the “far country.” Hence, its riches are of no value, but a great hindrance, unless used in a heavenly way; and chapter 16 shews how they should be used. Chapter 15 shews the sinner called out by grace; that which follows shews what he, who is called out, is to be as a heavenly man. This world is a scene of evil, and that which attaches to it is now ruin and not blessedness. (See the rich man and Lazarus.) Adam had a place in this world, and Israel had a place in it; but now that is all gone, and grace has come in, lifting those who are the subjects of it into another state of things altogether. Christ is justifying God. His nature being love, it was His joy to manifest grace to sinners. It is not here the joy of those brought back, but God’s own joy in bringing the sinner back to Himself. This gives the tone to heaven. “There is joy” above in the poor wretched sinner brought back.

I have no doubt we have, in these three parables, the unfolding of the ways of the Trinity. In the first is shewn the Son, as the Good Shepherd, going after the sheep. In the second, the woman lighting a candle, and searching diligently till she find the piece of silver, we have the painstaking work of the Holy Ghost, lighting up a testimony in this dark world. The third is the Father’s reception of the returning sinner, when brought back. In this, the prodigal son, we find the work in the sinner; but in the two previous ones, it is the sovereignty and the activity of grace, which goes out in love to find that which was lost, and brings the sinner back without his having anything to do in it. This persevering energy of love is in the Shepherd Himself—the Good Shepherd

cares for the sheep, and gives it no trouble in getting home; He carries it on His shoulders. Herein is seen the perfect grace in which the Lord Jesus has so charged Himself with bearing our every burden, our every trial and difficulty all along the road. Christ is thus the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Then mark, in verse 6, the peculiar character of this joy. “He calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.” There could not be a more genuine picture, or a fuller expression of a person being happy than this. Joy always speaks out. In the second parable we have the same general principle. The painstaking of the Holy Ghost is shewn in the acting of the woman who sought the lost piece of silver; the piece of silver could have neither trouble nor joy itself. The difference in the two is, that in the first, the Shepherd bears all the burden; in the second, it is the pains taken in finding the lost piece, proving the woman cared enough for it to take all this trouble to search it out. Thus does God’s love act towards us, to bring us out of the dark world to Himself. What a work it is to bring man’s heart back to God!

“’Twas great to speak a world from nought;

“’Twas greater to redeem.”

If we look at man, as he is in himself, he could never get back to God. But look at what God is in Himself, and who or what can resist His grace! Still it is the joy of the finder, and not of the thing found: “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep—my piece—that was lost.” And in the case of the returning prodigal, who made the feast? Not the young man, but the father, saying to those in the house, “Let us eat and be merry, for this my son was

dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." All caught the joy of the Father's heart, the servants, etc., all except the unhappy self-righteous elder brother (the Pharisee, the Jew), to whom the father replied, "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again," etc. It is the joy God has in receiving a sinner back to Himself. In the parable of the prodigal son, by itself, the full glory of grace is not seen, as these three parables set it forth together. The case of the sheep is the Shepherd charging Himself with the whole burden of the sheep; the silver is the painstaking of the Holy Ghost. Before actual departure there was moral departure. When the young man left his father's house, it was but a display of the evil in his heart. He was just as wicked when he asked for his portion of goods, and crossed his father's threshold, as when he ate husks with the swine in the far country; he was doubtless, more miserable then, but his heart was gone before. One man may run farther into riot than another, but if we have turned our backs upon God, we are utterly bad. In this sense there is no difference.

The moral evil was just the same with Eve. She gave up God for forbidden fruit. She virtually thought the devil a much better friend to her than God, and took his word instead of God's. Satan is a liar from the beginning, and at the cross the Lord proved this. It cost the Lord His life to prove that God was good. Christ came to contradict the devil's lie, which man believed, and under which the whole world is lying. Grace and truth came by Christ, and at all cost were set up by Him on the cross. Man can do without God, and from the beginning the whole world has been a public lie against God. Who

could unriddle it? Look at creation, how it groans under the bondage of corruption. Look at providence—how can I account for the goodness of God when I see an infant writhing with pain? How can I reconcile the two things? The villain prospers—the good man suffers. When I see Christ on the cross, I see what God is. Death came on man by reason of sin. But Christ takes my sin on His own sinless person, bows His head in death upon the cross, and thus sets aside that lie of Satan, “Ye shall not surely die.” Thus was God’s truth re-established here below in the work and person of the Lord Jesus, and nowhere else. In Him I see holiness, truth, and love, no matter at what cost.

The natural man is just like this prodigal, he spends his substance in the far country, and ruins himself. A man having £5,000 a year, and spending £20,000, will seem very rich for the time; but look at the results. He is a ruined man. The moment man departed from God, he sold himself to Satan, and is spending his soul, his heart, away from God; he even spends what God has given him against God, and when he is thoroughly spent, and has nothing to live on, he begins to be in want. “There arose a mighty famine in that land,” and all the world feels that. Every sinner does not go to the same lengths of eating the swine’s husks, but all are in the same condition of ruin. Every man has turned his back upon God, though all have not run to the same excess of riot, nor fallen into the same degradation. The famine never draws back to the Father’s house.

The prodigal joined himself to a citizen of that country—not his father’s country. “He would fain have filled his belly,” etc., and “no man gave to him.” Satan never gives; that is found where God’s love is, who spared not

His own Son. When the prodigal thinks of his father's house, the whole work is morally done, though he is not back there yet. He turns, his heart was changed, and thus his whole desire was to get back to his father's house, from whence he had departed. He was not yet in the full liberty of grace, so as to have peace and happiness, and he says to himself, "make me as one of thy hired servants." He is brought to a sense of his guilt; and what was it? feeding with the swine? No, this was the fruit of it; but his guilt was in leaving his father's house, turning away from God. When he came to himself, he desired to return. This was truly a right wish, but the form it took in his mind, from his not yet knowing grace, was a legal one. "I am no more worthy to be called thy son! make me as one of thy hired servants." But the father does not give him time for that. We hear nothing more about hired servants; for when he was "yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." He could not have been a servant with the father's arms round his neck. It would have spoiled the father's feelings, if not the son's.

It was the joy of Him who was receiving back the sinner to Himself; and it is the knowledge of this which gives peace to the soul: nothing else does. If a man does not know love, he does not know God, for God is love. The full revelation of God is what we have in Christ. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" God acts from the joy and delight He has in Himself, in receiving back the sinner, and therefore He does not think of the rags but of the child He has got back again. What right has man to call God in question, when He indulges His own heart in the outflow of" love

to the sinner? You will never get peace by the mere act of coming back, but by learning the Father's mind about you. Could the prodigal get peace as he was coming back if the father had not met him? No, all along the road he would be questioning, how will he receive me?—will he be angry with me? will he spurn me from his presence? And if he does, what will become of me? "But when he was get a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him." If not so, he would have trembled even to knock at the door.

When the father's arms were on the son's neck, was he defiled by the rags? No; and he will not have the son bring rags into the house, but orders the best robe to be brought out of it. God sends His own Son out of heaven, and clothes the sinner; and, thus arrayed, the young man could bring credit to his father's house. And, surely, if we are so clothed with Christ, we shall do credit to God; and, in the ages to come, He will shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

"Let us eat and be merry." It is not, Let him eat and be merry. Again, he says, "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad." There was but one exception to the delight in the house. The elder brother (the self-righteous person) was angry, and would not go in. God had shewn what He was in Himself, by His Son, in thus receiving the prodigal: and now He would shew what they were in themselves. We know the Pharisees murmured from the beginning, and the elder brother had no communion with his father: for if the father was happy, why was not he happy too? "He was angry, and would not go in." If such a vile person as the publican

gets in, this makes my righteousness go for nothing! It is truly so; for where God's happiness is, there self-righteousness cannot come. If God is good to the sinner, what avails my righteousness? He had no sympathy with his father. He ought to have said, "My father is happy, so I must be." There should have been communion in the joy. "Thy brother is back." That ought to have rung on his heart, but no.

Then see the perfect patience of God's grace: the father goes out and entreats him. And do we not, all through the Acts, see God entreating the Jews to be reconciled, although they had crucified His Son? So Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 2:15, 16, says that the Jews filled up the measure of their sins by forbidding the apostles to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved. It is all selfishness in the elder son. "Thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." To which the father replies, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." The oracles of God, the covenants, the promises, God gave to the Jews; but He will not give up the right to shew His grace to sinners, because of the self-righteous selfishness of the Jews, or of any one else.

Chapter 16. "There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods." Man, generally, is God's steward: and in another sense and in another way, Israel was God's steward, put into God's vineyard, and entrusted with law, promises, covenants, worship, etc. But in all, Israel was found to have wasted His goods. Man, looked at as a steward, has been found to be entirely unfaithful. Now, what is to be done? God appears, and in the sovereignty of His grace, turns that which man has abused on the earth, into a means of heavenly fruit. The

things of this world being in the hands of man he is not to be using them for the present enjoyment of this world, which is altogether apart from God, but with a view to the future. We are not to seek to possess the things now, but, by the right use of these things, to make a provision for other times. “Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,” etc. It is better to turn all into a friend for another day than to have money now. Man here is gone to destruction. Therefore now man is a steward out of place. “Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.” He is discharged from stewardship—has lost his place, but not the things of which he has the administration. Here is something far better than the alchemy which would turn all into gold. For this is grace, turning even gold itself, that vile thing which enslaves men’s hearts, into a means of shewing love and getting riches for heaven.

To Israel, God is saying, You have failed in the stewardship; therefore now I am going to put you out. In chapter 15 the elder brother, the Jew, would not go in; and here, in chapter 16, God is putting the Jew out of the stewardship. With Adam, all is over; but we have a title in grace to use, in a heavenly way, that to which we have no title at all as man. “If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” “If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?” Our own things are the heavenly things; the earthly things are another’s; and if you do not use your title in grace in devoting in love these earthly temporal goods, which are not your own, how can God trust you with the spiritual things which are “your own”? Our own things are all the

glories of Christ—all that is Christ's is ours, for "we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold," etc. We were bought with a price, it is true, not with money, but "with the precious blood of Christ," etc. God has not given us eternal life in order that we might be getting money. "No man can serve two masters," and if you want to be rich, you cannot be seeking to serve God. We may have to do our duty in this world, but it is never our duty to serve mammon and desire riches.

Now He goes on to shew that there are these everlasting habitations, when the grand results will appear of what has been done here. The old thing is fleeting away, and the new coming in. The Jew, who refused to come to the feast, is loosening the law, while rejecting grace. See chapter 14:18, 19.

Verse 19. "A certain rich man, clothed in purple," etc. The thought here is Jewish, and the great principle is that all God's dealings, as to the distributive justice on the earth, were no longer in force, and that now He only deals in grace. He draws aside the veil to shew the result in another world. The rich man had his good things here—he belonged to the earth, and the basket and the store belonged to him—his treasure was on earth, and his heart there too. But look into the other world and see the result— "torment." The good things have changed now. "The rich man died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." "And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, etc… and the beggar died." Was he buried? Not a word about it, for he belonged not to the earth. "He was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." He who had the "evil things" down here, "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."

He who have the “evil things” down here, was carried to the best place in heaven. Then mark, it was not the affliction, sores, etc., of Lazarus made him righteous, any more than the riches of the rich man made him unrighteous. God having done with the earthly things, no earthly circumstances are a mark of God’s present favour, or the reverse: though, no doubt, God’s dealings with Lazarus were the means of bringing down his pride, breaking the will, etc., and so preparing him for the place He was going to take him to.

Verse 31. “If they hear not Moses and the prophets,” etc. Here this solemn truth comes out, that even the resurrection of Christ will not convince them; for if they refuse to hear God’s word as they have it, they will not hear the testimony of God, even though one rose from the dead; and we know they did not.

This chapter 16 is to let in the light of another world upon God’s ways and dealings in this. The whole world is bankrupt before God; so that man is now trading with another’s goods. When man rejected Christ he was turned out of his stewardship. This is man’s position. We should therefore, dispose of everything now, in reference to the world to come, according to this permission in grace revealed in chapter 16, to use the things of which we have the administration. If we are serving mammon, we shall not get the blessing of serving God, in the sense of God’s gifts; for it is retributive justice here, in a sense. If you are not faithful in another man’s, who will give you that which is your own? If you have not been faithful to the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? If you are loving money, you cannot have your heart filled with Christ. We are not to be “slothful in business,”

but “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”; and for this He opens heaven to us. Not as He said to Abraham, “Unto a land that I will shew thee.” He has shewn heaven unto us, having opened it to us in grace. It is the revelation of grace that gives power over earthly things. May the Lord keep before us a living Christ, as our light for guidance and salvation to walk and trust in!

Chapter 17.

We have seen the great principle of divine grace in contrast with self-righteousness, and the Jewish economy, which refused its Messiah, the Son of God, set aside to make way for bringing to light life.and incorruption through the gospel. “Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come; but woe unto him through whom they come” (v. 1). We enter here on the spirit and way of serving, now that the world to come was let in upon the conduct and faith of the disciples in this world, for none could serve two masters. God is carrying on a work—in a little child perhaps—but it is His own work and individual faith is needed in the path of a rejected Christ. Among those who professed to follow Him and His glory on the principles of faith, there would be alas! many scandals. It was not now, nor yet to be, a reign of judicial power when the Son of man would gather out of His kingdom all scandals and them which do iniquity. Satan’s power is permitted, the exercise of faith is required. It is a time of proving, by the prevalence of evil, that which lasts because of God. The cross must be taken and self denied. It is a hard lesson, but blessed when learned. The cross and the glory are always connected. The cross must be on the natural man, not on sin merely, so as to

break the will. Christ had no will, shewing perfectness; but we need the cross practically, as the means of communion by breaking down that which hinders.

Then, again, the whole system of the world is a stumbling-block: there is not one thing in it which is not calculated to turn the heart from God. Take the merest trifle—dress, vanities in the street, flattery of man, of brethren, perhaps, etc.—all tend to elevate the flesh. What a different thing is heaven opening on a rejected Saviour! And this is our light and pathway through the world, for now the heavens are open to faith, as we pass through it to Him whom we see in glory. There is an active energetic flow of God's love in carrying on souls. Is our walk a witness? Take care you are not a stumbling-block. You may say, A person must be very weak to feel such or such a thing, but it is the very reason why he is to be cared for. The Lord give us never to hinder but to help the weak! These things are the stumbling-block of the enemy, and the man by whom they come is so far an instrument of Satan. The Lord loves His little ones. Better for that man that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of them.

Verse 3. But suppose a person does something to stumble you, what then? "Take heed to yourselves." Your part is to forgive. Take heed to yourselves, jealous and self-judging. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." What! if he trespass often—"seven times in a day?" Yes, if he "seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." Watch incessantly yourselves and see to it that the spirit of love (the power of unity and the bond of perfectness, as we know from elsewhere) be not

broken, nor the spirit of holiness, that the peace be not false. Blessed path! what condescension to our weakness and danger in the introduction of grace, and the moral judgment of present things, which are the aliment of the flesh and the domain of the world! Watchfulness against self and grace to others bring us through, rising like a life-boat above all breakers.

Verses 5-10. In such a position there would be need of faith and the energy proper to it. The apostles (led of God, though perhaps seeing but a petty part of the difficulty and with a confused sense of this new position) pray for an increase of faith. The Lord answers by setting forth the fulness of its energy: for faith realises a power which is not in the person and thus acts without limit. He applies it also, though in general terms, to the removal of the obstacles of a system, which might present the form of what was good and great, but fruitless. In every need we may draw upon God. All consists in looking simply to Him. All things are possible to him that believes. For it is God accomplishing His will, and He has willed to accomplish it by man and to honour Himself in man, after being dishonoured of Satan in and by man; but this in faith according to His will, till the Lord Jesus returns in power and glory. God is at work, and if you are co-workers under Him, you could believe that He is and say, Let this be done and this. Is it nothing to wield God’s power? If you know what it is to be opposed by Satan, you will feel how blessed it is to call in the power of God. Your place and work may be very humble—outside—no matter what: still you need God’s power to be little. What the Lord says in verses 7-10 is not applicable to a careless servant. If he has neglected his work, he is a slothful

one. But I am an unprofitable servant when I have done all that I am commanded. Am I neglected? It is to try me. Something needs it. Perhaps I want to learn that God can do without me. Now that Christ is rejected, God is at work. If He uses me, it is a great honour; if He lays me by because self was elated, it is a great mercy. He is saying, as it were, Be satisfied with Myself, be content to know I love thee. Are you content with His love? Do you want man's honour or your own? Remember that when you have done all, it is the time to say, "unprofitable servant!"

Verses 11-19. The history which follows shews that when God brings in new power, those who have had the previous privileges are the last to rise above them into what is better. But there is a faith wrought of God in the heart which sets free from the subsidiary forms thrown around God's will in the past economy. Thus, recognising God in Jesus, it carries the soul beyond the law of a carnal commandment and associates it with Him in whom is the power of an endless life. It occupies us with His person who is above all, planting us not in dishonour of the law ("yea, we establish the law" through faith), but in the liberty wherewith the truth—the Son—makes free. All were cleansed by the word of divine power. The nine went on to shew themselves to the priests, acting on the word of Jesus and thus far in faith. But the Samaritan stranger perceived God's glory in what had taken place, and so turned back to Jesus and aloud glorified God. The others owned the power which had come, but remained in their religious habits and associations. He, less pre-occupied with outward institutions, returned to the source of power, not to its shadow and witness, which nature always uses to hide

God. He had experienced divine power in Jesus, and instead of merely enjoying the gift, he most humbly, but in the boldness and propriety of faith, went back to own the Giver. “He fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks.” He wanted no priest. The priest did not, could not cleanse, but only discern and pronounce a man clean. Evil had levelled the Jew and the Samaritan. They were alike cast out of the presence of divine communion by the leprosy which afflicted them. But He who healed lepers under the law was He who gave the law, and the word of Jesus at once recognised the law and manifested the Jehovah who gave it. The gratitude of faith was a readier reasoner than the instruction of the law; for the blessing afforded by the work and presence of Jesus was to the nine the means of keeping up Jewish distinction, to the tenth it was the evidence of divine goodness. To him, therefore, it was complete deliverance. He was by faith arrived in grace at the fountain-head from which the law itself proceeded, and was let go in peace, made whole by his faith, having liberty from God and with God, giving thanks and glorifying Him, and withal knowing how acceptable it was in His sight.

How many reasons might have been pleaded for going on and not returning to Jesus! How might the nine Jews have said, You are ordered to go and shew yourself to the priest! But faith goes straight to the heart of God, and there finds all grace and a dismissal in the liberty of grace. To him who returned to Jesus, cleansed and with heart-felt thanks, the priests were left behind. In spirit and figure the healed Samaritan was passed into another system by faith—the grace and liberty of the gospel. It is blessed thus to be at the source of power

and goodness, and there only does God put now those who believe. If under the law before, we are become dead to it by the body of Christ that we should belong to another— to Him who is raised from the dead. It is this way alone that glorifies God, however men may plead the letter. Thus only can we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received (not the law, but) the reconciliation. In Him, thus known and enjoyed, we have all and more than all then the priests ever conceived. We have communion with the Father and the Son by faith in God fully revealed. We have to do with Him in heaven now, not with a temple and priests on earth. “Arise, go thy way.” You have found the person and glory of the Lord. You are beyond the priests and the temple, your faith has pierced the veil and found One greater than both. The rest went their way, cleansed, to be under the law. Stupefied by Judaism, they did not return to glorify God. All this, at the point of the gospel we are arrived at, is full of importance. It is another light thrown on the passing away of the law and of that dispensation.

In the next verses, from verse 20 to 37, the question was actually raised as to the coming of God’s kingdom. The Pharisees asked when it should come, and the Lord places them on their plain responsibility. “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,” or outward show. It should not be said, Lo here! or Lo there! for that kingdom then was there among them. The King was speaking to them. Ought they not to have known Him because He came in grace? If He had humbled Himself to know their sorrows and to die for their sins, was that a reason for not discerning His greatness and moral perfection manifested in ten thousand ways? Did not His

holy love to the poor and guilty prove, plainly enough, who He was? If man's heart had not been opposed to all that was the delight of God in the kingdom, if his eye had not been blind to all that was lovely and of good report, he would have felt that the lower Christ stooped, the more wonderful were His works, To His disciples He had other things to say. He was rejected and leaving them. Suffering awaited them. Trying as their position might now be as the companions of His rejection, the days would come when they would long in vain for one of those days when they had enjoyed blessed and sweet intercourse with the Son of man. They would, as Jews in the land, feel the difference. Then Satan, to allure and deceive in that day, would lead men to say, "Lo here," or "Lo there"; but the disciples would know its falsehood. There was no hope for the nation which rejected Christ. The King had been there but refused; He was no longer "here" or "there." This day the Son of man would be as the lightning flashing from one quarter under heaven to another. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected of this generation, that is, the unbelieving Jews.

It is evident that while the Lord takes this name of Son of man to His disciples as revealing a relation higher and wider than that of Messiah (the link of which was broken and gone in the nation's ruinous rejection of Him), the whole of this instruction is Jewish and shall find its accomplishment properly in a godly remnant of the latter day. The Christian part is not spoken of here, for that is association after a heavenly sort with Christ, and we have its great moral outlines, at least in Luke 12. Here we are on the ground of responsibility, not of heavenly grace. We must separate the church's place with Christ from the government of the world by Christ.

The very character of the predicted delusion confirms this distinction. For if men said to the Christian, “Here is Christ,” he would instantly know that it was of Satan, because we are to meet Him, not here or there on earth, but in the air; 1 Thess. 4. But this is not the case when you come to the government of the world. There the hope rests on Jewish ground, and then the witnesses for God must go through tribulation such as has never been. Now, unless expressly forewarned, they would naturally look here or there for the Deliverer: for in that character His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, and He shall come to Zion and shall come out of it. “Jehovah shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.” All this differs from the Christian’s hope and his desire meanwhile; for we do not want our enemies destroyed, but converted, and we are looking to be taken from them all to heaven with the Saviour, instead of waiting for Him to join and exalt us under His reign upon the earth. But, again, the subject here is neither the past siege of Jerusalem nor the future judgment of the dead. Titus’s capture of the city was not like the lightning, but a long, fierce, hardly-contested struggle. Nor were the Jews, up to the moment of the final stroke, in a state of ease and carnal security, resting on the continuance of things as they were, as in the days of Noah and Lot. Suddenness of judgment is its first feature, certainty is the next, discriminating certainty, neither of which things could be fairly said of the Romans. Without or within, at rest or at work, men or women, it mattered not, God would burn up the chaff and preserve the wheat: the one should be taken, and the other be left. Next, there is a local and earthly stamp, which excludes the scene from that of the great white-throne judgment. For there is no resemblance

between the judgment of the dead and the deluge or the fate of Sodom. It is the end of the age, not of the world, and is a judgment on a temporal people, and more especially on their city; for they were not to return into the house, if on the housetop; and if in the field, they were not to turn back. None of these things could be said of the dead, any more than the bed or the mill. It would be no time for human motives, artifices, or concessions (v. 33). Faithfulness to the Lord and His testimony would be the true and saving wisdom. The day of the Son of man's revelation was in question—His judgment of the quick, and especially of a generation which has rejected and caused Him to suffer. If they asked, "where? "the solemn word for conscience was, where the body, the corpse, was, the swift inevitable judgments of God would fall.

Chapter 18.

We saw, from verse 20 to the end of the last chapter, that the kingdom of God was presented, first, in the person of Jesus, as a question of faith, not of outward show, nor of a Lo, here! or lo, there! and, secondly, in the way of judgment, which should deliver the remnant by the execution of divine vengeance on their enemies.

Verses 1-8. The first eight verses of our chapter complete the prophetic warning, and shew that the resource of the righteous in the last days will be prayer. Nevertheless, though the parable has the special application to the future oppression of God's witnesses who will then be found in Jerusalem, the instruction, as usual with this gospel, is made general so as to suit any or all kinds of difficulty by which men might be tried. "And he speaks a parable unto them, to this end, that

men ought always to pray and not to faint." Faith would be put to the test. If God were looked to, and not merely the blessing, men would not faint, though there was no answer. They would go on, always looking up, though all seemed against them. The widow represents those who have no human resource: their resource would be constancy in prayer. Such will be the godly seed in Israel, for it is the remnant, not the church which is here meant. They will plead with the judge to avenge them of their adversary. Their patience and confidence may be sorely tried, but they will not cry in vain. "And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him." He may be slow in taking up their cause; but when once He shall rise up, a short work will He make on the earth. Meanwhile, patience must have its perfect work. In Jesus it had its full perfection. There was the rejection and the reproach of men, the forsaking of disciples, the power of Satan, the cup of God's wrath; but He went through all to the glory of God. In detail, we too have to be sifted, and to find all circumstances against us but God for us, yet more than if we had outward help, miraculous power, the church all right, etc. Even joy may hinder our entire dependence on God, making us forget, practically, that the flesh profits nothing. When no circumstances lead you to have any hope, is your hope then in Him? The flesh may get on for a long while, as in Saul; but faith only can wait with all against it. It is then the divine life depending on divine power. Thus it was in Christ pre-eminently. "I believed, therefore have I spoken." He went down into the dust of death, and has introduced a wholly new order of things. And we, having the same spirit of faith—we also believe, and therefore speak. "Wherefore 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 creation." Christ is dead, risen, and now set down at the right hand of God. Having this life, we are put to the test practically to learn the lesson of death and resurrection, where nothing but God can sustain.

In the parable there are two considerations. If the unjust judge hear and act for the defenceless, be the motive what it may, will not God? But this is far from all. God has His affections, not only His character, but objects of His delight. "And shall not God avenge his own elect? "etc. It never can become the righteous God, who taketh vengeance to make light of evil or let the wicked go unpunished. For then how shall He judge the world? He notices the cry from the oppressed day and night, and it is the cry of His own elect. "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." But will there be the faith that expects His interference? They will cry from distress and God will hear. Nevertheless, the question is raised, Will there be, when the Son of man cometh, that faith on the earth, which is founded on God known in peaceful communion? Will it not rather be the cry of the righteous, in bitterness of spirit, a cry forced out of them, and not the cry of desire?

Verse 9. We have next, the moral features of, and suited to, the kingdom, the characters which are in harmony or discord with the state of things introduced by grace. The Pharisee and publican set forth, not the doctrine of atonement or of justification by faith, but the certainty that self-righteousness is displeasing to God, and that lowliness because of our sin is most acceptable in His sight. The Pharisee does not set God aside. He "stood

and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee." But then he thanks God for what he is, not for what God is. The only hope of the publican was in God Himself. He was very ignorant, no doubt, but he had the right spirit to get at God. Light had broken in and shewn he was a sinner, and he submitted to the painful conviction, and confessed the truth of his state to God. He was cast on God's mercy to his soul. He dared not appeal to justice, he did not ask indifference, but that mercy which measures the sin and forgives it. The revelation of grace had not yet come in, the work of reconciliation was not yet done, so that the publican stood "afar off," but his heart was touched, and God was what he wanted. If a soul is brought to a sense of sin now, it need not, and ought not, to stand afar off. The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared. Nevertheless, though he did and could not thus know grace, the publican gives God and himself their true character. It was not full knowledge, but the knowledge, as far as it went was true. "I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Universal truth! but where so shewn as in Jesus? For if the first man, exalting himself, was abased to hell, He who was God, made Himself of no reputation, humbled Himself to the death of the cross. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him," etc.

In one sense men cannot humble themselves, because they are sinners already, and cannot go lower; a saint may. True humility is forgetfulness of self.

This is illustrated yet more by the incident that follows (v. 15-17), where they brought infants to Jesus, that He would touch them. It is the lowliness of real

insignificance, as the former was because of sinfulness. Who would be troubled with beings of such little consequence? Not the disciples, but Jesus. The Lord delighted in them, and that is the spirit of the kingdom of God. And here too a general moral maxim comes out. If a man is to enter that kingdom, all confidence in self must be broken down, and the truth be received simply, as a little child hears its mother. If it is not so, God and man have not their place. When He speaks, all I have to do is to listen. This is the humility of nothingness, as the other was on account of sin.

Next, in verses 18 to 27 comes the question of doing in order to eternal life, not salvation for a lost one, but that which searches the heart to the bottom. The young man was a lovely character, looked at as a creature. For if there are the ravages of sin in the world, there are traces of God there too. This ruler did not see God in Christ. Morally attracted, he came to learn to do good, without a doubt of his own competence. In Jesus he only saw a perfectly good man, and one therefore eminently able to advise and direct him in the same path. Sin, on the one hand, and grace, on the other, were altogether ignored by him. He knew neither himself nor God. There is no man good. All are gone astray. Man is a sinner, and needs God to be good to him: he is incompetent to do the good which satisfies God.

The Lord took up the young ruler on his own assumption that he could do good, for the purpose of bringing out what he was. The good Master that he had appealed to puts to the test what his heart really is. “Yet lackest thou one thing; sell all that thou hast… and come, follow me.” Would he give up self-importance? After all, he loved his riches too well. “He was very sorrowful; for he was very

rich." Had not such things been promised as a blessing to the Jews? Christ shews them to be a snare. But then they do much good! Nay, are they good for your heart? It is not that they may not be used in grace; but the man did not know his own heart. Good is not there, nor the strength to produce it. Every motive which governs man is rooted up by the cross. But all within is bad, and I can never work a thing fit for God out of bad material. I need God therefore, who can give me a new and holy nature, who can be merciful to me because He is above all sin. The spring of all good is, that it flows from God and not man. It is an impossibility, as far as man is concerned, that any should be saved. Sin has ruined man and all his hopes. If one looks at the means he can avail himself of, they are wholly useless to save him. But "the things which are impossible with men," said the Saviour, "are possible with God." Such is the sole foundation for the sinner.

On the other hand (v. 28-30), if Peter is quick to speak of the devotedness of the disciples, in leaving all and following Jesus, the Lord shews the certainty that every loss, for the kingdom's sake, will turn into manifold gain, both now and in the world to come.

But He binds it all up (v. 31-33) with what was coming on His own person. They were going up to Jerusalem; but for what? He, the Messiah, "shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge him, and put him to death." All hopes must end here: "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." Even He, if He is to deliver the lost, must come down to the dust of death. Christ has no association with sinful man. How then can

He deliver? He must die for us; He cannot take corruption into union with Himself. A living Christ, we may reverently say, could not deliver us, consistently with God's nature and character; redemption was a necessity. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

But it was the only means of a holy salvation; man's full wickedness came out in the rejection and death of Christ. He hated what is in God and Him who is God—hated both the Son and the Father. All question of human justice is settled and negatived for ever. Alas! the disciples understood none of these things, neither His shame and death, nor His resurrection. It was the accomplishment of what the prophets had written concerning the Son of man. But they knew not what He said nor what they wrote. The death of Christ would manifest what man was, and what God was; His resurrection would evince the power of life that can deliver the dead. But He was not understood.

Verse 34 closed that part of our Gospel which shews the bringing in of the new and heavenly dispensation. With verse 35 we enter on the historical account of the Lord's final intercourse with the Jews. "Son of man" was the general character of the Gospel, but now, in the midst of Israel, He takes up that of Son of David. Jericho was the first place Israel had to say to when they crossed the Jordan, and a special curse was pronounced against it. But Israel had not walked in obedience, and the Messiah enters not as the king in outward glory, but as the rejected Jesus of Nazareth, with blessing for the remnant that received Him in faith.

“And it came to pass that as he was nigh unto Jericho,” etc. It is not “came nigh,” as if it were necessarily His first approach, but a general expression, just as applicable to His being nigh on His leaving the city. (Compare Matthew and Mark.) “A certain blind man sat by the way side, begging… and he cried, saying Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” He was rebuked by many, but there was the perseverance of faith, and he cried so much the more, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” Here was a sample of the power of the Name that Israel rejected. The eye of the blind was opened then, as it will be in the remnant by-and-by.

Chapter 19.

Next, we have the account of Zacchseus (chap. 19:1-10), for the Spirit of God did not tie Luke to the mere order of time; and morally viewed, it was the fitting sequel to the healing of the blind man. Found only in this Gospel, it is a striking illustration of the grace which receives a man, no matter how low, and in the face of Jewish prejudices. For a publican, a rich chief of the publicans, was justly an object of abhorrence to those who regarded him as the expression of Gentile dominion. All was wrong through sin, and Israel was not humbled. Still it was a sad position for an Israelite, however honest and conscientious Zacchasus might be in it. But it was the day of grace, and “he sought to see Jesus.” There were difficulties, hindrances in him and around; but faith perseveres in spite of opposition. As the blind man was bent on his object, so was the rich publican set on seeing Jesus. This marks the working of God’s Spirit —the apprehension of the worth of the object. We want it and more of it; we know enough to want more. It is an

appetite produced by the Holy Spirit. It is a terrible thing, if we, as Christians, have not this craving, this hungering and thirsting after a greater enjoyment of God; for where this is not, deadness and apathy of soul have come in.

Jesus came to the place, and saw him and said unto him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.” He had not yet the full knowledge of Jesus, but his desire had been met, and he had joy. It was neither law nor glory, but a hidden Messiah come in full grace. There was abundant evidence who He was, but in grace He was come down where they were. No matter what people thought. Finding Jesus is everything. Zacchaeus had the answer to the want which divine grace had created. Grace does not give at first the knowledge of Christ’s work; there may be little or no understanding that we are made the righteousness of God in Him. Hence the first joy often wanes; because, when conscience is accused, I want the consciousness of that righteousness. The first joy is constantly that of discovering that we possess the felt need of the soul for Christ; but the full question as to righteousness may still have to be met in the conscience, though of course every believer in possessing Christ does possess divine righteousness. Nevertheless, much as there is to learn, there is joy. New interests are awakened, new desires arise, a new insight is obtained into good and evil. When there is a deep sense of what it is to be lost and saved, the world (man) is a light matter. But when the pressure on the conscience is removed, too often nature resumes a sort of place, and Christ is not all and everything to the saint.

Zacchaeus' heart is opened. There is confidence, which tells itself out. There might be ever so much honest effort to satisfy conscience in his false position; but after all what a place it was! Men murmured. The Lord passed all over. Self-defence was needless. The Lord did not accuse, and speaks of nothing but the salvation which was that day come to the house. Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham, and the Son of man was come to seek and to save that which was lost. What, could a Pharisee object? There had been a work with the conscience of Zacchaeus, but the Son of man was come and salvation was the word. He brings it. He gave what Zacchaeus had little thought of. He was come to meet the need He had created. He was come to seek, that is, to produce the desire; and to save, that is, to meet the desire.

The Lord was now nigh to Jerusalem, and so He added a parable to correct the thought that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear; for Jerusalem is the city of the great King, and the question of His rejection would be closed there. He shews, on the contrary, that He was going away—going to a far country, to heaven, where He was to receive the kingdom and to return. The time was not come to set up the kingdom on earth. Meanwhile, the business of His servants was to trade with the money He delivered them. When returned, having received the kingdom, He assigns them places according to their faithfulness; for in Luke it is a question of man's responsibility; in the corresponding parable of Matthew God's sovereignty is the point. Difference of gifts appears in Matthew, difference of rewards in Luke. In Luke each servant receives a mina from the Lord; in Matthew all who gained in trading enter alike the joy of their Lord. Here the whole force is, occupy. "Occupy till

I come." Our position is serving a rejected Saviour till He comes again. We are not yet to share in the glory of the kingdom. When He returns, all will be disposed of impartially, and there will be that which answers to authority over ten cities and over five. The righteousness of God is the same for us as for Paul; but as there is very different service, and different measures of fidelity, so there will be speciality of reward. No doubt it is grace that works, still here there is reward of faithful service. The secret of all service is the due appreciation of the Master's grace. If one fears Him as "an austere man," there is unfaithfulness too, even on one's own principles.

Verse 26 is a universal principle. When through grace there is the realisation in our souls of the truth presented to us, we are of those "who have." But if a truth comes before a man, and he talks about it without its being mixed with faith in the heart, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. Truth, if it reveals Christ, humbles me and deals with the evil within. Then it is not only Christ as an object outside me, but a living Christ in my soul. Knowledge, which has not power over the conscience, only puffs up. If truth be not acted on, it troubles the conscience. But how often one sees a conscience, having lost the light, quite easy at a lower standard than before, rejoicing that it has lost its trouble, though the light of truth be lost with it! The soul has sunk below that which had exercised the conscience, and thus the whole standard, principle, and life are lowered, and opportunities of winning Christ lost for ever.

Holding fast the truth—Christ—I have Him as it were a part of myself, and learn to hate the evil and to delight

in the good; so that I get more, till I grow up into Christ, into the measure of the stature of His fulness. Common duties do not rob us of Him: from these the heart returns with fresh delight into its own centre. It is the heart clinging to vanity that spoils our joy; it is anything which exalts self and lowers Christ—an idle thought even, if allowed in the heart. As to the citizens, the Jews on whom He had rights as king, their will was against Him, not only hating Him there while among them, but above all, sending the message after Him, We will not have this man to reign over us. Unsparing vengeance must take its course on them in His presence.

Verse 28. Jesus enters Jerusalem as Messiah. His rights as Lord of all were to be asserted and acted on, verses 29-36. He presents Himself for the last time to Israel, in the lowliness of grace, which was of far greater importance than the kingdom. This gives rise to the most marked contrast between the disciples and the Pharisees. The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with loud voice, saying “Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” Some of the Pharisees appeal to Him to rebuke the disciples, but learn from His lips that if these were silent, the very stones would cry out. There must be a testimony to His glory; verses 37-40.

When Jesus was born, angels announced it to the poor of the flock, and the heavenly host praised God, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace—good pleasure in men. Such will be the result, and the angels anticipate it, without reference to the hindrances, or to the means. But Christ was rejected here below; and now the disciples say, “Peace in heaven and glory in the

highest." When the question of power is raised, in order to establish the kingdom, there will be war then (Rev. 12). In fact there can be no peace in heaven till Satan and his host are cast out. Then will the King be established in power, when the obstacles shall be taken out of the way. Psalm 118 celebrates this, His mercy enduring for ever, spite of all the people's sins. It is the song of the latter day. If God sends peace to the earth in the person of His Son, it is in vain, not as to the accomplishment, but as to present effect. Meanwhile, to faith there is peace in heaven, and when this is asserted in power against the evil spirits in the heavenly places, there will be blessing indeed. O, what a time will it be! What a relief to the working of God's grace! For now it is ever toil and watching. What, always? Yes, always; and that is not the rest. But then it will be, as sure as God takes His great power and reigns. "The Lord shall hear the heavens," etc. (Hos. 2). There will be an unbroken chain of blessing, and that too on earth. It will not be one "building, and another inhabiting," but blessing flowing down and around to the lowest and the least. Till then, as now, the word is suffering in grace, not victorious power. Never fear persecution: it will make your face shine as an angel's. But God could not be silent if His own Son were cast out. He might leave Him to suffer, but not without a testimony. If there were no others, the stones would speak. And so if we are faithful and near to Christ, this will turn for a testimony.

Next (v. 41-44) we have, not the cursing of the fig-tree, but the spirit of grace in the Lord's weeping over the city. The counsels of God will surely be accomplished, but we ought also to know His real tenderness in Jesus. Those tears were not in vain, whatever the appearances.

It was the time of Jerusalem's visitation, but she knew it not. We ought, as having the mind of Christ, to know when and how to interfere spiritually. We are the epistle of Christ, whereby the world should be able to read what God is. Christ manifested Him perfectly. But what did He find in the people? See verses 45, 46. God declares His house to be one of prayer: men— the Jews —had made it a den of thieves. It was a terrible moral estimate, but this is the true way to judge; that is, having God's word, to take facts as they are. We are ignorant and morally incapable of judging without the word of God. Let the eye be fixed on Christ and our judgment be formed on things around by the word.

Chapter 20.

The first question raised was by the scribes, as to the authority of Christ and its source. Jesus questions them about the baptism of John: Was it from heaven or of man? They reasoned without conscience. They owned their incompetency, rather than acknowledge His Messiahship. The simple child of God receives the word as certainly as Christ gives it. Reliance on God's word is the only sure ground. How can you be certain? God has said it. If God's speaking requires proof, I must have something more sure and true than God. Is the church? Alas! alas! … If God cannot speak so as to claim authority, without another to accredit what He says, there is no such thing as faith.

The parable of the husbandmen (v. 9-18) sets forth the Lord's dealings with Israel, to whom the vineyard was first let, and, upon the rejection of "the Heir," the gift of it to others. Nor was this all. The rejected stone becomes the head of the corner. Whosoever fell on that

stone should be broken; but on whomsoever it fell, utter destruction would be the result. The past sins of Jerusalem illustrate the first; for the second we must wait for the execution of judgment when the Lord appears.

Verse 19. The question of tribute to Caesar was very subtle. They used the effect of their own wickedness to tempt the Lord. Abstractedly the Jews ought not to have been subject to the Gentiles. And, moreover, the Messiah was come, the Deliverer of Israel. If He said, Obey the Gentiles, where was His delivering power? If He said, Rebel, they would have had an excuse to deliver Him to Pilate. Because of Israel's sin, God has broken down the key-stone of nations, and given power to the Gentile. The Jew has been rebellious under the sentence, and ever craving deliverance from their thraldom. But the Lord answered with divine wisdom. He put them exactly in the place where their sin had put them: Caesar's things are to be rendered to Caesar, and God's things to God.

After settling the question as to this world between God and the people, He next meets the Sadducean or sceptical difficulty as to the next world; verses 27-38. The Lord shews the place of the risen saints in entire contrast with the world. The idea of a general resurrection is set aside. If all rise together, there is uncertainty, a common judgment, etc.; but if the saints are raised by themselves because they are children of God, leaving the rest of the dead for another and distinctive resurrection—a resurrection of judgment, all is changed. No passage of scripture speaks of both rising together. The resurrection is that which most of all distinguishes, and this for ever. It is the grand

testimony to the difference between good and bad. The saint will be raised because of the Spirit of Christ that dwells in him—the application to his body of that power of life in Christ which has already quickened his soul. It is a resurrection from among the dead, as was Christ's. So here, "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age," for such it is, "and the resurrection from the dead." "They are equal to the angels, and are the children of God." Luke adds another characteristic point omitted elsewhere; "all live unto him." It is the present blessed living unto God of those who have died, and await the resurrection from among the dead.

Then in verses 41-44 the Lord puts His question, How is David's Son, David's Lord? This was just what the Jews could not understand. It was the hinge on which turned the change in the whole moral system. He had taken the place of the holy dependent One, a pilgrim as others, and He had drunk of the brook by the way. He was going on in meekness and quietness, but living by the refreshments which came from God His Father. Thus having emptied Himself, humbled Himself, He is now exalted by God. This great universal principle, "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased," is fully exemplified in the two Adams. The first Adam, man's nature, would exalt itself to be "as God," until in its full ripeness Antichrist will exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.

Satan tempted man at the beginning to make himself like God, and at the end God shall send them strong delusion to believe a he. Satan, not being able to exalt himself in heaven, will attempt to do it through the seed of man; but in the end shall be abased; Isaiah 14:12-15.

In the last Adam we have Him who was God humbling Himself, going down, becoming obedient unto death, even the vilest, and then we see that humbled One going back to the place of power at God's right hand, but as man as well as God. God highly exalted Him, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Having been obedient all through, in humiliation, He is exalted to be David's Lord. This took Him out of the line of Jewish promises, though as David's Son of course He had them.

The Jews did not understand the Scriptures, and fulfilled them through not understanding them. God's ways have gone on through all, manifesting His grace and patience towards man. He placed man on the earth, and then sent law, prophets, etc., until man gets to the end in rejecting all. God tries man and then brings in the new man, who is the fulfilment of all His blessed counsels—the second Man. Then He takes up the last Adam as the heavenly man into a heavenly place and all now depends not on the responsibility of man, but on the stability of God. Life, righteousness, and glory descend from heaven. Is it life that is needed? God gives the life of Christ in resurrection. Is it righteousness? It is a divine righteousness that God gives. Is it a kingdom? It is the kingdom of heaven. All flows down not simply from God in grace, but from the place which man has in glory, from the counsels of God about the heavenly man in glory. He has first taken Him up, and thence the blessing flows down. The man Christ Jesus has fully met all man's responsibilities. This is the reason of the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, and also that of the kingdom to come. The gospel is the power of God, and the kingdom is to be set up in heaven. The king is gone into the far country; and when He returns, it will be to bring in the

kingdom of heaven. All the counsels of God now take their centre and seat in heaven. Thus, in the largest way, the turning-point in all the plans and counsels of God is Jesus being set at the right hand of God. All the character, the stability, and the perfectness of our blessing takes its source from the exalted Jesus. The character of it is heavenly; the stability is what God has done; and the righteousness that fits me for it is God's.

The Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, has come down to bear witness to Him, on whom peace of the soul rests, even on the accomplished righteousness of Him who is taken up into glory. His office is to work within, and make us down here manifest what God is. All this we have as the result of Christ, instead of accomplishing the promises as David's Son, bringing them in as David's Lord.

Mark the moral blessedness of this general principle: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Christ humbled Himself—not was humbled, that is another thing. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." That is what we are to do—take the lowest place. We cannot do this till we are Christians; but it is our glory to take the lowest, and hear Him say, "Come up higher." "He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps." The Lord Jesus has been rejected as David's Son; He will come forth as David's Lord.

Now, while He is thus hidden, we see the church's place. We are "hid with Christ in God," and have our portion by faith, as united to Him, while He is out of sight. The Holy Ghost, having come down, gives us a place as associated with Him in all the blessedness of the Father's house,

and in all the glory which He has to be displayed by-and-by.

The place of Eve was one of union with Adam in the dominion over all things; Genesis 1:26-28; 5:2. We find the church in the display of Christ's glory, only as by grace, the bride and companion of Christ, never as part of the inheritance. Viewed even individually, we are "joint-heirs with Christ." It is of the last importance to the saints in these days to apprehend the distinct place which we have; as one with Christ, the heavenly Man.

Chapter 21.

At the close of chapter 20 and the beginning of chapter 21 we have a most instructive, though painful, contrast between the selfish hypocrisy of the scribes, whom He condemns before the people, and the real devoted love of the widow, whom He singles out for honour. Remark also that the Lord knows how to separate the intention of a sincere soul from the system that surrounds it, judging the whole state of that with which the individual is associated. Observe, further, the difference of giving one's living and one's superfluity. It is easy to compliment God with presents, and thus really minister to self; but she who gives her living gives herself in devoted-ness to God, and proves her dependence on God. Thus, the two mites of her who had these only expressed all this perfectly: for there was need and everything else to hinder, while the applause of men and the pride of the donor found no place here. For Jewish splendour the act had little worth; but the Lord saw, and bore witness of, the poor widow, blessed in her deed.

Verses 5 and following. The account which the Lord gives in this Gospel of the sorrows of Jerusalem is also,

like the preceding, much more allied to the simple fact of the judgment on the nation and the change of dispensation. It differs much from Matthew 24, which fully refers to what is to arrive at the end; while our Gospel bears, more than the first two, on the then present time and setting aside of Jerusalem. Hence, Luke plainly sets forth the siege and destruction by Titus, and the times of the Gentiles. Let it be observed also that the question in verse 7 extends only to the predicted destruction. Consequently, in what follows, we have the judgment on the nation taken as a whole, from its then destruction till the times of the Gentiles (with whose economy this Gospel is so much occupied) be fulfilled. Nation should rise against nation, signs from heaven and sorrows on earth follow. And before all these the disciples would be objects of hostility, but this would turn for a testimony instead of destroying theirs. They were to go on testifying, while the unhappy devoted city where they were filled up its iniquity. The Lord would permit trial, but not a hair of their head would be lost. But this would close. The sign given here is in no wise the abomination of desolation, but an historical fact—Jerusalem encompassed with armies. Its desolation now approached. They were then to flee, not to return. These were days of vengeance (it is not said of the unprecedented tribulation, as in Matthew, which is only in the latter day). All that was written was to be fulfilled. Great distress there was in the land, and wrath on this people. Slaughter first and captivity afterwards wrought their cruel work of devastation, and Jerusalem till this hour abides, the boast and prey of Gentile lords, and so must it be till their day is over.

In these earlier verses (8-19) the Lord dwells on the dangers, duties, and trials of the disciples before the sack of Titus. Specially were they to beware of a pretended deliverer, and of the cry that the time (that is, of deliverance) was at hand. Neither were they to be terrified by wars or commotions, any more than seduced by fair promises. These things must first be, but the end not immediately. Besides, it was not only confusion and woes and signs of coming change and evil outside. Before all these they themselves were to be in affliction and persecution for Christ's sake.

Then in verses 20-24, comes the actual judgment of the city and people, already judged virtually by His rejection. This extends down to our own days in principle. But all is not yet fulfilled. For in verse 25 begins the Lord's description of the closing scene—a judgment not on the Jews merely, but on the Gentiles also; for the powers of the heavens, the source of authority, shall be shaken, as in Haggai 2 and Hebrews 12. This is not said to be immediately after the siege of Titus; but on the contrary, room is left for the long course of treading down of Jerusalem under Gentiles, till their times are run out. It is in Matthew that we must look for the great tribulation of the last days, occupied as the first evangelist, is with the consequences of Messiah's rejection, especially to Israel. Therefore it is said there, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days," that is, the short crisis of "Jacob's trouble" yet to come. Here, however, after mention of the times of the Gentiles, it is said that "there shall be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and waves roaring, men's hearts failing them," etc. Men were astounded

because they saw not the end, and trembled as they were dragged along to some unknown awful conclusion. For principles were at work, they knew not how, dragging them along whether or no.

The coming of the Son of man disclosed all the scene to the disciples. But it is clear from the circumstances, and especially from the character of the redemption spoken of (v. 28), that it is a question, not of Christians, but of earthly disciples, and of an earthly deliverance by judgment here below. The Lord in mercy turns the terror of man into a sign of deliverance for the remnant of that day.

Verses 31, 32 are interesting in this point of view here, because they furnish remarkable evidence, first, that the kingdom of God does not mean the gospel of His grace; and, secondly, that this generation cannot refer to the space of time from the prophecy to the destruction of Jerusalem. 1. For when they see these things coming to pass (and He had spoken of the final, universal trouble for the whole habitable earth, and not merely of what has befallen the Jews), they are to conclude that the kingdom of God is nigh. Now, even if it were only the Romans taking away their place and nation, and still more if it include the latter-day trouble, it is undeniable that the gospel had extended far and wide before the first. In fact, the manifestation of its influence was declining rather before that time, as we see in the later epistles. But the things here seen were signs like the budding of the trees, and the kingdom of God is evidently to be at the coming of the King, when the Lord God Almighty takes His great power and reigns. That there was a partial analogous judgment, when Jerusalem fell, is true, but verses 25-28 ought to leave no doubt of

a wider subsequent judgment, with signs which introduce, not the sorrows of the Jews, but the Son of man coming in His kingdom. 2. For a similar reason, “this generation “does not apply to a mere lifetime, but is viewed morally, as in Deuteronomy 32, Psalm 12, and many other scriptures. It is here expressly put at the close, after not only the fall of Jerusalem, but the totally distinct scene of Christ’s coming in power and glory. The expression in verse 33 is very solemn. Deeper interests were involved than a casual change as to Jerusalem. The time was wrapped up in purposed obscurity, but nothing more sure than the facts predicted.

The Lord has provided for His then disciples what was needful, but also in the written word for the like times to come. Still, though the principle be always true, verse 34 clearly applies to a day to come on the earth. The privilege is to escape the judgments, and stand before the Son of man. This again is earthly, not the rapture to heaven. The great moral principles, of course, remain true for all; specially indeed for those who, by virtue of a higher calling, can enjoy them in a more excellent way.

Verses 37, 38. The Lord yet returned to give testimony, walking and working in the day; but His resting-place was there, whence He did depart, and where His feet shall stand in that day. Patient in service, He taught daily and early in the temple; at night He was separate from the judged city. His time was now come.

Chapter 22.

How the carnal mind was shewn to be enmity against God in the rejection of Christ! Wickedness was summed up and brought out in all—people, priests, rulers. If a friend, he is a traitor; if disciples, they either fled when

danger approached, or denied Him when near. The religious chiefs who ought to have owned the Messiah took Him to the infidel power of the world. He who was in the place of judgment washed his hands, owning Christ's innocence, but gives Him up to man's will and rage. Thus man's evil was brought into complete juxtaposition with that which was perfect, and this in putting Him to death. It is no use to look for good in man. Not that there are no amiable traits of nature, but God has no place at all if man is put to the test.

Along with this is the picture of the Lord's perfect patience through it all. Not man only, but Satan was there in temptation. It was the power of darkness, as well as man's hour. And the Lord Jesus passes through this scene of men's wickedness and Satan's power; His heart melted like wax, but the effect always being the manifestation of perfectness. An angel strengthens Him; for He was really man, but perfect man, enduring all that could try Him, and nothing brought out but perfect grace and perfect obedience. Whenever there was sorrow, His love surmounts the suffering to help and comfort others.

Verses 3-6. It is a solemn thought that the nearer to Jesus, if there is not spiritual life, the more a man resists God, and the more sure and sad an instrument of the enemy he becomes. If truth has been presented and not received, nowhere has Satan so much power.6 Covetousness was the means used; but though they plotted to betray and crucify Him in a corner, this could not be; they were obliged to accomplish it according to God's purposes.

Then the light from behind the scene (v. 8-13) makes a passage. It is the Lord; and no matter what He suffers, or what is before Him, yet we find the divine knowledge and power. There is the chamber! What calm and peaceful dignity! It is no effort, nothing to display a character. All yields before the unwitnessed authority of this rejected Saviour—all but that to which it had been most manifested, the unrenewed heart of man. To the householder, unknown it seems to every eye but one, it is enough to hear, “The Master saith to thee.”

Verses 14, 15. How blessed to see such perfect human affections combined with His divine knowledge of all things! “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer” —like one leaving his family and first desiring a farewell meeting. When we see the divine glory in the person of Christ, we find the human affections shining out. (Compare Matt. 17:27.) It is this which gives Him a power and charm which no object else has: so that God can delight in man and man can delight in God. The Lord breaks every link with the old thing (v. 16). It is not setting up the kingdom here, but setting up man with God when the old connection was impossible. He was taking a new place where flesh and blood could not enter. His death and resurrection introduce a new relation with God.

The Lord distinguishes here between the paschal lamb and the wine, and both from the institution of His supper. He entered in the fullest way into all the feelings of Israel—the Israel of God, into the interests of the people as such, till His rejection put them on other ground, and divine favour passed into another scene by the resurrection, becoming Himself the Substitute, the true Paschal Lamb. His disciples held the foremost rank

as to this fellowship, as we have Hushai the king's friend. With them He desired the last testimony of parting and love. But while thus expressing His affection to them, He assumes manifestly (v. 18) the Nazarite character, which was always His morally, but now externally and painfully: "I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God come." He postpones His joy with them as in the common enjoyment of the kingdom, till then.

Then (v. 19, 20) He institutes the memorial of His better redemption, of His self-sacrificing dying love. If He separated Himself now to God in His joy, it was not want of love to His disciples, but its fullest display. It was to be done "in remembrance "of Him. We remember Him suffering, dead, absent; we know Him as a present living Saviour. The new covenant is established in His blood. We cannot, in all the joy of fellowship with Christ above, forget what brought us into it. On one side, it is a body broken and blood shed; on the other, it is Himself and all the perfectness of love in dying for us. We are united to Him as a risen Christ, but He calls us to remember Him as a dead Christ. The blessedness of this last is in the work He did alone, by virtue of which I am put in union with Himself, alive again for evermore. As to man's part in it (v. 21-23), it was treachery and wickedness.

The Lord then distinctly sets forth this calling to walk in His own lowliness and not as the world. Earthly grandeur was recognised among the Jews, but now it was sentenced, like all their system, as the rudiments of the world. All other greatness, though under the form of being benefactors, was worldly. He was one that served. The grace of His heart sets them right without a reproach. He lets them know that whatever high place

they sought, He took a low one. He might have said, Nothing will break down this horrid selfishness; yet says He, “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.” And He is the same now. What we should seek is to have as much of the burden of the church as we can. Suffering thus with Him, His heart goes on with us.

Verse 31. Peter was bold enough in the flesh to enter temptation. But it is impossible for man to stand where it is a question of good and evil. He is a sinner and cannot go through that trial. If God judges, flesh comes to nothing. There is the weakness of human nature, but, besides, Satan’s title and power over man, who had brought out his own condition in God’s presence, and come under death as the judgment of God. I may have learnt in grace that the flesh is thus profitless, but it must be learnt by intercourse with the enemy, if not with God. For Simon, the Lord prayed that his faith should not fail; all his self-confidence must perish. Nor did he distrust Christ like Judas, who had no faith. What enabled him afterwards to strengthen his brethren? He discovered that there is perfect grace in Christ even when he did worst.

Verses 35-38 shew an entire change of circumstances. Previously He had protected them and supplied all, as Messiah disposing of everything here. That was now gone, since the Righteous One was being more and more rejected. He had come, able to destroy Satan’s power, but it was the Lord, and man would not have Him; that is the condition the world is in. He must be reckoned among the transgressors! What link could there be between God and man? Humanity is a condemned thing, because it refused Christ. You may find a scrupulous

conscience as to putting the money in the treasury, but no conscience in betraying and crucifying Him. But it is in a rejected, dead Christ that faith delights. The Christ that man scorns, it requires faith and grace to own. But the disciples still rested on man's strength, not on Messiah crucified in weakness, and said "Here are two swords." The Lord in saying "It is enough," alludes to their words, and implies that they did not enter into His mind. He did not want to say more.

Verses 39-46. There are sittings needed to exercise us and to judge flesh. Christ, of course, did not need this, but dealt with all in communion with His Father. To Him it was a path of obedience, a blessed opportunity of doing God's will; to Peter it was Satan's power. Christ did not speak of the wickedness of the priests, the will of the people, or the injustice of Pilate, but of the cup His Father gave Him. There was positive intercourse with God about the trial, before the time came. And so it must ever be. It is late to put the armour on when we ought to be in the battle. A man living with God, when he gets into trial, goes through it, in his measure, as Christ did. He stands in the evil day, because he has been with God when there was no evil day. On the cross it was not a question of communion; in the garden Christ is in communion with the Father, as to Satan's power, which was about to fall on Him. He felt all, but succumbed under nothing. Thus, instead of entering into temptation, He was in the highest exercise of spirituality, accomplishing the will of God in the most difficult circumstances, and the most perfect submission where it cost everything. Our Father never can lead us into sin, but He may into temptation, that is, into the place of sifting, where the flesh is exposed, when this is

needful, because hardness, or levity, or inattention to His patient warnings, has come in. It is the last, and often necessary, means of self-knowledge and discipline. Though it is great grace that He should take such pains, yet seeing our weakness, and the terribleness of the conflict with the enemy, it will becomes us to pray that we may not be cast into the furnace. In such times a bad conscience drives to despair. The flesh, in its undiscerning carelessness, meets the trial in uncertainty, or carnal opposition, and falls. If, on the other hand, trial comes, we learn our position before God—watching, prayer, entreaty, spreading all before Him in child-like confidence, but submissive desire that His will be done.

The Lord was thoroughly man in this, for an angel appears and ministers, strengthening Him; for the conflict of His soul was great; but it urged Him, in the realisation of the trial, to pray more earnestly. The effect of this is to see more clearly the power of evil and the sorrow; and that so as to act on the very body. He was in agony Himself, but always says “Father.” He is, and speaks, in His relationship as Son; not yet the victim before God, but the sufferer in spirit, feeling all the depths of the waters He fs passing through, but crying out of them to His Father. Satan tried to stop Christ with the difficulty, when he could not beguile Him with the pleasure. But He went through all with His Father. At the cross was another thing—the power of God against sin.

Verses 47-53. It is blessed to see these two things brought together—patience with men, and yet power to stop every thing. Having been in agony with God, He is calm before man. When the servant’s ear was cut off, He

puts forth His hand to heal. What a picture of man, what a picture of God, if we look here at Christ!

Verses 54-62. When we tremble before men, it is when we have not been with God. Peter breaks down, proving the deceitfulness of the flesh. In Jesus suffering as He was, there was nought to disable the perfect and simple action of grace at each moment required. When the cock crew, He turned and looked on Peter, who remembered His word, went out and wept bitterly.

Verses 63-71. The Lord spent the night, not before His judges, who took their ease till morning, before they judged the Lord of glory, but with the men whom they employed, the object of all injury and insult. Then, when it suited the convenience of the Jewish rulers, they brought Him to their council; but the Lord knew it was not the time of testimony, and left them to their weakness. The presenting of Messiah to the Jews was finished; from this the Son of man was to be seated at the right hand of God. All was settled with God— they could go on. They draw the right conclusion, and He conceals nothing. He was the Son of God. They must be guilty, not of mistake, but of condemning Him because He was the Son of God and owned it.

Chapter 23.

Verses 1-25. Religious iniquity had now only to lead on the world to finish the wickedness in which itself had taken the lead. The civil power must give in to the wilful evil of the apostate people of God. This is the history of the world, and of the two, the religious side is always nearest to Satan. The chief priests manifested their enmity by their accusation, which was calculated to arouse the jealousy of the governor; charging on Christ

what was entirely false as to Caesar, but with the subtle groundwork of that which they knew (reckoning on His truth) He could not deny. The guilt of the Jews was complete, as was also that of the Gentiles, for Pontius Pilate declared Him innocent, and desired to release Him. Cruel enough himself, the Roman governor disliked cruelty in others, but he would not go so far as to save Him from the malice of His enemies: it would have cost something to do this; it threatened his interest, and Pilate gave way. The one thing that is strong in the world is enmity against Christ.

But there was another form of evil to be introduced, to wit, Herod, the apostate king of apostate Israel; and in rejecting Jesus all are friends, however jealous and divided. How terrible the union between the fourth beast and God's external people! But if the Gentiles failed shamefully in protecting the just and hence fell into basely unrighteous judgment, the activity of an evil will was with the Jews. Three times the opportunity of a relenting voice was given; but while the governor's indifference was as plain as the disappointed insolence of Herod, every time the cry of the people increased in ardour for the death of the Messiah. Pilate, therefore, released the guilty Barabbas, whom they desired, to appease the Jews, and delivered Jesus to their will.

Verses 26-31. It was a terrible time and full of violence. It mattered little whom they met, if they could only force them to help in their iniquity. Their hour was struck, and all fell into the same mass of rejection and insult of Christ, save that the Jews acted with more knowledge. The forms of privilege became sorrows and harbingers of terror; they must be laid low, for all was untrue now. The natural feelings, touched by affecting

circumstances, as we see in the weeping daughters of Jerusalem, did not change this. They understood neither the cross of Christ nor the ruin which awaited themselves. One may be affected with comparison, as if one were superior to Christ, and fall under the judgment consequent on His rejection and death. No humiliation of Jesus put Him out of His place of perfect capability of dealing with all others from God. Alas! it was not only on Pilate and Herod^ nor on the chief priests, that judgment was coming, but on the women that lamented Him, unconscious of their own state, which was under condemnation. Neither natural conscience, nor natural religiousness, nor natural feelings will do—nothing short of the glory of God in Jesus. And if He, the living and true vine, who indeed bore fruit to God, was thus dealt with, what must be the lot of the fruitless and unprofitable, for such branches were they? Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Man rejects the green tree, and God rejects the dry. Life was there in the person of Jesus, and they would not have it, and are therefore given up; it cannot be had now but through a dead and risen Christ.

Verses 32-43. There is the setting aside of all they looked for here in present deliverance, for Christ must die. But if we are also to see how low man can go morally, we learn, at the same time, that Christ in His grace can go lower still. “Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” Therefore, whenever you see an attempt (and it is the attempt of man’s religion) to connect a living Christ, before death and resurrection, with living sinners, be sure there is error. It unites sin with the Lord from heaven, and it denies that its wages is death. Had Christ delivered

Himself, as the rulers, with the people, said in derision, He would not have delivered us. He must pass through death, and take a higher place, even in resurrection, and there He takes us. By itself, the incarnation cannot bring life and redemption to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. We need to be set beyond all in resurrection-life in Christ.

Thus, then, in spite of the grace of Jesus in intercession, Jews and Gentiles joined in mockery of the crucified; yet God had prepared, even here, the consolation of His mercy for Jesus in a poor sinner. But no sorrow, no shame, no suffering brings the heart too low to scorn Jesus; a gibbeted robber despises Him! There is an instinct, so to speak, in every unrenewed heart, against Jesus, which was not quelled even by that power of love in which He was going down into the deepest humiliation, to surfer the wrath due to sin. Say not that you are one whit better than this wretched man. “There is none righteous, no, not one: none that understandeth; none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable.” In two words, there is no difference. You are as bad, in God’s sight, as the railing impenitent thief. See now the fruit of grace in the other. Grace works in a man who was in as low a condition as he who, notwithstanding his own dying agony and disgrace, had pleasure in outraging the Lord of glory; indeed both had done it (Mark 15:32). But what more blessed and certain than the salvation of this thief, now that he bows to the name of Jesus? He is going to Paradise in companionship with the Lord whom he owned.

It is often idly said, that there was one saved in this way, that none might despair, and but one, that none might

presume. The truth is, that this is the only way whereby any poor sinner can be saved. There is but one and the same salvation for all. There was evidently no time for him to do anything, had this been the way; but all is done for him. That very day his knees were to be broken. But how could he get into Paradise! Christ wrought his deliverance through His own death, and his eye was opened in faith to what Christ was doing.

Nor was it only that Christ's work was wrought for him — the ground on which his soul rested for salvation. There was a mighty moral work wrought in him through the revelation of Christ to his soul by the Spirit who convinced him of his utter sinfulness. "Dost not thou fear God," is his rebuke to his railing fellow, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly." It was not all joy. Conscience had its place. There is a real sense of good and evil; for he has got in spirit into God's presence, and this, making him forget circumstances, elevates him into a preacher of righteousness. And if he owns the lightness of his own punishment in honest confession of sin, what a wonderful testimony he bears to Christ! "This man hath done nothing amiss." It was just as if he had known Christ all his life. He had a divine perception of His character; and so with the Christian now. Have you such jealousy about the spotlessness and glory of Christ, that you cannot help crying out when you hear Him slighted? He believed that He was the Lord, the Son of God, and so could answer with assurance for what He had been as a man. As completely a man as any other, the holy obedience of Christ was divine. "This man hath done nothing amiss." What a response in the renewed heart to the delight of sinlessness! His eye glances, as it were,

over the whole life of Christ; he could answer for Christ anywhere, because he has learnt to know himself.

Then he says, turning to Jesus, “Lord, remember me, when thou comest in thy kingdom.” As soon as he can get rid of what was sad, when he has done with his testimony to the other thief, his heart turns to Christ instinctively. How undistracted he was! Was he thinking of his pain? or of the people around the cross? As is always the case, where God’s presence is realised, he was absorbed. In the extremity of helplessness, as to outward appearance, he hears the Shepherd’s voice, and recognised Him as the Saviour and King. He wants Christ to think of him. The judgment of men was that Christ was a malefactor. The weeping women saw not who He was. But no degradation of circumstances could hide the glory of the Person who hung by his side. He owned Jesus as the Lord, and knows that His kingdom will certainly come. The other malefactor thought only, if he thought at all, of present deliverance; but this one saw the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. His mind was set, not on being free from bodily pain, but on the loving recognition of Christ in glory. He looks not to earth, nor nature, but to another kingdom, where death could not come. There was not a cloud, not a doubt, but the peaceful settled assurance that the Lord would come in His kingdom.

And the Lord gave him more than his faith asked. There was the answer of present peace. It was not only the kingdom by-and-by, but “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” As if He said, You shall have the kingdom when it comes, but I am giving now soul-salvation; you are to be associated at once with Me in a way far better and more than the

kingdom, blessed and true as it is. For indeed the work was accomplished on the cross, which could transport a soul into Paradise. If the Saviour had taken the sinner's place, the sinner is by grace entitled to take the place of the Saviour. The poor thief might know but little of Christ's work and its effect, but the Holy Spirit had fixed his heart on the person of Christ. The words of the Lord (v. 43) imply the atonement, by virtue of which we are made fit to be His companions in the presence of God. The work of Christ is as perfect now for us, as then for him; it is as much accomplished for us as if we were already caught up into Paradise. How distinct this is from anything like progress of the soul to fit it for heaven! And how wonderful that such a soul should be a comfort to the Saviour! He had come into the condemnation; yea, and wrath was on Him to the uttermost. And now the converted thief was a bright witness of perfect grace and eternal salvation through His blood.

Verses 44-49. The scene was closed which let in the light beyond through the portals of a heart now purged by faith, and the darkness proper, to the hour took now its suited course —specially over Israel, it would seem; "and the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst." Thus the way into the holiest was made manifest by the act which had its place in this darkness, and God in the grace of Christ's sacrifice shone forth upon the world. Darkness of judgment as it was to one, the light broke through, and access was opened within the veil. All was finished, and the Lord with no hesitating voice but aloud cried, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." This was not Jewish blessing, (for the living, the living, they shall praise

Thee), but it was much higher; it was sonship, death overcome, and the occasion merely of presenting the spirit, safe, happy, confident, notwithstanding death, into the Father's care and presence. This is an immense principle, and, short of resurrection, of the highest possible importance. Death in the hands of Jesus— what a fact! The centurion, in the course of duty, struck at least in natural conscience, glorified God and owned a righteous man on the cross. The masses were troubled and went away, auguring no good. Those who knew Him, and the women from Galilee, were more nearly interested, but in fear stood afar off.

Verses 50-56. But the providence and operation of God, the righteous Judge, took measures for the body of the Holy One. If the more prominent witnesses were set aside, others feeble in the faith are found active and faithful in the post of danger, confession, and attachment to the Lord. How often the difficulties which frighten those force these forward! So was it with Joseph of Arimathea, for Jesus must be "with the rich in his death." The women too, in true but ignorant affection, make useless preparation, awaiting the just Jewish time for a Lord who had passed far beyond their faith. The resurrection was soon to usher in the dawn of a bright morrow: for the honour of the grave, like the intentions of the women from Galilee, was of a Jewish character, and all this was now closed in death.

Chapter 24.

What now occupies our evangelist is the Risen Man again with His disciples and the testimony to the world founded on the resurrection—this new truth and power above all the principles of natural life. The door of the

cross is shut on all that man in the flesh is, and the new thing is introduced in this risen Christ. Resurrection is an entirely new condition; but even the Jew could not have the sure mercies of David without it. Man, lawless and under law, has had the sentence of death pronounced on him. He may pride himself on his natural powers, but he is without God. He has rejected the One who came to him, a man in perfect divine grace, and in so doing has fully shewn what he is. Therefore says the Lord, “Now is the judgment of this world.”

An entirely new ground appears, and this is here brought out in Christ Himself. Our bodies are still the same, but the life, character, motive, means, end are altogether new in the Christian. “Old things are passed away, and all things are become new.” The women, pre-occupied with their own thoughts and affections, come with their spices to anoint the dead body of Jesus, while He was already living in the perfume of His work and offering before God, having effected all that placed man anew before God the Father, the last Adam in living acceptance. Then they were thrown into an unlooked-for difficulty at first, for they did not find the Lord’s body. Neither did they know He was risen. They understood not that there was neither judgment nor sin remaining. There may be real and great love to Jesus without understanding this. But soon the question was put which involved the answer to all. “Why seek ye the living One among the dead? “These women, faithful if ignorant, were not forgotten of the Lord; and He whose ways are grace has preserved their memorial and their early seeking of the Lord, thence to bear the message to the apostles themselves, but to them the words were as idle tales. Peter’s heart, broken and contrite, was the more

affected by what he heard, and ran to the sepulchre, and having seen the linen clothes laid aside there, went away wondering. Surely it was a marvellous secret, baffling and rising above all human thought! (v. 1-12).

Luke's statements of circumstances are always general. In John we have more details, especially developing Mary Magdalene's devoted affection to His person, but shewing also how little she as yet knew of the power of God in resurrection.

Verses 13-27. The touchingness of this interview with the Lord on the journey to Emmaus need not be spoken of. How the Lord draws out all their thoughts! But He is here altogether as a man, and presenting the truth they speak of Jewishly. How naturally their minds rested always in the same circle! He was a prophet, and they hoped He might redeem Israel. The fact of the resurrection occupied their attention, but it had no link with the counsels of God. They were astonished, and, like others before them, there they rested. Christ takes up quite other ground, though it was only in the way of intelligence and not yet the power of the Holy Ghost. "O fools," says He, "and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written." These He expounds, and opens their understanding to them; for though viewed completely as man, He operates divinely and spiritually on their mind. "Ought not," said He—was it not the counsel of God plainly revealed in His word? What He presses is the mind of God in the scriptures relative to the Christ. This was an immense step; it took them out of their egotism and the egoistical character of Judaism. Their thought was of the redemption of Israel by power. They had no idea of a new and heavenly life, though of course they had it. Even as to the Christ, death must

come in if God were to be vindicated and man really blessed, and so Moses and all the prophets had taught. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?” —not set up His kingdom down here, but “enter into his glory.”

Verses 28-35. Then we have a most graphic account of the scene at Emmaus. “He made as though he would have gone further.” Why should He, to their eye “a stranger,” intrude? “But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And it came to pass as they sat at meat with him, he took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight.”

This was not celebrating the Lord’s supper with them; yet was it taking up that part of it—the act of breaking the bread—which was the sign of His death. He was not now merely as the living Bread that came down from heaven, but as He had said, “this is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world” —not which I will take, but give. He did take flesh, of course, in order to give it; but it was His death that became the life of the world. For Jew or Gentile there was no other way. The condition of man was such that he could be quickened only in connection with the cross. All that was in man, as a child of Adam, was under sentence of death and judgment. Christ, by grace, entered into the place of man— came where I am, that I might be on equal terms with Him, as far as acceptance with God; His broken body shews me that I have got that which brings me to God. A dead sinner can find life and divine favour only in a dead Christ. So the Lord had taught in John 6. To eat His flesh and drink His blood must be in order to have life.

It was not any longer a question of His bodily presence merely as incarnate. Redemption was absolutely necessary, and faith in it. Christ is to be fed upon, not alone as a living Messiah, nor only as One alive again for evermore in resurrection; but, besides that, as He who died, His body broken and blood shed in atonement. Thus it was the Lord was known to the disciples at Emmaus, though it was not the Lord's supper. Their hearts had been opened by what encouraged them in connecting the truth of God with the facts of human unbelief and Christ's rejection, and thus turning the cause of their despair into joy and peace by the sight of the counsels of God in it. But His actual revelation was by the affecting circumstance of personal association in the breaking of bread. It was Himself who broke the bread. There could be no mistake. He was gone in a moment—"vanished out of their sight." But His object was gained. They had life through His death.

And He was risen. The body was a spiritual body, and had flesh and bones, which a spirit has not. He had shewn them not only the fact, but its necessity. Why does He not say "did," but "must rise from the dead?" Because all the sentence must be passed on the first Adam. All that I have now is in the last Adam: I am not only quickened, but quickened together with Christ, having all trespasses forgiven. Christ, by His death, put them away for all who believe, and for such, all that belonged to the first Adam is clean gone. This is power over the principle of sin, which as a fact is still within. And hence the apostle bids the believers reckon themselves dead to sin. In the power of the Holy Ghost, giving me the consciousness of new life in Christ, I am to mortify my members here below, because I have to

apply the death of Christ to my old nature. The monkish principle tries to kill sin in order to get life, but the apostle shews that we must have life by faith in Christ in order to treat sin as a dead thing. See Romans 6, 7, 8.

The holding of the disciples' eyes was of importance. To have recognised Jesus would have been in their state to have satisfied their thoughts. The Lord, on the other hand, engaging their hearts by all God said of Him, furnished them with scriptural intelligence; and then in the act of intimate friendship, which recalled the great truth of His death, brought to mind His great deliverance. "We walk by faith, not by sight." Filled with the concentrating event which began a new world, they hastened back to Jerusalem, where the eleven and others were occupied. "The Lord," said the latter, "is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Then the two told the tale of their wondrous journey, and still more wondrous recognition of Jesus in breaking of bread. The Lord was proving that there should be independent witnesses.

Verses 36-53. Thus their hearts were prepared. Yet in the fact of this new thing, "the beginning, the firstborn from the dead," there was that to which earthly hearts could ill assort themselves. The Lord presents Himself as the very same man, all through and in every way. In His intercourse with the two, it had been just the same; all was human, though what no man ever was, and what none but God could be, was shewn in and through it. Here also His hands, His feet, His previous wounds are presented. He takes of fish and of an honey-comb, and eats before them. Two sentiments had overpowering possession of the disciples—joy to see Himself again, and astonishment. The Lord presents the truth of

resurrection, not as a doctrine, but in living reality, thus restoring their souls and making them know Him most familiarly, risen indeed, but yet a man properly and truly. “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”

This shewed the standing before God in justification of life and liberty. But another thing was wanted before men— power. This is not the question before God, where the Christian stands as Christ stands, “accepted in the beloved.” But the testimony of the Christian here below, whether preaching or anything else, needs power to be given. This power was promised to the disciples, but even yet they must wait for it. We must not confound service of any kind with standing. The power of the Spirit is requisite to live before man—power over and above the new birth, and distinct from spiritual understanding. This last is needed to give us the apprehension of our standing in Christ; and when He opens our understandings to understand the Scriptures, it does not puff up. It is a revelation of Himself and leads to communion with Him. Yet the other want still remains. Even this knowledge is not necessarily power. The testimony and purpose of God in the word has to be fulfilled.

The great truth of a suffering and risen Christ reaches out to the Gentiles. In Matthew His association with the Jewish remnant is taken up. Consequently He meets them in Galilee after, as before, His resurrection; and thence flows the commission to go and disciple all the

Gentiles. But all this is dropped in Luke. Jerusalem, Emmaus, and Bethany, above all, are prominent; from thence He ascends to heaven, where He has to do with poor sinners. The testimony was to begin at Jerusalem expressly: the riches of His grace must be shewn first where there was the deepest guilt. The cross broke this link with the Jews as a Jewish Messiah, but opened the door of repentance and remission of sins, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. “And ye are witnesses.” Then came in the need of power. “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” This all-important sign of Christ’s exaltation could only be obtained for man by the reception of Jesus in heaven when redemption was effected. The Holy Ghost had ever acted in creation, in providence, in revelation, in regeneration, and in every good thing, but He had never been given before. It hung on the glory of Jesus: to this the Holy Ghost could become a servant in man; for it was the divine counsel and the perfection of love.

Meanwhile, before this endowment, they returned with great joy to the city which their Lord had left. Their hearts were filled with the influence of the great fact, that their Master was glorified, though it was still associated with Jewish thoughts. And these two elements reproduce themselves in the Acts of the Apostles, particularly in the earlier part.

4 Observe, that Matthew only uses the expression, “kingdom of heaven.” It is often, in a general sense, capable of being interchanged with “kingdom of God,” as we see by comparing Luke. Notwithstanding, the two phrases cannot always replace each other, and Matthew uses “kingdom of God” in a few passages where

“kingdom of heaven” could not be used (Matt. 6:33; 12:28; 21:43). Thus “the kingdom of God” was there when Christ the King was there; “the kingdom of heaven” began with Christ going to heaven. By-and-by, when Satan ceases to rule, it will be the “kingdom of heaven” (and “of God” too, of course), not in a mystery, but in manifestation. “The kingdom of God” has also a moral force which “kingdom of heaven” has not; and in this way it is frequently used by Paul, and was peculiarly suitable to the Spirit’s design in Luke.

5 Satan’s saying in Luke 4:6 (“All this power,” etc.) was false as to right, but true in fact, through men’s lusts. So far as these go, he gives the power; but God, after all, is above him, and governs in providence.

6 This is a sample of Luke’s manner as to dates. The entrance of Satan into Judas was what was morally necessary to present here; not so the particulars. Strictly, he put it into Judas’ heart then, and entered after the sop was received.

On The Gospel Of Luke

Chapters 4, 5

I hardly know whether the thoughts I send you suit your little journal;7 but I trust that all that unfolds the way the blessed Lord presented Himself on the earth, the connection of the Old Testament with the New, and the revealing of God in man upon the earth, will be profitable to some of your readers at least.

I forward to you therefore some remarks on the Gospel of Luke, flowing from thoughts which have arisen in my mind while lately reading it. There are two great subjects in the life of the blessed Lord which Luke brings out: the fulfilment of promise; and the revelation of God in grace in the “Son of man.” These are presented to us in the history in a very interesting way. I will notice this as displayed in chapters 4 and 5.

In chapter 4 the Spirit of God has shewn us the blessed One led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, victorious in trial, as the first man had failed in it. He returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, having first bound the strong man.

Let me remark here, in passing, how faithfulness in trial and temptation shews the power of the Spirit as much as the energy of action. Jesus was led by the Spirit to be tempted, overcame Satan by the word through the Spirit, and returned in its power, working miracles and casting out devils. But the power had been exercised all through the temptation, only in standing fast. See Ephesians 6. Therein He had overcome Satan, baffled his power, really bound the strong man, and then had

only to spoil his goods. He used too the weapon we have to use, the word of God: only we must remark, as we learn from Ephesians 6, that, to use the word, we must first have all the defensive armours, that is, the state of the soul must be right. Christ, of course, was perfect and used it perfectly. In the measure of our spirituality and uprightness we shall be able to wield this blessed weapon. But here even the sword was a defensive weapon. He met the wiles of Satan by it. Whatever reasonings or scriptures Satan may use, if we are spiritual enough to use it, the word of God suffices to confound him.

But to turn to my more direct subject. The Lord now stood as man, anointed of the Holy Ghost, having overcome Satan, to make good divine grace and goodness amongst men, and specially first amongst the Jews; but the glory of His divine person was not to be hid. But first He presents Himself as the anointed Man, fulfilling all that has been promised in grace.

I must remark another point. The Lord looks for rejection; and this, it will be seen, is the case in both the characters in which He presents Himself. First, then, as the anointed Man. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Thus He presents Himself as the fulfiller of promise, announcing the favourable and gracious time of God’s mercy in His own person. “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” But at the same time He tells them that He will be rejected. A prophet has not honour in his own country.

But He adds that grace, as grace, passed beyond the limits of the Jews; that God was sovereign in His goodness, and of old had sent help to two Gentiles, while many remained in sorrow in rebellious Israel. This the haughty Jews would not bear, and, gracious as His words had been, they are now ready to destroy Him for preaching a grace which Israel might lose all part in, as rejecting Him, and the Gentile get blessing by. They are ready to destroy Him; but it was not the time, and He passed through the midst of them.

Now see the character in which the demons own Him: how it meets this character in which He was really come. How sad a picture! Demons perforce own Him; men reject Him with hatred. It is remarkable how these evil spirits own Him according to the truth (as we may remember the spirit of divination did Paul), but surely only as dreading, and, if they could have done so, avoiding His power. “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.” It was the reluctant owning of a power they could not avoid. The time was not come to cast them into the pit, but to deliver man. The demon came out of the man at Jesus’ word.

But it is well to note that this title was a prophetic one of Jesus; and His title as summing up all the mercies of God. It is unfolded in Psalm 89. The word “mercies,” in the first verse of that psalm, is the same as “Holy One” in verse 19: “Holy One” in verse 18 is quite different. Mercy was to be built up for ever, the psalm declares. How? “Thou spakest in vision of [not “to,” I think, but about, as we see that of the prophecy in Psalm 72, “A Psalm about Solomon”] thy holy One,” thy gracious One,

in whom help and mercy is summed up. “I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant,” etc. Here, no doubt, the immediate subject is David: but in the mind of God a greater, even Christ, is here. The evil spirit owns that this Holy One is there in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Help was indeed laid upon the Mighty One, who, having overcome Satan wholly, could have delivered man from all the miserable fruits of his power, even death itself; but man would have none of Him. He must be redeemed or lost.

Next, in this fourth chapter, when healing many, the demons who are cast out own Him as the Christ the Son of God. This was owning His title as promised to Israel in Psalm 2; but which also witnessed to His rejection. Thus the power of present delivering goodness, in the promised One, was there. He is owned the Holy One of God, in whom mercies came to Israel; as the Christ and Son of God spoken of in Psalm 2. But in His own country He is not received. The prejudices and passions of man rise up against grace and this gracious One, while the demons own Him, but through dread; a strange but solemn picture! They could not but know Him. But what is knowledge when only such? Those He really came to would not receive Him.

In chapter 5 He is seen in another character. He reveals, and is, Jehovah. In the miraculous draught of fishes He makes Himself known to the conscience of Peter, who sees the Lord in it, and acknowledges himself a sinful man unfit for His presence. This is always the effect of the revelation of God to us, and indeed of nothing else. Jesus speaks words of grace, “Fear not.” From henceforth he should catch men. In what follows He

heals the leper, which was Jehovah's work alone. But there was a special circumstance connected with this, full of blessed significance. The leper recognised His power, but was not sure of His goodness or willingness to help him. "Lord," he says, "if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." The Lord does not merely say He is willing, He puts forth His hand and touches him. Now, if a man touched a leper he too was unclean, and must be put out of the camp. But here was a divine person come down, Jehovah, who could cleanse. One who could say, "I will"; "be thou."— One who could not be defiled, but had for that very reason come down to touch the defiled one, and remove the defilement. He was Jehovah, come as man, to touch, so to speak, the sinner in grace. Jesus was one whose holiness was so perfect, as God become man, that He could carry divine love to the vilest—carry it wherever a need or a sorrow was, and as love touch the defiled, not to become so, but to heal. It is a wonderful picture of what Christ, Jehovah, present to heal was in this world. Thus revealing Himself to the conscience, and doing a divine work in love, in what was a figure of cleansing from sin, mark Him out as Jehovah in the world in grace.

He withdraws Himself into the wilderness and prays; ever the dependent, as the obedient and victorious, man. But other elements of divine grace are yet to be observed here. He was sitting with doctors of the law, ready to object to grace, and ignorant of how the Son of God had in manhood visited this sinful world in the power and title of divine grace. One sick of the palsy is brought to Him by faith. He goes to the root of all sorrow, and says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The question is not here how through the precious death of

Christ forgiveness was consistent with divine righteousness and glorified it. What is here revealed is Jehovah present in unmingled grace. As the testimony and witness of this, the Lord does what is ascribed to Jehovah in Psalm 103, along with the forgiveness of sins. “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; and healeth all thy diseases.”

Lastly, the Lord shews, as the friend of publicans and sinners, that He had come in sovereign grace to gather, in the power of good, not looking for it in man. But thus also He must be rejected. This new wine, for it was so, could not be put into old bottles; Judaism could not receive and be the vessel of sovereign grace; nor could those who were used to Judaism easily receive the new wine of the gospel and Spirit of God. And so it ever is in all ages.

Chapter 7.

I do not for the present make any remark on chapter 6. Only we may note that the Lord is gathering distinctly around Himself, apart from the nation, and that He addresses His disciples as thus separated—as those already called to possess the kingdom. But in chapter 7 we have the Lord brought out in a far greater character, and more fully revealed, than as the fulfiller of promise. He is entirely a divine person, and consequently reaches out beyond Judaism, and even human life, in this world. Still the Jews are recognised by the Gentile whom the Lord blesses; and this was right. The Lord did the same. It was the lowliness and submission to God’s ways which the knowledge of God, true faith, always produces.

Remark here, too, a principle which will be found to shine forth through all the Gospels, namely, that

whenever Christ was manifested as God, it was impossible that He could be confined to His relationship to the Jews. God present in His own nature, as love, cannot be confined to the special relationships to a nation to whom He has made promises: although He may, and surely will, faithfully meet them according to promise. This is largely and specially brought out in John: where, indeed, however, the principle reaches further, and thereby assumes another character. The Jews are there looked at, already, in the first chapter, as reprobate, and so treated; though dealt with, still, all through the Gospel. “He came to his own, and his own received him not.” The world, too, is viewed as blind. “The world knew him not.” It was that phenomenon known only in morals, the light shining in darkness. The effect of this is to bring out the Lord in two characters in that Gospel—first, as God, as light in the world, and as such, when forcing the conscience to attend to Him, bringing out the terrible truth that men love darkness rather than light—that they will not have God such as He is: this especially, and formally, in chapter 8, when His word is rejected, as His work is in the ninth. But this makes a turning-point in the Gospel after the first three chapters, which are preface. The first, Christ in nature—Christ incarnate—Christ in work of blessing on earth—Christ (as John Baptist also) calling and gathering on the earth; which reaches on, by His servants, to His millennial presence on earth; in all which, note, no heavenly character or office of Christ is given, as is ever the case in John’s writings. The second gives the millennial kingdom. The third what is needed for the kingdom, and heavenly things: where John also brings out His full person and glory in grace. Then being driven out of Judea, the new order of things is intimated, from

God's nature and the Father's love, in the fourth chapter. Thereon, to the end of the seventh, Christ is presented as the divine lifegiving Son of God; in incarnation, and as the dying Son of man; the Giver of the Spirit, as the feast of tabernacles, the figure of earthly rest, could not yet be kept by Him. Then, His word being rejected in the eighth, in the ninth He gives sight, and this brings in effectual grace; and, rejected though He be, He will have His sheep. Here we have not simply God, who is light in darkness, revealed, but the Father sending the Son in grace. This distinction is always kept up in John. When grace is spoken of it is the Father and the Son! the Father sending the Son; while as mere light, it is God. But this expression of Father and Son refers to grace revealed and effectual, not to the love of God in His nature and character. Where this is spoken of, it is still God. "God so loved the world." I may follow this Gospel and its character more in detail, if it suit you and the Lord so will, another time; but this leads me back to the general truth that Christ as revealing God shines necessarily out beyond Israel.

Thus, in a very striking and beautiful example, the Syro-phenician woman. There the Lord seems to hold back and confine Himself to Israel. "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs." The poor woman says, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Could He say, God is not so good as you suppose? He has no crumbs for the wretched, who even look to Him through grace? Impossible. It would have been denying, not revealing, God; and her faith is at once met. Remark, too, again here, how lowly faith is, and how it submits to

God’s sovereign will! She owns herself a dog, and the privilege of being near God, as Israel was, as a nation. But her faith pierces through the difficulty, with a want, to Him who revealed God in love; and divine goodness, which had taught her to trust in it, met, and could not but meet, that confiding trust.

Now in the seventh chapter of Luke the Lord fully takes the divine place. He is owned by the Gentile as One who can dispose of all, as he himself ordered his soldiers about; and the Lord owns his faith. “I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel.” In the next recorded event He goes farther in the display of divine power and goodness. “When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her.” That was His first thought; and to the bereaved widow He spoke first, and this was God too, though as man near to her sorrow. But divine power was there too; and a word from Him woke up to conscious life the young man they were about to bury. But power, the fullest, divine power, did not obliterate goodness, and cannot. God uses power, but He is love. He delivered him to his mother.

This reaches the ears of John. The very dead are raised, and he remained in prison! He sends to know, Is the promised One come? He trusts the word of Him of whom he had heard such things, but he wants to know if He be the One that should come. John is to believe in Christ, not Christ receive testimony from men. But “He that should come “is the promised One. And John is to receive Him, as others, by the testimony which He gave of Himself, as setting right all the sorrows that sin and Satan had brought into the world, and in grace caring for the poor. But this was more than promise, though it witnessed to the promised One. It proved the presence

of One who was love and had all power. But because He manifested God, He was the rejected One; and blessed was he who should not be offended in Him. If He came in promise, as man expected Him, it would not have been in the grace of divine power come down in love to every want. But because He did, though His arm was not shortened, “He was despised and rejected of men.”

However, when John’s messengers were gone, the Lord bears testimony to the captive one. He was Jehovah’s messenger, sent before His face to prepare His way. But it was really Jehovah who was come. But he who mourned to them, and He who piped to them, were alike rejected by that generation. One class alone received the Lord—the humbled ones who had owned their sinfulness. These intelligently justified God’s ways in both John and Christ. But it went far beyond a Messiah; they had morally met God. They owned they needed repentance; they had deserved the axe. They owned the suitableness of grace. It was not merely Messiah they received. Perhaps, in some of the happiest cases, they are not much occupied with this, though they may have recognised Him as such. They wanted compassionate grace, and they had found it. They recognised the justice of God in condemning them and calling them to repentance: They acknowledged His sovereign goodness in having to do with and in receiving worthless sinners. They justified God. One who was self-righteous thought John and divine grace alike out of place. Repentance was all well for others; they were the heirs of the kingdom.

Now this is characteristic of Luke. The promised One was there no doubt. But it was in grace to men, grace bringing home to them their moral state. They were

meeting God. His way, such as He was in truth, John prepared; Him in His own person and ways Christ fully revealed; God manifest in flesh meeting sorrow, meeting Satan's power, meeting death, meeting sin, in grace. They who felt all these found God in perfect grace there; the friend, indeed, not of the lame, and blind, and deaf merely, but, more wonderful still, of publicans and sinners. They—oh how willingly!—justified God in His ways; while they did so truly and righteously, in what led them to it, in the mourning testimony of John,.who coming in the way of righteousness, went into the desert alone (for there was none righteous; no, not one), and, calling for good fruit, found only that which sinners could, through grace, come with—the confession that they had borne bad fruit. But this gave understanding. The conscience, recognising the state he who has it is in, finds in the manifestation of God Himself in grace all it wants, and what infinitely attracts the heart. The knowledge of God is found through conscience, not through the understanding.

The convicted sinner is wisdom's child; he knows himself— the hardest of all knowledge to acquire. And God in grace meets his state exactly. But such a manifestation of God does not meet the Pharisee. Right and wrong he knows, and can judge of God's dealing in grace; but not the smallest ray of it enters his soul. Yet God can only be so revealed to man who is a sinner, if it be not in eternal judgment; and even so He is not known, for He is love; that is, he does not know God at all. Intellect never knows grace; self-righteousness does not want it. We learn to know God through conscience, when grace has awakened us to feel its need.

Here the child of wisdom is found. The history of the poor woman and the Pharisee is the example of this. The poor sinner was the child of wisdom. She judged her sins with God; she had found Him in grace for her sins. She did not know forgiveness, but she had tasted love. It had won her confidence, the true divinely-given confidence of an humbled heart. This was Christ's work in the world. At the beginning Satan had gained man to evil and lust by first producing distrust of God. Why had God kept back this one tree? Man would be like Him if he had it. Confidence in God was gone; then lust came in.

The blessed Redeemer, while coming indeed to put away sin, yet in His life as the manifestation of God, had come winning back the confidence of man's heart by perfect love— grace in the midst of sin: humbled to the lowest to bring it wherever there was a want; to win man by his wants, and sorrows, and even his sins, where by grace the true sense of them was, back to God; that he might trust in God, because He was God, in love, when he could trust in none else, and thus know Him as God in the fullest revelation of Him—a child of wisdom, true in heart, and knowing God. Such was this poor sinner; justly feeling her sins, but feeling that being such, and feeling herself such, there was One she could trust. Had He been less than God, she could not—had no right to do so—no profit in doing it. It would not meet her case. What God was had reached her heart. She could not have explained it. But it had met her case.

How lovely is this, and yet how humbling to man! In the Pharisee we have clear intellect—the perception of right and wrong, as far as natural conscience goes. All that was in Christ, all that was in God manifested in grace,

he had no perception of, he saw no beauty in it; his eye was blind as to God; he says, “If he were a prophet,” to say nothing of the promised One. This the Lord shewed He was, by exposing his heart, and noting to him what state he was in; He then leaves him, and the cavillers he was surrounded by.

His heart was with the sinner, the humbled one. Her sins, He had declared to all, were forgiven; but to her He turns, to unfold all God’s grace, to give rest to a weary heart—” Thy sins are forgiven thee.” No concealing, no marring integrity by softening matters with her; though owning all that grace had wrought (she loved much) standing by her, with the heartless. When He notices her sins, she would not have had it otherwise: we never would when grace really works. “Thy sins” —but He notices it as God, which He could, and could righteously, through His coming work— “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” Man’s cavils do not interrupt His work of grace: “Go in peace; thy faith hath saved thee.”

What words from a divine Redeemer! Sins forgiven, faith in divine love owned, and salvation declared to be possessed by it! peace—perfectly divinely-given peace—for her! She had not trusted the heart of God in vain. He had revealed Himself that she might trust it. Grace was greater than sin, though it allowed none of it. It wrought conviction, confession, confidence; but it gave forgiveness, salvation, peace: for God, who had restored the soul, and more, by the revelation of Himself, was there. It seems to me, besides this profoundly interesting individual case, instructive to see how, while manifested clearly as the promised One, the Saviour in this Gospel passes on, by the way in which He is manifested, into His divine manifestation in grace. It is

not followed here as in Matthew, which speaks of dealings with Israel, with woes to Chorazin and Bethsaida, though even there it issues in grace; but in the manifestation of God in grace, and the picture of a poor sinner become the child of wisdom, as taught her soul's need, and the grace of God to meet it. Observe here, too, how love is known, and brokenness of heart trusts it, before the answer of peace is given by Him who could do so.

Our chapter gives us thus the God of the Gentiles; the God who delivers from death, raises from it; the God who meets the sinner in grace, when all sin is known, and sends him away in peace from Himself. It is well to have to do with such a God!

Chapter 12.

In this Gospel we constantly find the Lord going over the same ground again and again, in different aspects; but here He is pressing the rejection of His own person, not in connection with the kingdom, but in connection with men's souls. It is not the kingdom as being set aside by His rejection, nor yet the connection of men's souls and bodies with Him in future earthly glory—such as blessing the basket and the store—but the blessing of their souls for ever; therefore what is pressed here is the relationship of the soul with God. On this ground He says a man is but a "fool," that "layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." For "what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? "He thus takes them off all dispensational teaching, to put them on the broad moral ground of the soul's

relationship to God; and then shews them the consequence of discipleship with Himself.

His coming again also is not in its aspect towards the church; but the consequence of His kingdom being set aside for the present is, that His disciples are to look for His coming again. And this also bears two aspects; the one for those in relationship with God, and the other towards the world. Both are taken up in this chapter.

But first He puts before the disciples some of the motives which should actuate them as His disciples (v. 19). “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, for there is nothing hid that shall not be made known.” It will all come out before God: whatever is said or done, it will all come out before God. Having made this appeal to their consciences, the next thing is, that He being rejected, power will be on the side of evil. Power would be there, and it would be against, them: still not one single hair of their head was unnumbered. This was for their comfort! but as to the government on earth by Christ, that was now closed for the present, and, Christ as Messiah being rejected, they must be rejected too, and bear the cross like their Master, being left down here in the midst of the power of evil unsubdued. So thoroughly indeed was power on the side of evil, that when the Lord was casting out a demon, the people said, “He casteth out demons through Beelzebub the chief of the demons.” The principle brought out in this is, that the saints are now down here in conflict with evil, but they are not to be afraid. “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear him which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.” Think of your souls

as being connected with God. The hairs of your head are all numbered. If men kill your body, do not be afraid; for they cannot touch your soul; and not a single hair of your head shall perish. You may be cut off by an ignominious death. What then? Why, “not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father.” “Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

Nothing can possibly separate us from God’s love. However hot the persecution may be, confidence in God is all that is needed. As Paul said, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In all human efforts to preserve oneself from suffering, there is shewn a want of confidence in God. If I am delivered from suffering, I am thankful to God for it; but if it be permitted, I accept suffering as my portion, and trust God in it. Do not seek suffering; but in confessing Christ, you will be sure to get it: and then you should take the suffering and trust God in it. It is a privilege to suffer for the name of Christ. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” However severe the suffering, let your confidence be in God. Do nothing of yourself, leave everything to God alone; for God may make some man (a Gamaliel it may be) to stand up for you. God may use anything as a means of preserving you which you could not use yourself, even the wickedness of man. So that it

is never a question of means, but of who is to use them. It is God Himself, and not you. And mark that this would not be indifference, or haughty defiance; it is simply trusting in God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

If a man persecute me, I would not say a word; I must be quiet and passive, whatever they may do, referring everything to God. As in the case of Peter and John, when the chief priests “commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.”

Then again, in verse 8, “Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.” How thoroughly the Lord is supposing the hostility of man! He expects it, for in truth the gospel sets out with it. “I send you forth as lambs among wolves.” He did not say as lambs among lambs: but as lambs among wolves. Therefore, beloved, if you meet with this hostility, “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” For what Christ met with in His own person while down here, He fully anticipates for all His followers; and therefore “rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings.” But then it is as lambs—not in rashness, but harmless as doves, though wise as serpents. Be prudent in not giving

occasion to hostility; but if confessing the name of Christ brings it out, take is patiently, trusting in God.

The Lord sees the difficulties they will have to encounter, and cheers them by saying, “If you confess me before men, I will confess you before the angels of God.” And mark how the Lord knows how to put His finger on the very point of the difficulty; “If you confess me before men.” It is not whether they could think of Him in their closets: of course they could do that, if they cared for Him at all; but that is not it. Do they “confess me before men? “Alas! how often we cannot find courage to confess Christ openly “before men,” when we can do it in our closets. But this is just a simple test how far the fear of man has more power over our souls than God. Still He would not have us to thrusting ourselves upon people; this would be no good at all. “Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves.” “Be simple concerning evil, and wise concerning good.” As they said of Daniel, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it in the law of his God.” Daniel was simply obeying God, and in thus simply and steadily doing God’s will, he had to suffer for it; and so may we. But then let us take care that we are suffering for doing God’s will, and not in doing our own will. Not as Moses in his rashness, going and slaying an Egyptian and then running away. There was no good in that. But go on steadily doing God’s will, giving Satan no handle: but at the same time having unhesitating boldness in confessing Christ, and in bringing out God’s truth; but not anything of the flesh to excite or offend the flesh in another, except it be by the cross, and that will always be an offence. As it is said, “The reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me.” He took Himself

all the rejection of man's wicked heart against God. He set his face "as a flint"; and so must we. But then we are not to fret ourselves by saying anything contrary to the grace of Christ, and thereby bring on us needless hostility.

Then again, it is not sufficient to be right in the thing that we confess, neither to be sincere. It must be God speaking by us. That which flows from me ought to be of the Spirit, in the power of the Spirit, and according to the time of the Spirit, or it is not of the Lord; it is not the manifestation of the grace of Jesus. This requires the will to be mortified, and the flesh crucified; for if it be otherwise, there will be the blustering out of something without any grace. But assuming the will to be mortified, the flesh subdued, and the Spirit of God working, He says (v. 10), "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." The Lord is here putting them, in a sense, on higher ground than Himself. What an amazing encouragement to our poor hearts! If you speak, they are even more responsible if they reject it than in rejecting Me. This, of course, could only be true but as they spake by the Holy Ghost: there must be no water mixed with the wine.

Paul could say, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." I should not venture to say, If my gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. Paul could say so, because he gave it out as pure as he got it in. But it is not always so with us; and therefore we cannot say what the apostle could, because it was the truth and nothing but the truth that was given pure from God. I could say so as to the truth of it; that is, I can say if you reject the

truth you will be lost, though I cannot say if you reject the gospel I preach you will be lost.

Verse n. Here the Lord encourages the disciples for the warfare, supposing the hostility of the world, which must be expected if the gospel is set forth in power, and guarding them against the fear of man. He says, “When they bring you unto the synagogues, unto magistrates, and unto powers, take ye no thought how, or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.” When God first sent out the gospel, He took care that it should go out pure. All we speak ought to be by the Spirit, as it is nothing but what is of the Holy Ghost that God can use. But when it is by inspiration, which is nothing but by the Holy Ghost, then God takes care that nothing else but the truth shall be spoken. But when I am speaking it is not necessarily so guarded as that no error is mixed up with it. Of course anything really good that is spoken is in a manner inspired. But when the truth was inspired by the Holy Ghost, God so kept the man that nothing but the truth came out. It is not so now. When God came forth in creation, it was by the Spirit. “The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters.” Everything was always done by the Spirit. “He that God has sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.” This was spoken of Christ. But now there is no warrant that every man speaks the truth, because there is no man now so qualified, as to leave no doubt whether there is nothing beside the Holy Ghost.

In verse 13 one comes to the Lord, complaining of the injustice of his brother; “Speak to my brother,” says he, “that he divide the inheritance with me.” And the Lord

replied, “Who made me a judge or a divider over you? “He was not come to set things right in this world then; though He will do this when He comes again. Had He been accepted as Messiah, He would have done so then; but the counsels of God were otherwise. It was quite right that the man should have his inheritance; but as Messiah He was rejected, and therefore could not then set “justice and judgment on the earth.” He was then come about men’s souls; therefore He says to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness.” For while the one sought to defraud, the other sought to obtain; and it was the same spirit in both. They were both loving the possession of these things, and this was the whole secret: therefore the Lord told them, that “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

He could not be occupied with dividing men’s inheritance, for His whole business was with their souls. The world was going to be set aside, therefore what had the Lord to do with men’s inheritances? His work was to go on with God, doing His will; and His entire business as to men was with their souls; and this ought to be our business too, for we are associated with God on new grounds. But if we are seeking the world or riches, the effect will be practically to separate us from God. I always tremble now when I hear of a Christian getting on in the world; for “how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?” And who ever escapes the snare of getting on in the world? Generally there is a getting down in spirituality, when there is a getting up in the world. It may all be taken up in service to the Lord, but that is quite another thing; then it would be a bright testimony. A person once said to me, What

harm is there in riches? My reply was, Suppose they keep you out of heaven; what then? Oh! said he, I never thought of that! If riches do get possession of the heart, they surely must keep Christ out; and a Christless heart never got into heaven yet. The real mischief is in the riches of this world getting into the heart. Mark that most solemn word in 1 Timothy 6:9, 10, 11, “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” It is they that have a desire for riches, who fall into “many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” It is not the question as to whether riches are right or wrong in themselves, but as to riches being the object of the heart. If so, they keep Christ out. A man will then say, But suppose I do not set my heart upon them; but the Lord who knows our hearts better than we do ourselves, does not deal in this way: for He says, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”; and not as it is often quoted, “Where the heart is, there the treasure will be.” It is quite true that, if the Lord give riches, He can give grace to use them; but even then they are a snare. The language of the “certain rich man” to his soul in this chapter is, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry”; but God says, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?” So is he that “layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards

God.” Here come in the questions, “What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

“Therefore take heed, and beware of covetousness, which is idolatry.” For, be it ever remembered, that while riches are a snare to the rich man, to be jealous of a rich man, because of his riches, is as bad or worse in the poor man; for it just shews that he would also have them if he could. It is not a question about riches. The Lord wants to get souls into heaven, and riches will not take them there; that can only be by being rich towards God. The whole question is about Christ; for if Christ has His place in our hearts, the things of this world cease to be temptations to us. The man that is rich towards God has no desire for other riches. But the man that layeth up treasure for himself is not rich towards God; because self is at the bottom. All this has to do with the world.

But now in verse 22 He says unto His disciples, “Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.” “The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.” When speaking to the world He takes the lowest ground; but when He turns to His disciples He speaks differently. They may trust in God, for He presses upon them that as His disciples they were of great value in the sight of God. Poor worthless things in themselves, no doubt, still they were of great value to God. Do not you be uneasy, for God has a particular interest in you, and the hairs of your head are all numbered. If God feedeth the fowls, “how much more are ye better than they?” They were all God’s subjects by creation, for He had not given up His title to the world. In the peculiar

teaching of the Book of Jonah, when God had given up Israel as an earthly testimony, we learn that God's character of doing good to all, and caring for all was not at all touched. "Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much cattle?" "But does God take care of oxen?" In truth He does, for they are the work of His creative power. But to the disciples He says, You are of such value to God that He would have you reckon yourselves to be of value to Him even in the midst of this hostile world. Do not you be taking thought for the morrow; leave the morrow with God. Do not you be taking thought at all; for if by taking thought ye cannot do that which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? He is urging upon them unlimited confidence in God, who is to them as a tender Father. Therefore He says to them, "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after, but your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Therefore, do not be uneasy in passing through the desert, for the kingdom is at the end. And if God is going to give you the kingdom, though as sheep you may be killed here, still He will give you the kingdom.

Then after shewing them what their relationship involved as His disciples, He speaks to them of His coming again.

Verse 35. They were to be "like unto men that wait for their Lord." For though rejected for a season on the earth, He will return: and therefore He here tells us of

the blessedness of those who will be found waiting for Him.

That which should characterise the saints is, not merely holding the doctrine of the Lord's coming, as that which they believe, but their souls should be in the daily attitude of waiting, expecting, and desire His coming! But why? That they may see Himself and be with Him, and like Him for ever!— not because the world which has been so hostile to them is going to be judged, though God will smite the wicked.

It is true, there will be mercy to those who are spared. But we have obtained mercy now, and are therefore waiting for Himself, for what He is in Himself to us, and not because of judgment. That would not be joy to me, though it will be to some on the earth; for "In every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which Jehovah shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps, etc. (Isa. 30:32). This is not our hope, but simple waiting for Himself. The whole walk and character of a saint depends on this, on his waiting for the Lord. Every one should be able to read us by this as having nothing to do in this world, but to get through it, and not as having any portion in it; "turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." This is thought a strange thing now, but the Thessalonians were converted to this hope, for they belonged to a world which had rejected God's Son; therefore they had to turn from these idols to serve the true and living God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.

What I desire to press upon you all and myself too is the individual waiting for the Lord; not as a doctrine merely,

but as a daily waiting for Himself. Whatever the Lord's will may be, I should like Him to find me doing it when He comes. But that is not the question, but am I waiting for Himself day by day?

In the second chapter of 1 Thessalonians the hope is connected with ministry, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" Then Paul would get the reward of His service to the saints. Then in the third chapter the hope is connected with our walk, as a motive for holiness, "unblameable in holiness, before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints."

Then in the fourth chapter, the doctrine of the hope is unfolded; the manner of it comes out—" The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Thus we see what a present expectation the coming of the Lord was; therefore Paul says, "We which are alive and remain." But why does he say "We"? Because he expected it then. This was Paul's character then, that of waiting for the Lord. And does he lose that character, because he died before He came? No, not at all.

Though Peter had a revelation that he should put off the tabernacle of his body (2 Pet. 1:14), yet did he daily wait for the Lord's coming then; and this will be Paul's character when the Lord does come; he will lose nothing by his death. "Be ye like unto men that wait for their

Lord.” The character of their waiting was to be like servants at the hall-door, that, when the master knocked, they were ready to open to Him immediately. It is a figure of course here; but it is the present power of the expectation that is alluded to. And the ruin of the church has come in by practically saying, “My Lord delayeth his coming.” “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.”

“Let your loins be girded about, and your fights burning” — “your loins girt about with truth” for service. You must not let your garments flow loose; that is, you must not let your thoughts and affections spread abroad, but be ready with your garments well girt up and your lights burning. This is not rest, for it is an exceedingly tiring thing to have to sit up and watch through a long dark night. But in the spirit of service the heart, affections, thoughts, feelings, and desires must all be girt up. And this requires real painstaking not to let the flesh go its own way; for it is a great comfort sometimes to do this, if but for a moment, but if we do we shall surely fall asleep like the virgins. For as the virgins went to sleep with their oil in their lamps, so may we go to sleep with the Holy Ghost in our hearts. But blessed are those servants who are found watching. The Lord says this is the time for you to be girded, to take your turn in love to serve and watch; but when I come again, and have things My own way, then I will take My turn in love, ungird you, and gird Myself, and come forth and serve you. You must be well girt up and watchful in the midst of evil; but when the evil is done with, then you may take your rest. When in the Father’s house, you may lie down and be at ease; and then your robes may flow down without any fear of their being soiled. In that blessed

place of holiness and purity you may let your affections, thoughts, and desires flow out without the fear of their being defiled.

The Lord does not speak to us, as He does to the remnant on the earth. He does not say to them that He will come as a thief in the night, but He tells them the tribulation will be so terrible, that He notes how many days it shall last, and says, “For the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened, or no flesh could be saved.” But to us it would be nothing that our flesh should be saved on the earth—we would rather get out of the flesh. To them it would be everything to “fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” They would be amongst those who would not have Christ, and therefore will have Antichrist; and so terrible will be the sorrow, that the Lord comes to cut short those days. They were too late for the other thing, but now, by reason of the sorrow, a short work will the Lord make of it on the earth. The Psalms express a desire for judgment, because those who express it then get their deliverance; but no Christian can claim this. Who could ask, “that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and that the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same? “Judgment will not be our deliverance, but going up to heaven before the judgment begins.

He will come in judgment; as it is said, “Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” But that is not for us—we are not His enemies; for He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And we are perfected now, but we wait by the Holy Ghost to have that which is ours by virtue of our union with Him; and when He comes forth to judgment, we shall come with

Him. The Lord comes with His saints, when He comes to execute judgment on the earth; but He comes for His saints previously.

I do not desire judgment, but I do desire that which is worthy of being desired, the hope of being with the Lord, as the Lord, and like the Lord for ever. It is the end of the whole thing as regards ourselves. Therefore, as the apostle says, The times and the seasons are nothing to you, for you belong to the day that will come, when the wicked shall be as ashes under the feet of the saints.

Verses 40, 41. The Lord then goes on to speak of the conduct of the saints while waiting for their Lord; and, “Peter said, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.” Now observe that the answer of our blessed Lord was most remarkable, and in this way, that those who had the name of waiting for the Lord would become the world. In our country, in England, worldly people are called Christians, and thus they are responsible for the name they bear, and not only for the power. So they that take the name of ministers are responsible for the position they take. For people will be judged, not according to the power they have, but according to the place they have taken. They cannot say, I have taken the place, but have not the power, so you ought not to judge me. But you have taken the place, and therefore are responsible for the power, or you should not have taken the place. If a servant comes into your house and spoils all your

goods, you judge him according to the place he has taken. Therefore the professing church or Christendom is responsible for having taken the place of Christianity without the power; and how can there be power where there is not life? If servants, they are to give to the household the portion of meat in due season, because it is a service to be done in the house while the master is away. So that whatever the place, whether little or great, the servant is to be in service to Christ, while He is away; and if faithful, He will make him ruler over all that He hath at His return.

Verse 45. “But and if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming,” etc. Mark, he does not say He will not come, but “he delayeth his coming.” And the moment the church of God said, My Lord delayeth His coming, it got into the world; and the Lord’s coming was counted a heresy. For as soon as the church lost the practical sense of the Lord’s coming, it began to decay and decline, and the hope gradually dropped out, until it was entirely lost. What awoke the virgins at first was the cry, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh.” But they needed to be called out again from the place where they had gone to make themselves comfortable, although they had been called out before; and that which awakes them again is, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh,” etc. It is not that the church had been saying, He will never come again, but” My Lord delayeth his coming,” just shewing that the hope of His immediate coming had lost its place in her heart. The servant does not say he will be a heathen or a Jew, nor does he leave the other servants; but instead of giving them their meat in due season, he begins to beat them. And when it came to this, they began to eat and drink with the drunken; not that they

got drunk, but that they readily went on with the ways, customs, and habits of the world from which they had been redeemed. Is that the wilderness? No. It is getting into the world and setting up a millennium in the continuity and perpetuity of the church down here, which is virtually denying the Lord's coming. How can I make preparation for continuing down here, if I am expecting Him daily? Men tell me that the Lord is providing for the continuance of the church down here on the earth; but the Lord tells me in His word to expect Him daily to take me up to heaven.

It is a most solemn thing, that this thought of settling in the earth because the Lord delayeth His coming is fast closing in upon the blinded hearts of the professing church, and thus fitting them for the judgment that is fast approaching. The voice then ought now to be lifted up like a trumpet to meet this state of things. "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." This will be the test again by which souls may yet be gathered out to wait for the Lord, and not settle down into the expectation of the perpetuity and continuance of the church down here.

Now mark the result of this (v. 46). "The lord of that servant cometh in an hour when he looketh not for him, and will cut him in sunder, and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." He is treated according to the position he has taken.

Verse 47. Christendom is in the worst case after all; it will be better even for the poor heathen than for it. "As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law." That which now boasts itself as the church will then have peculiar judgment; for "it shall be beaten with many stripes."

Verse 48. While the heathen who ought to have acted according to the light of conscience “will be beaten with few stripes,” God will not go on with evil, though He may bear long with it. And where Satan is working, believers cannot rightly deal with it, but by treating it as what it is. I have no power over it, for it corrupts the principles of the light within me, and brings darkness into my soul.

First, then, there is the waiting for the Lord Himself; and, secondly, the answer to the question, “Speakest thou this unto us, or to all?” is to all that call themselves, and take the place of servants. The Lord make us faithful as those who are waiting for Him! It will be no joy to my soul for Him to find me heaping up riches when He comes; for there should be the testimony to the world that He was coming. Individual faithfulness is first, and then love to Him and to souls will flow out naturally.

Chapter 13.

There are two great principles in God’s dealings, in connection with man on the earth, which are developed in the church of God, as such, and in the government of God. And these two things are very distinct the one from the other. In the church the riches of God’s grace are manifested; but in His governmental dealings, righteousness, and the display of His attributes, as justice, mercy, and goodness. We have an example of God’s governmental power in Exodus 34:6, 7, “And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,

and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." Here it is in connection with the Jews, and not only among the Jews, but it shews also that which is outside in the world in God's dealings. What we get in Exodus 34 is not sovereign grace bringing a soul to eternal life, but governmental power; the exercise of which we may now mark every day around us. For if a man wastes his fortune, or ruins his health by intemperance of any kind, his children suffer for it. This is an invariable principle. We see also the exercise of righteous government in God's not clearing the guilty.

See God's dealings with David, because of the matter of Uriah. "The sword shall never depart from thine house… Thou didst it secredy; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun… Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme, the child that is born unto thee shall surely die." Now, here was judgment for David's sin; and we know that in his after life, the "sword did not depart from his house."

This also is true of the Jews for the murder of the Lord; as it is expressed in Galatians:— "What a man soweth that shall he also reap." This, however, is not grace but government; still it is true of a saint as well as of a sinner. Both kinds of dealing God has with the saints now, that is, in grace, and in righteous government. I shall never reap the reward of my sins in eternal blessedness, for it is infinite grace; but in the way of righteous government I shall reap the reward of my iniquity down here. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked… He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh

reap corruption." It is grace as to sins eternally, but righteous government as to iniquity down here. God never lets go the reins of government, even over the world, although for a season He did not interfere in governmental power. As it is said, "The time of this ignorance God winked at." He did not say there was no sin; therefore they were responsible. So that "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." There was sin and death, though no transgression, because God had not then come in with law. But Adam had received a positive commandment and had transgressed it. And sin must bear its consequence, which is death. But "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel," then all will come out, and both will have their place.

The angels see and understand the government of God in the world; but in the church it is quite another thing, as Peter says, "Which things the angels desire to look into." The angels had seen the various wisdom of God in creation, when the morning stars sang together; but here it was quite a new thing; for by the church the manifold wisdom of God is displayed. God is going to have a people not belonging to the earth at all.

In the prophets government on the earth is spoken of, because it is of Messiah's kingdom that they speak. But God's government towards Israel in its Messiah-character is now suspended, but it will come out again another day. When the kingdom is spoken of, it is government on the earth; but when the church is spoken of, it is as-connected with the Governor Himself. The position of Christians is such, that they have in it a motive for the very commonest affairs of life: so that

their daily conduct should be suitable to their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We are united to Him who will judge the world; and therefore, when the apostle is going to counsel two foolish Christians that are going to law, he says, “what! cannot you settle such a trifling thing as that about money without going to law?” “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” Could not those who are destined to do such high things settle their own smaller matters, without going to law, and that before the unbelievers? It is the sense of their high calling that Paul places before them; which he desired might fill their minds as it did his. Therefore, if telling them as servants to be faithful in a house, and not to be guilty of purloining, he says, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” The grace having appeared, the glory is looked for. Therefore the conclusion is, do you, as subjects of the grace and waiting for the glory, live righteously and suffer wrongfully, rather than avenge yourselves.

We have, then, God’s government of this world, and of the Jew in justice, though in patient goodness; and His taking out of the world a people united to Christ in governing. If you look into the prophets, you do not find anything about the church whatever, but about government, whether of the Jew or of the world. But when we come to the church we find a suspension of

government, in its outward, visible, and settled order, because the world had rejected Christ, who was their Governor. In the church I get an entirely new thing; for the Son of God, having been rejected in the world, is gone back to the Father, and He now says to us, “Ye are not of this world, even as I am not of this world.” “Now is the judgment of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out.” Christ, who made all things, is also set over all things in government, as Heir of all things; though not yet openly exercising His power thus. But Christ, who is “Head over all things, is also Head to the church, which is his body”: a thing hidden from ages and generations; but now made manifest.

In Ephesians this is fully brought out, but there we have more of the fulness of the body; while in Colossians there is more about the fulness of the Head. This is because the Colossians were in danger of slipping back from the Head into the observance of ordinances; therefore the apostle presses upon them the fulness of the Head to bring them back again. But in Ephesians he dwells on the church, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. The church, as His body, is the completeness of Christ.

In Ephesians 3 we read of the promise in Christ by the gospel given in the eternal purpose of God to the church before the foundation of the world; whereas the promises given to Israel were given to them on the earth and not before the world was. The church was called in the eternal purpose of God before time; while the Jew was called out in time. In Colossians 1:23-25 we read, “Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I, Paul, am

made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the church; whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil [or, more properly, to complete] the word of God." That which still remained for God to give, and which we now have, is the revelation of the church; for until the church was revealed, the word of God was not complete. But now that which for ages and generations was hid in God is fully told out.

Here we see Paul's two ministries, first, that of the gospel, and then that of the church. And the form which a believer's life now takes is, "Christ in you the hope of glory." A Christ in heaven, and at the same time dwelling in the saints now on the earth, is a thing which was hid in God before the foundation of the world. Unto the Jews had been committed the oracles of God; but they knew nothing of a body on the earth united to a Head in heaven, even to the man Christ Jesus, as members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Until the church was revealed to Paul, this was still hid in God's eternal purpose. As soon as all God's dealings, in the sense of proving man, were closed with the earth, by the rejection of His Son ("This is the heir, come let us kill him"), all was closed to men in the flesh, and the church is brought out in connection with a Man in heaven.

God sent His only Son, and Him they crucified. He had no other messenger. Christ was rejected as Prophet, as Messiah, as Son of man, and as Son of God; and when man, as man, was thus fully shewn out, God comes in and acts for Himself. Him, whom man had put to death, God raises from the dead, and sets Him down at His own

right hand in heaven; in virtue of which the Holy Ghost comes down and unites a people on the earth to this risen Man in glory. This is quite a distinct thing, and therefore it is that in Scripture we constantly find a gap, as it were, leaving space for the mystery of the church, “which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God,” to be brought out.

Therefore, as we have previously remarked, the church is not found in the Old Testament; but Christ’s coming in humiliation, and His coming in judgment, are spoken of close together, without saying a word about the church coming in between the two events. So, in Luke 4 when the Lord was in the synagogue at Nazareth, after preaching from Isaiah what referred to His then mission of healing the brokenhearted and preaching the acceptable year of the Lord, He closed the book and sat down, saying not a word about “the day of vengeance” —that being deferred until the mystery which had been hid from ages and generations had been manifest to the saints; or, in other words, until after the church had been brought out.

It is of immense importance, for the steadiness of the soul, to keep these two principles quite distinct; for what often confounds people in the study of prophecy is their not seeing the distinctive place which the church of God holds apart from God’s government of the world, or of Israel. But the very essence of the church is, that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. They are all sinners alike; but, when reached by God’s grace, are all brought into one body. The very principle on which the church is based, would have destroyed the whole basis of the Jewish system. All along in the Jewish system their righteousness consisted in maintaining a distinct

separation between themselves and the Gentiles; but now “there is no difference”; for both Jew and Gentile are made one in Christ. If the barrier which God Himself had originally set up had been broken down before Christ was crucified and risen, it would have been sin: therefore the church could never have been even hinted at in the Jewish scriptures. The principle of the church could not be brought in, while the “handwriting of ordinances “remained. But this being “blotted out” “\in Christ, “the twain, Jew and Gentile, are made one new man.”

In going back to our chapter (Luke 13), we see the Jews had the thought of God’s government in their minds. Nor was it wrong in itself. They thought that God could not let such a guilty wretch as this Pilate live, who had been mingling the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices. But Christ brings them to a new principle by which to judge of things, and tells them that Pilate is but a mere instrument in the governmental dealings of God with the nation. Judgment was going on in this present evil world. “Suppose ye,” says the Lord, “that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” It is not that they were finally condemned as sinners here, but it was governmental judgment in this world which would overtake them all unless they repented. God had sent forth His judgment and caught these Galileans, and would catch the Jews also unless they repented. For not only Pilate but God’s Son was there, and they were practically rejecting Him. And how many of the Jews had their blood mingled with their sacrifices by Titus in the destruction of Jerusalem!

Christ had said to the Jews in the close of chapter 12, “When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.” This is not a question of eternal salvation, but it simply refers to the state of the Jews: that is, the Jews will not come out till they have paid the very last mite. Jerusalem will not get out till she has received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins. But she will get out from the chastenings of the Lord when they are complete. It is very evident that this passage refers simply to God’s government of His people.

In verse 56 of the preceding chapter the Lord asks in the way of reproach, “How is it that ye do not discern this time?” And ought not we always to discern the time? Surely the Lord might often reproach us by saying, “How is it that ye do not discern this time? All the world is rejecting Me, and if they do not repent before they get to the judgment, there is no hope. Natural conscience ought to tell you Jews not to reject your Messiah, for God is going all the way along with you to the magistrate, dealing with you in patient grace; and if you do not repent and be reconciled, judgment must come upon you; and then it will be the same with you, as with those whom you think to be such sinners.”

“I am come to send fire on the earth,”—(the fire of judgment) “and what will I if it be already kindled?” (v. 6). The Lord is here dealing with the same state of things. The fig-tree also is Israel; for God came seeking fruit in them, but He found none. In the gospel there is

this difference, that grace sows in order to produce fruit; but in connection with Israel's responsibility, He came seeking fruit and found none.

The sentence upon the fig-tree then is, "cut it down." He not only found it useless, but His vineyard was cumbered by it. "The name of God is blasphemed through you among the Gentiles." Then comes in Christ's mission. "Last of all he sent his Son." God had planted a vineyard and pruned it, but found no fruit. Then a new Gardener comes in to try what He can do, and He said, "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it," etc. This was all done, but still there was no fruit. All was useless, as far as Israel was concerned. Then God says, I will get rid of the whole thing: "cut it down."

The woman with an infirmity (v. n), whom Jesus heals on the sabbath day, brings out another thing that was working in their hearts, that is, the abuse of the law, which brought in hypocrisy. They would lead an ox or an ass from the stall to water on the sabbath day, but they could not bear that a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound eighteen years, should be loosed on the sabbath day. One of the infirmities of man's mind is to use possessed truth to resist revealed truth. Paul was an example of this. As "touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless"; still Paul thought he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth. And so also Christ says of them in John 16:2, 3: "These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me." They were using the name of the Godhead which had been given them ("Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah") to reject the Son; for when Christ came in humiliation, they would not receive

Him. Orthodoxy is used to stop the reception of truth. When truth is the ground of a man's standing, it gains him credit; but when a new truth comes in, it puts faith to the test. So the unity of the Godhead was used by the Jews to resist the reception of Christ.

The ruler of the synagogue said, "There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." But he ought to have known that the Lord of the sabbath was there. That single word "daughter of Abraham" ought to have told him who He was that stood there. And the Lord answered him and said, "Thou hypocrite," etc.

In verse 18 the Lord goes on to say what the kingdom will be like, while the king is rejected and away. While the king is sitting on His Father's throne, until He comes to take His own throne, the kingdom is like a little seed thrown into the ground which springs up and becomes a great tree; just what we see in Christendom. This fills up the gap between Christ's rejection and His coming again. There is no royal power exercised while the king is away; as it is said in Mark's Gospel, "It springs up men know not how." But when the harvest is ripe He will come again. He sowed the first time, and the second time He will put in His sickle. He does not, however, come looking for a great tree, but for heavenly fruit; though, instead of the fruit He expected, He will find the seed has become a great tree, with the fowls of the air lodging in the branches. Pharaoh was a great tree; Nebuchadnezzar was a great tree; the high and great ones of the earth, the representatives of earthly power. Even Israel, who had been planted "a noble vine, wholly a right seed," was bearing no fruit. Therefore, as it is said in Ezekiel 15, "What is the vine-tree more than any

other tree," if it bears no fruit? It is only fit to be burned. We all know that the vine is the most fruitful thing that grows upon the face of the earth, and that the branches when cut off and withered make the best firewood; but they are useless for anything else. It was not a question of the kingdom here, but of fruit-bearing. The word sown in the heart does not come to a great tree, but produces fruit.

In verse 21 the kingdom is likened unto leaven; and leaven is just that which spreads throughout the whole mass in which it is placed, and also gives a character to the thing in which it is. It is the nominal profession of Christianity which is spread into a great mass—a great system. Looked at as a doctrine it has leavened whole countries. Still it is not what the Lord could own; as leaven in Scripture is never used in a good sense. The idea is, the spreading of the doctrine while the king is away.

It should be observed that there is not a word here about the power of the Holy Ghost in connection with the spread of Christian doctrine. He is simply speaking about the effect produced in the world.

In the question of the disciples (v. 23), "Are there few that be saved?" the word "saved" is the same as that which all through the Old Testament signifies the remnant spared. Therefore the question really was as to whether this remnant that would be spared would be few or many, when the judgment came. But, this being a mere idle question, the Lord does not answer it, but says to them (v. 24), "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Those who would get in may. The strait gate was receiving Christ at that time. Some however would come

and knock when the door is closed, to whom He will say, “I know ye not whence ye are.” Strive to enter in at the strait gate, through which Christ goes before you—that is, rejection. “For many [all Israel] shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.” For, inasmuch as they did not receive Christ in humiliation, He says, “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.” It is all most simple when we see the rejection of Christ. For those who reject Christ in the day of His humiliation will themselves be rejected in the day of His glory; and, instead of being His companions in the kingdom, will be thrust out. The unbelieving Jews shall see the Gentiles come into the glory of the kingdom, while they remaining in unbelief will be cast out.

The Pharisees came and said to Him, “Get thee out and depart, for Herod will kill thee” (v. 31). Now Herod was an Idumean and became their king; but what had this Idumean king to do with God’s promises to Israel? Nothing whatever. In Herod we have a kind of figure of the wilful king, first in his trying to kill Christ, and then in his having no faith in God’s purposes or Christ’s glory. But Christ answers, “Go tell that fox “I shall do my Father’s will till the moment come, for I am come to shew divine power, and when rejected here shall be perfected in glory. What divine contempt for the apostate king was here combined with the most perfect human obedience! “Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! “After all,

Jerusalem is the guilty place. Let the Idumean king say and do what he will, it is Jerusalem that is guilty; for Jerusalem was nearest to Himself. And the nearer I am to God, if I reject Him, the worse is the rejection, and the more dreadful the judgment, because it is the place of love. Look at Psalm 132, “The Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation,” etc., and at the end of Psalm 78 it is the same election of Zion from verses 65-68. “But chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which he loved.” And in Psalm 87, “What is Rahab and Babylon?” I am not ashamed of Zion to compete with them. But Christ does not put the sin upon them until they have rejected both Him and His Father.

But before bringing out this purpose of grace, God dealt all through with man on the ground of responsibility, and the last effort He made was in sending His Son. The fig-tree yielded nothing—responsibility was fully put to the test, when the soil itself was found to be bad. I have tried the chosen portion, says God, and find the whole thing so worthless that nothing can be done with it. It is as though one had taken the sand of the sea and found it so impregnated with salt that nothing could be done with it; and, the more digging and pruning that was given to it, the more bad fruit it produced. And we all are no better than the Jews were, for we were, by nature, children of wrath even as others. What! condemn everybody? Yes, to be sure, but then I condemn myself! Man’s “heart is enmity against God.” And the more pains God has taken, it has only brought out the more hatred. The old man is condemned, and the gospel begins with seeking and saving that which was lost. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard

his spots? “And do we not find the truth of all this in ourselves?

But notice how the divine person of the Lord comes out here, “O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered … and ye would not!” Now a prophet could not say this. Though Christ was a prophet, it is true, still He was more than a prophet. He was Jehovah; for none but Jehovah could gather Israel. As it is said, “He that scattered Israel will gather him.” Israel had rejected Jehovah, when under responsibility; but Jehovah will own them when He comes in grace. The church will go up to heaven, and the kingdom will be set up on the earth. And mark how the deity of our blessed Lord shines out again and again in the Gospels, while at the same moment the humanity remained so perfect. And here I would say a word or two as to the way of bringing this blessed fact out. For surely the circumstances through which the Lord passed in His path down here did bring out in a far brighter way who He was, than any text that could be adduced to prove it. Not that I would set aside any text, but suppose you believed there was a God as a truth; if He were to come down by your very side and say, Here I am, would not that be a very different thing? And though Christ was the humbled Man all through His path here (for He was ever the servant of all), yet when the service was of no use, then it was that God shone out. “Before Abraham was, I am.” See Luke 13:33, 34. The moment He said, I must die, since you reject Me, immediately Jehovah shone out. “O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee” —and who could gather Israel but Jehovah Himself?— “but ye would not,” therefore “your house is

left unto you desolate until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The complaint in the Psalms is, that there is none to say, "How long?" —none to count upon the faithfulness of Jehovah to His people. (See Psalm 74.) The expression, "How long?" is often used in the Psalms, and in Isaiah 6 it refers to chastening, and not retribution. How long is Israel to stumble or fall? (Rom. 11). In Isaiah 6 the prophet having uttered those words, "Make the heart of this people fat," etc., taken up by the Lord in John 12, the prophet then says, "How long?" He was in the faith of God and reckoning upon God, and having God's mind, he cannot believe that God will give them up, and therefore asks, "how long" the chastening is to continue. To which the Lord God answers, "There shall be a great forsaking in the midst of the land, but in it there shall be a tenth, and so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." The sap is still there, though there be no leaves.

So in Psalm 118, "Jehovah hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death." In the same way, the Lord does not say, Your house is left unto you desolate, and therefore you shall not see me again. No, but He says, "Ye shall not see me, until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah." He can give as Jehovah, in grace, the answer, and when He gives repentance to Israel, then He will send Jesus— whom, until then, the heavens have received— and then our connection with Him comes in. The prophets spoke only of earthly things, though divine; but to the church it is "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling!" You hath He made to sit together with Him in the heavenly places, and that gives security. How did I get in

there? By virtue of Christ; He is my title and is He not a good title? My desires are to be acquainted with this, that I am one with Christ in heaven. And these are my desires in fact, and that is what the Holy Ghost seals upon my soul, and we get it as our everlasting portion. When Israel is brought to repentance, then “the stone which the builders rejected will be the head of the corner,” and owned of them. They will say, “O! give thanks unto Jehovah, for his mercy endureth for ever.” Alas, they will receive another first! But when their hearts are turned and grace works, then they will use the language of Psalm 119, and find the expression of the law within their hearts, and when faith is thus exercised, and their hearts are broken and open to receive Him, then He Himself will come to them. If there is not a prophet to say, “How long?” then Jehovah Himself will give the answer.

And though applied to Israel here, yet we may learn what the Lord is, for He never changes, and though He executes judgment in righteousness, grace is found in His heart for faith to lay hold of. “When he cometh shall he find faith on the earth? “Well, if there be not faith to be found, or a prophet to be found, there is One who will lay up in His treasures something for faith to lay hold of in the sovereignty of His grace. We see Jehovah in that humble one, that Nazarene, and see how He is able to rise above all iniquity; and thus to see Jehovah shining out through it all, how precious He becomes to us! That we are one with Him should endear Him to our hearts, and in learning Him may He give us to follow Him.

7 This was a contribution to the “Girdle of Truth.”—Ed.]

On The Gospel According To John

Editor's Note8

There is a general remark as to John’s Gospel which will astonish some perhaps; that, except in three cases, John has nothing to do with heaven. In these alone you have heaven. “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” “I go to prepare a place for you,” and “Those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am,” in chapters 6, 14, and 17; and in these it is only thrown out in a way. John’s Gospel is really the manifestation of God to men down here in the person of Christ, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, with the declaration of Christ’s coming again. I merely indicate the character of the Gospel in saying so: you do not get any ascension either at the end of it. Let me first give you a summary of it.

In chapter 1 you get Christ’s person, and incarnation and work, or rather, perhaps, what He does than His work. All His essential names are there, not His relative ones. You do not get Him as Head of the church, or as High Priest, nor as the Christ, which are His relationships; for He is not revealed as Christ in verse 41.

In chapter 2, having His title as Son of man at the close of the first, we hear of His millennial work in the marriage, and the clearing of the temple, up to the end of verse 22. Verses 23 and 24 are connected with chapter 3, where we see not only Christ’s total rejection by man, but the setting aside of the natural man, the new birth and the cross.

These three chapters are before His entry on His public ministry. We know this, because John was not yet cast into prison, and from the other Gospels we learn it was after John was cast into prison, that He went out into His public ministry. In chapter 4 He leaves Judaea, the place of promise, of the temple, and all that, and sets aside Jerusalem and Samaria, bringing the gift of God down to the earth in grace. He sets up spiritual worship, and the old thing is set aside altogether. Then, in Galilee, He brings the power of life to man where he is, and heals the nobleman's son. In chapter 5 He is the quickening Son of God along with the Father, and the judging Son of man alone. He is Son of God in judging too. In chapter 6, He is the humbled Son of man incarnate and dying, and the food of the saints while He is away.

In chapter 7 the Holy Ghost is substituted for His manifestation to the world. Of course it is only the main idea I am giving you now. In chapter 8 His word is rejected. In chapter 9 His work is rejected. In chapter 10 He has His sheep in spite of all. In chapter 11 being rejected and having His sheep, God bears testimony to Him as Son of God in the power of resurrection. In chapter 12 He is owned by spiritual intelligence as the dying one (which comes in most beautifully in a little parenthesis), and then as Son of David, King of Israel, and Son of man; you get the three here, Son of God, Son of David, and Son of man. In chapter 13 He still remains the servant. As He cannot remain with His disciples here, He abides a servant, though gone to God, to fit them to be with Him there. At the end you have the last supper, and Judas, and then the cross, but in the character of His glorifying God there. In chapter 14 He

is telling them that He would come again to receive them, and He gives them what would be their comfort, while He was away; having revealed the Father in His own person, and then they in Him and He in them, known by them through the presence of the Holy Ghost.

In chapter 15 He is Himself the true vine on the earth, Israel is not; and He sends the Comforter to reveal His heavenly glory while His disciples bear witness, through the Comforter, of what He had been on earth. In chapter 16 we have the action of the Comforter on earth towards the world and in the church; they were to ask in His name which they had not done yet. In chapter 17 to the end of verse 23 He puts them completely into His own place on earth toward the Father, and towards the world, He being glorified; and in the last verses He wills that they should be brought into the same place with Him in heaven. In chapter 18 you begin the last history of Gethsemane, and so on. In chapter 19 remark that you have no human suffering, but divine power in it all; they scourge Him and you get all the facts about it, not that He did not suffer, but it is not that part that is brought out: people fall back to the ground instead of His sweating great drops of blood; you have the divine side, I mean. In chapter 20 you have the whole condition of believers from the first revelation of the fact of His resurrection and ascension until the remnant believe by seeing. In chapter 21 you get Christ ministerially represented as come again in the millennial times and the services of Peter and John until then, Peter to be cut off, but John to go on. It is the beginning of the millennium and of the history of Peter and John in the interval from Christ’s death. Paul’s ministry is not found there. Now let us go back.

In the very outset Christ came to the world, and the world knew him not, and He came to His own and His own received Him not; consequently the Jews are treated as reprobates; but He has come from the Father into the world. It is what some might call a Calvinistic gospel; consequently it shews the sovereign grace which leads anybody to receive Christ or own Him at all. They are born of God, not of the will of man. Therefore, too, He has His sheep; and this characterises the Gospel.

The truth is entirely abstract in the first five verses except five words. The Gospel itself begins before Genesis. In Genesis you have the responsible creation; but here “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” a very distinct statement of the eternity of Christ. There is the being of the Word, He is the Word, the Logos, the expression of God’s mind, for Word is both—it is what we were speaking of once before as the intelligent and the intelligible. Christ is the expression, and the Logos too, because He is God. When the expression only is meant it is rheema, not logos. But logos takes up what the mind is as having a thought, or it expresses the mind. All the wisdom of God is in Christ, He is it, and besides He is the expression of it. Then you get another thing, and that is, personal distinction,— “the Word was with God,”—something in a personal sense distinct. And then “the Word was God,” and that is the nature. It is very full, though brief.

Verse 2 meets what was a common difficulty that He only became into personal distinctness when God began to act. Of course it is a mere notion, but it is met here: “He was in the beginning with God.” Then in verse 3 I come to the beginning of Genesis. “All things were made

by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." He is Creator as to things outside Himself. And then I get what is inside Himself, "in him was life." Very full all this, as to the divine person and glory of the Lord. And another thing, "and the life was the light of men." God is light in His nature, but here is specific appropriation in the second person. It is in form too a reciprocal expression. Wisdom always had man in its thoughts; the angels come into creation, but the life was the light of men, and therefore He became a man.

Then I get the judgment of the world, and of "his own," "the light shineth in darkness" —a thing impossible in nature, for if the light there shone in darkness, there would be no no darkness for it to shine in. The judgment of the world is the consequence, for "the darkness comprehended it not." "The light shineth in darkness" is abstract too; He does not say "shone."

Then comes another truth of immense import. "There was a man sent from God," that is, God took pains with men to bring them to apprehend this light. He sends this messenger to draw people's attention; "the same came for a witness to bear witness of the light that all men through him might believe." All to no purpose it might be, but still there was the painstaking of God. "He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that hght." Here we get this name of light (we have nothing of love yet), the purest thing we have any. idea of, and which manifests everything else. It is light that makes all things manifest; but it is a thing too which is perfect purity. That is the true light which, on coming into the world, lights every man. It was not a mere Jewish thing: we have got far away out of that now, but it comes into the world; it is not a question of promises here, but of

nature and counsels. God in His counsels had to say to men, and light comes into the world; He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. Man had not the sense to see that the person who made him was in the world, and its light. And He came to the Jews, and they would not receive Him either. So there was the judgment of everything. You have got the world, and its pitch-darkness; and the Jews—His own—will not have Him: “there is none that understandeth or that seeketh after God.” Job 38:1-7, refers to the same: only that these very singers were created too; so that Job does not go quite so wide. John 1:3 is before the beginning of Genesis when you think of the angels.

We have got what Christ was, abstractly, and the result was that nobody received Him. They had no understanding, and no will; and now, consequently, we get grace working, “but to as many as received him, to them gave he power9 to become children of God.” It is not merely that they got light and blessing, but He gave them a place, “children of God,” “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God.” I have the action of grace, and, where the action of grace is, they do receive Him.

If we are to distinguish the phrases in verse 13, “of flesh” is the nature more; “of man” is the being; “flesh” is the characteristic, “man” is general. “Not of blood.” A Jew was born of blood and thought himself a son of the kingdom; but it was not of the will of the flesh either—Gentile, if you please. This closes on God’s part what He was; and it closes on man’s part too; and then there is the grace that comes in.

Now the Word is looked at as become flesh. In verse 14 a new part commences. Before, it was what He was; now, what He became (what He began to be). The Word became flesh and dwelt among us; it was a real thing, not like God visiting Abraham; but He dwelt among us, tabernacled there "and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." His own incarnate character and our connection with it. The part about John the Baptist comes in in the middle. But there is the statement, "the Word was made flesh": and then you get the aspect He had. We beheld His glory, not of the Son as such, but as of an only-begotten with a Father. He had all the title of that excellency and value in everything. All that that was to the Father was with Him. It is His personal glory made visible in flesh. When He was made flesh, we get a witness of John (v. 15), just as before, saying, "This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me."

The difference between only-begotten (monogenees) and first-born (prototokos), is that the first is His relationship to God eternally; the second is His relationship to other things. Thus, "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth," in Psalm 89. This is not what He is essentially. He was light—the revealer of the Father. "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "The light shineth in darkness" is real, and it is by incarnation; but John is not taking it up in an historical way, only the fact of light and life. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and

truth," he does not say were given, but "came by Jesus Christ"—they were in His person.

He was the truth. The truth never was in the world till then. Bits of truth there were; prophecy was true, and people tell the truth to one another; but the truth was only now. Christ alone is the truth. The truth itself had never come. The law is not the truth; it is not its object. The law tells me what I ought to be; truth tells a fact that is. The law never told anything about truth, but gave a perfect rule, and shewed what man ought to be—"Thou shalt not do this and that." I might draw conclusions from it and say, I am not this or that; whereas, Christ was this and that; He was God and was man, a holy being, and love itself; and all that man without sin was; and the effect was, that He shewed not what things ought to be, but what they were. This world is all very fine, but it is the mere tool and instrument of the devil. Christ tells the truth about everything, evil and good alike—just as light manifests everything; and, more, grace came by Him too; and I know not only what I am, but what God is, and, whatever I am, He is grace to me. Of course Christ had to die to fit us to be with God, but as regards testimony, everything is told out by Christ's coming—what we are, what God is, what the devil is, and what the world is, and everything. The light shines in it, that is Christ's nature; and then he comes down to the fact, that the "darkness comprehended it not." That is the moral statement as to it.

As to the force of the use of the names "God" and "Father" in the Gospel of John, and pretty much in his Epistle, as a general rule, when you speak of our responsibility or the nature of things, you get "God." But when the ways of grace are unfolded, you get the Father

and the Son; there are certain exceptions which only confirm it. “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It was essential to put “God” in there, because it was as God He did it. “The Father sent the Son to be Saviour of the world,” “And this is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” That is a most blessed sentence; though the word “love” is not there, it is the perfection of it. We cannot know God by seeing Him; but the only-begotten Son, in whom is concentrated all the Father’s delight, and who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared Him. The Son comes and declares the Father as He knows Him in His bosom, just as the Father enjoys the Son as the object of His delight and love. If I were to tell you what my father was in his love, I should tell you what he was to me; and Christ comes and tells us all this Himself, and therefore He could say, “He hath that seen me hath seen the Father.” In another sense He “came forth from the Father and came into the world.”

There never was a time when the Son was so dear to the Father as on the cross. “Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I may take it again.” That is, if you look at Him as a Son with His Father. If you take Him as actually suffering being made sin, He could as such have no joy in God. He was forsaken in His soul of God. That is quite true, if you are looking at judicial action in respect of sin. He could not then have any enjoyment of communion with God. The principal part of the cross was the interruption of the communion,

but the complacency of the Father in the Son was never so great. It is a misapprehension of relationships which has made confusion here. My father is a man; but suppose I were to go and say to him “my man, so-and-so,” it would deny the relationship between us; but if he says to me “my boy,” it is very natural, because it is the expression of the relationship. You will never get the value of such things by putting them into a cut-and-dry form. Suppose I were to try to act the son to somebody, I should in that case slip out something all wrong as sure as possible. If the judge were my father, and I go into court, there I should say to him, “my lord “; but this would not be to deny him as my father.

Verse 18 is the revelation of the Father in the world, and it is striking, if we compare it with John’s first epistle. In that he says, “No man hath seen God at any time; if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us! “We know that by the Holy Ghost. Here the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father He hath declared Him.

But I think that very often there is defect among Christians as to relationship, and their apprehension of it; that is, they do not live in the present consciousness of it; they come even in worship in a certain sense through Christ—no man ever came in any other way—but there is not the sense of what the Lord means when He says the “Father himself loveth you.” There is no consciousness of that; it is rather persons outside, conscious they can get in. Of course they never could get in but by Christ.

Then comes John’s mission, preparing the way before Him. He says, “I baptize you with water, but there

standeth one among you whom ye know not; he it is who coming after me is preferred before me." John gives the divine person of Christ and bears testimony to Him. So that we now have had three things: the abstract nature of Christ; then Christ incarnate; then as the revealer of the Father. And we have John's testimony to these; and He who was divine and incarnate, and the revealer of the Father, dwelt among us "full of grace and truth."

Then in verse 29 we come to His work. He is "the Lamb of God," and He "baptizes with the Holy Ghost." Those are the two parts of His work; He is not only a Lamb, who takes away the sin of the world, but He gathers a peculiar people by the Holy Ghost too. You notice it is not "taketh away the sins," nor "has taken" away the sin; you never get either. Often people say Christ has taken away original sin and so on; here it simply says He is the doer of it. It points Him out as such. He is in every sense God's Lamb, He is of God and suited to God, and the effect of the work of this Lamb is the removal of all sin totally out of the world, away from God's sight; He takes it clean away. The first Adam was set up an innocent man; but the moment he became a sinful man, all that God did and does now as to the world He does in respect of sin. If He judges, it is for sins; if He forgives and shews grace it refers to sin, whatever He does in government must have reference to that. There is sin, and God must act in respect of it now; when the new heavens come and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, then the ground of relationship between God and the world will be righteousness instead of sin, or indeed instead of innocence either. It is based upon accomplished redemption which never can lose its value, and therefore the ground of relationship is immutable in

the nature of things. And that ground is already laid, though the thing itself has not yet come. We have justification and peace and reconciliation. This is however only one particular part of the result; in the new heavens and new earth the whole result will be completely fulfilled. The result is not produced in manifestation at all as yet.

Thus verse 29 has no reference to time. Christ is the taker away of sin. It is just the same as in Hebrews 2, “He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one.” It is not there that they are going to be sanctified, or that they have been sanctified, but simply those are the people.

Thus we have His work as the Lamb of God, and the next thing is John bearing record, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.” And then follows the great fact that, besides accomplishing redemption, He is the baptizer with the Holy Ghost. The first thing is, He is the one who takes sin clean out of the world, and then His work being accomplished brings the redeemed into the full blessing of sons. He first, note, takes His place among men and receives the Holy Ghost before He becomes the giver of it to others. And He is marked as Son of God in that place. It is a beautiful expression of the way in which Christ found Himself among us. And then heaven was opened the moment He took His place with the remnant and was baptized—the Holy Ghost comes down on Him, and the Father says, That is My Son.

It was the Son that created in Hebrews 1, and in Colossians 1; and as to being Son in the eternal state, He says, “I came forth from the Father, and am come

into the world “; again, “I leave the world and go to the Father”; and you have no Father if you have no Son. If I do not know Him as Son when He came into the world, I have no mission from God at all. And you get too the Father sent the Son.

“Son of the Father” and “Son of God” are the same essentially, only one is personal relationship, the other nature. But there are persons who take it that Christ was only Son as come into the world. The positive answer is given to this in Hebrews and Colossians, that by Him, the Son, the world was made. He is also called Son as born into this world. There is “This day have I begotten thee,” in Psalm 2. That is not quite the same thing, though the same person, of course. He was begotten in time, that is true as to His human estate. But Hebrews and Colossians are conclusive. It is of immense import, because I have not the Father’s love sending the Son out of heaven, if I have not Him as Son before born into the world. The Son gives up the kingdom to the Father in 1 Corinthians 15. I lose all that the Son is, if He is only so as incarnate, and you have lost all the love of the Father in sending the Son as well. “I have declared thy name and will declare it,” will declare it is now. He did it on earth, and does still, and I believe will do it to all eternity if you take the general statement of Scripture.

In Acts 13 you will find Paul, after speaking of other things, says in verse 33, “God hath raised up Jesus “(not “again”; which ought not to be there), and so in Acts 3:26, “God having raised up his Servant Jesus” (not Son; Peter never states that Jesus is the Son of God); so in chapter 13, “he hath raised him up,” as it is written in Psalm 2. “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten

thee"; and then he goes on to prove resurrection by quoting another text: "I will give you the sure mercies of David." The sureness of them is the proof they were in resurrection not dependent on failing man, and then by resurrection He was declared to be the Son of God with power.

Then in verses 35, 36 you get again, "The next day after John stood and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God." In this we have not John's public ministry that had not produced the effect; but the going out of his own heart at the sight of the Lamb of God. "And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." And then Christ—which to me is most important—Christ accepts the being a centre. He "saith unto them, What seek ye?" They said unto Him, "Where dwellest thou?" "He saith unto them, Come and see." Christ becomes a centre.

Again in verse 43 Christ says to Philip, "Follow me"; and this intimates another thing to me, which is, the only right path through the world where there is no path and nothing right. We are accustomed to think we have a way to trace; but a way to trace proves the world is in ruin and nothing right with us. If a man is in a right place, he has no way to find out; but if I am in a wrong place, there is no right way there. Suppose my son scampers off away from me to Brazil, there is no right way for him until he comes back; for all he is doing does but carry on his error of being away from his father. In Eden and in heaven there is no way to find. If I have got to find a way, it is because I am in a wrong place; but here I find Christ is the way, and Christ is the centre, and He accepts it too. The days are numbered from verse 34 when the gathering of the godly remnant

around Jesus begins. First through John the Baptist's ministry, and the day following Jesus Himself gathers; and this takes up all the time right on to the remnant at the end represented by Nathanael, a remnant then and a remnant to the end. Philip found Nathanael and said unto him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph." There is the greatest prejudice in Nathanael, but there is uprightness. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Come and see." Nathanael asks, "Whence knowest thou me?" "Before that Philip called thee when thou wast under the fig tree; I saw thee." Nathanael answers, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." This is the confession of Psalm 2. That is Christ's Jewish place. Jesus answered and said, "Because I said unto thee I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these." And He said unto him, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." This is Psalm 8. I get Nathanael as a remnant owning Christ in His place there, and then comes "Ye shall see greater things than these" —ye shall see all creation—the angels—subject to the Son of man. "Under the fig tree" was really the Jew, and God knew him there. The fig tree is symbolic of Judaism. That gives us the whole, the abstract nature of Christ, His incarnation, His work, gathering others, and calling by John the Baptist and by Christ; then the owning of Him as in Psalm 2, and finally His place in Psalm 8.

Then in chapter 2 you get the third day. John's ministry is one day, Christ's ministry is a second day, and then "the third day" in chapter 2 is the millennium, the

marriage, and water of purification of the Jews. All among the Jews.

Thus chapter 1:35 is the first day. The third day is when the remnant is all called in. You get no church here at all. John the Baptist's ministry was preparatory; then Christ gathers by His own ministry, and gathers to the kingdom, and revealing of the Son of man; and then the millennium. It is in Psalm 2 we hear of Christ set King of Zion; then the trials of the remnant, and in Psalm 8 everything is put under Him. Here it is the highest creature that is put under Him. When I get Him Son of man, He is Lord of all. There is nothing of the church, unless it would be in baptizing with the Holy Ghost.

The marriage in chapter 2 is all a picture of millennial joy. The time of the second day would have commenced when the Lord was on earth, and it will be resumed again; but it is in abeyance now. What was to go on till the destruction of Jerusalem you get in Matthew 10 to the end of verse 15. The baptism of the Holy Ghost was at Pentecost. There will be a latter rain when the Holy Ghost will come down, though you do not get exactly a baptism of the Holy Ghost in the millennium.

Chapter 3 is immensely important; for you get in it a complete judgment of human nature, the absolute testimony to what man is, but the bringing in of the complete grace that meets it too. The last three verses of chapter 2 belong really to chapter 3; and there you get that men could believe in Christ in a certain kind of way, and yet it is good for nothing. It was not insincerity, nor is it so now, often; but it is a human conviction there justly drawn from His miracles now. That has arisen perhaps from education or human causes, but it was all

in man and of man. The moment other motives and stronger came before them, they cry out, “Crucify him.”

In Nicodemus we find a want that is something more than that. The moment a want is thus felt, there is a consciousness that the world will be against you; and so he goes by night. There is a real want in his soul. He goes to Christ and follows up the impression. What the Holy Ghost produces is always a want, though the want is met. Nicodemus owns Christ to be a teacher that comes from God; but he did not know that the old nature was good for nothing, and that he must be born again. Thus it is the Lord meets him: “I am not going to teach flesh: you must have a new nature; the old cannot be taught at all, except outwardly, and this is worthless.” The special case for a Jew is that he could not enter the earthly kingdom, except he were born again. Therefore the Lord says, “Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again.”

Then you come to the principle of sovereign grace, “the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” This can reach a Gentile; and that is grace. Do not be astonished that I say, you Jews must be born again, flesh is but flesh, and then the Holy Ghost goes where it lists. The Spirit of God goes where He pleases; God is sovereign.

Nicodemus ought to have known it from the Old Testament prophecies, say Ezekiel 36. That was for the Jews, and in the millennium they must be born again, and they must be so even to get into the kingdom on earth. But the moment you get the cross, the whole

thing is carried farther; if you look at it, you will see the Lord's own statement. The water of Ezekiel refers not to baptism, but to the word of God exclusively. Baptism refers to it; and so here. Puseyites and others refer these words to sacraments, but it is the word. Baptism may be its symbol; the symbol refers to the truth, of course. It is not that such words misplace the symbol; people do that; but the symbol is one way of teaching the truth. You have a similar thing in John 6: we must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, or else we have no life in us. People apply that to the Lord's supper, and there we have a symbol again; for it is a symbolic statement of these truths; and we have the written statement of them too in the word; and both these refer to death, Christ's death, and that brought home to us when you come to look into them.

It does not say in terms, you cannot enter heaven except you are born again, though it would be perfectly true; but you cannot enter the kingdom of God. These chapters and the sacraments refer to the same thing, but these chapters do not refer to the sacraments.

Then the Lord says, "we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." In verse 32 John says the same thing, "and what he hath seen and heard that he testifieth, and no man receiveth his testimony." If you get man as man in the presence of Christ Himself telling these heavenly things, man's heart will not have one of them. A man would have nothing to do with them; if you were to put a natural man in heaven, he would get out as fast as ever he could, he would not find a single thing there that he likes.

We have had the rejection of the Lord's testimony, and also the fact that an entirely new nature is brought in, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The cross must be there, but it goes on to the millennium on the earth, and there you must get men born again to have part in the kingdom.

"Again" means "anew, completely, from the beginning," not a modification of the old thing. In Luke i:3 it is "from the very first." It is the same word. I know many think the new birth is an action of the Holy Ghost on man as he is, especially where there are no decided views of truth; as if the Spirit of God found a man, body, soul, and spirit, in a bad state, and then put him, body, soul, and spirit, in a good state. But the testimony as brought here is received of nobody: "wherefore when I came, was there no man; when I called, was there none to answer"; that is the condition, and then what is done is that they are born of God. Then we come to the second great truth, the Lord comes revealing things from heaven, and also doing that which was needed to take us up there. We see the two sides of the cross, the Son of man must be lifted up (and that carries a great deal with it), and then the source of it is that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This same person comes on man's behalf, and on God's side God gave Him. On the one side, it is Son of man; and on the other side, it is Son of God. Then the lifting up of the Son of man you will see in two connections, as the rejected of man, and as "made sin." A living Messiah is for the Jews according to promise, but He must be lifted up, rejected by the world, cast out of it, and made sin before He could draw all men.

But God gave His only-begotten Son, and that brings everything to a test. He was not sent to judge, but save, and he that believeth not is judged already because he has not believed. “And this is the judgment that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.” He came into the world to die, and verses 16, 17 refer to Him as the lifted-up Son of man. I should not say in the same absolute way now, that God loves the world. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. But this has not stopped His grace, but laid the ground for the testimony of it in the whole creation under heaven by His ambassadors. I suppose it is the characteristic of God, and no time is in the statement. Still there is the accepted time and the day of salvation, though that depends on resurrection. It is in full view of the cross that the Lord said, “God so loved the world.” God is now beseeching men to be reconciled, He is acting on that ground now. He gave His Son, and that is done and finished; but it is on that He is now acting.

The casting away of the Jews did put the world in a different position before God; and the cross put the world in a different position of responsibility as to grace and the saint as delivered from it. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” The cross gave a righteous outlet to God’s love. The strongest scripture as to this change is, “for if the casting away of them,” the Jews, “be the reconciling of the world,” etc.

We get a very distinct character given to Christ’s testimony, and one that made a total breach with the world; “he that cometh from above is above all, he that is of the earth is earthy, and speaketh of the earth,” that is John the Baptist’s testimony; the setting up of the

kingdom on earth has its place and character, but all that is gone now, and it is the setting up of the kingdom of heaven. “He that hath received his [Christ’s] testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.” That is the true reception of the word.

It may be John the Baptist’s testimony to the end of verse 32, and John the Evangelist’s in verse 33. There may be some doubt about it. The last verse certainly looks like John the Evangelist’s line of things more than John the Baptist’s.

The force of “the wrath of God abideth on him “is that he has deserved it; and that if he rejects Christ, he lies under it still. But we must not forget that this wrath applies to all sins and uncleanness, not merely to unbelief: “for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.” In this last verse of the chapter “the wrath of God abideth “if they do not bow to Christ’s authority; it is not, disobey Him in the details of precept, or anything of that sort; the “believeth not” means “is not subject to” Him. In “He that believeth not is judged already,” it takes him as not believing. If he has been inattentive, it is not condemnation that he cannot escape from as yet. John is not speaking about attention or inattention, but about not believing or being subject to Christ.

What is so striking is the entire setting aside of man. The Son of God comes with His testimony, and nobody receives it. God sent His Son that the world through Him might be saved, and that is what the world will not receive. In a sense the object of the gospel now is that men through Him may be saved, though it is also to gather out a people. It is a different thing—God’s mind

and the absolute state of things. You read in 1 Timothy, “Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”; it is not “will” in the sense of purpose and desire, but it is good will as to His own nature and love. It is the character of God, not His purpose; and the two are very distinct, what God is, and the way He deals. But there is the activity of His love, “As though God did beseech by us”: and, as one result of that, even the condemnation becomes more terrible if the riches of His goodness are despised, “not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance, but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God”; that increases the condemnation.

When grace had been offered to man and rejected, man was set aside, and a new thing altogether brought in. And so in chapter 4, Christ being set aside by the Jews, He leaves Judaea and goes to Galilee. In verse 4, “He must needs go through Samaria,” and then follows the character of His ministry. Wearied with His journey He sits on the well. A woman comes to draw water, and He says to her, “If thou knewest the gift, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” If you did but know that God was giving, and had come down so low as to ask a drink of water of you, if you but knew that, who it is, and in what character He has come down, you would have asked and He would have given, and what He would have given would have been in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Then you find all that is to no purpose directly, and the way the Lord gets at the woman is by her

conscience; and understanding comes in by conscience. She is a poor wretched soul, but a very interesting woman, and a great deal going on in her heart though a vile creature. It is a beautiful picture, wonderfully distinct and definite, of how the Lord deals with her heart. The woman is astonished that He has anything to say to her, and the disciples that he had to say to a woman. But the Lord's action towards her is very distinct, getting intelligence in by the conscience. "Go, call thy husband and come hither." "I have no husband." "Thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." She had got totally alone through her restless search for happiness and wilful ways, she does net go to the well at the time when the women usually went to draw water; she was tired of her life, for she says, "That I come not hither to draw." The Lord was weary too in His lonely path of grace, and more isolated than she, and sat at the well, and the woman was weary and utterly isolated by sin, but her conscience is reached, and note here the effect. She recognises the word of God that had reached her, its authority not merely the truth of what was said: "I perceive that thou art a prophet"; and then the Lord points out to her that God must be worshipped in spirit because He is a Spirit, and that the Father seeketh worshippers in spirit and in truth. His nature required it, His grace sought it. She says she knows that, when Messias comes, He will tell us all things. But He replies, You have got Him already. Where the heart has been visited really, there Christ has already come. Then you see the effect; she is entirely delivered from care; she leaves her water-pot and goes after other people. "He that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." We do not get the

kingdom here exactly, though it was here I have no doubt.

The “needs,” in chapter 4:4, is a material one. The straight way was through Samaria; the Jews went that way generally, though they did not stop at Samaria on the way. I would not say it was on purpose to meet this woman, though God’s purpose that He should. The sixth hour was our noon—at least so I have always reckoned it here. At the end of the chapter we see the character of the ministry of Christ in anticipating death, symbolical of the death that was coming on Israel. In point of fact, He had to make him alive: “Come down ere my child die,” said the man.

The Samaritans were a mixed people. After Israel was carried captive, the king of Assyria sent people to live in the land who did not fear the Lord; and the Lord sent lions and slew some of them. So one of the priests was sent back to teach them the manner of the God of the land, and then when Nehemiah came back, Sanballat and these people wanted to join him, and he would not let them. Mount Gerizim was the place where Joshua pronounced the blessings, and so they said that would be the proper place for worship, and a temple was built at Gerizim by them. The high priest’s daughter was married to a prince of these people; and they built a temple for themselves.

As to the temple in the millennium, there is a square in the midst of the land, and the city is one side of the square, and the temple is on the other. The portion allotted to the temple seems to be separated from Jerusalem by some distance.

In chapter 3 Christ takes them out of flesh; and in chapter 4 He tells what worship is outside of flesh. In chapter 5 we get the great principle of life, but He does not begin with life. There is instruction connected with it that carries us farther in it as to the character of sin when He comes to the doctrine that men are dead. A man lay at Bethesda, where there were some remains of Jewish blessing. Jehovah had said, “I am Jehovah that healeth thee “; and the Jehovah that healeth was yet there. In the case of this man, the means were there; but the disease he had had taken away the power of using the means; the effect of sin is to make us incapable of using the means afforded to flesh under the old covenant. To use the pool, he must have the power to get in, and it was just what the disease he had to be healed of had taken away, and such even if willing, as this man was, is man’s state under the law. The Lord brings power with Him. The Jews reproach Him when the man is healed, with breaking the sabbath, and then He gives that beautiful answer (“Father” being the name of grace), “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” God could not have His rest where sin and misery are. The law tested man and said, “Do your duty and enjoy my sabbath of rest here below”; but the fact was, they did not do the duty; they were all sinners, and, instead of there being the rest of God, the Father works and the Son works, and brings in divine life where sin and death are; but in this world as such one can have no rest. God at least can have none.

I do not believe a word of what they say about leaving out verse 4 of this chapter. These learned Germans leave anything out. It is just the same with the opening of chapter 8. You get Augustine in the fourth century,

saying some had left that out because it was contrary to morality; and the same language is used by others. In one of the manuscripts of the old Latin translation it was there, and they have deliberately torn in out. But some men take this and that out without the least moral discernment; it is very easy to take it out so, but how did it get in? what should people have put it in for? In other places, as in Acts 8:37, you can account for it in the plainest way. There was a reason for putting in this verse. As for the manuscripts, if not versed in them it is very easy to be entirely misled about them. L is almost always the same as B, and so L is no good as a separate witness. The manuscript E omits the verse, and the corrector has put it in again. These people did not like the angels, and so they left them out. After all the only question is whether an angel did it—God did it, anyway.

Then you have “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” The Lord often did miracles on the sabbath day, taking pains as it were to upset it. You do not find any one institution in the wilderness to which the sabbath is not added. You find the sabbath brought in wherever there was some new expression of God’s will and ways, as obligatory; while you never have the sabbath mentioned in connection with Christ’s working in the New Testament, except to cast a slur upon it; it was a sign of the old covenant and the dispensation was passing away. Now the Lord’s day is a testimony to resurrection, the essential basis of the new creation for man; the sabbath of the rest of God for man on the earth; while in connection with that rest it serves to give man a day’s rest as of God and it will be fulfilled in the millennium: whatever man has a title to in purpose and peace Christ takes the right of it and will make it good.

Then when you come to the typical import of it, the seventh day was type or sign of the earth's rest, and the Lord's day of heavenly rest. The Lord by His action shews that a power was come in that was paramount to law. It is strikingly significant that Christ lay in His grave on the sabbath day.

Adam takes no share in the sabbath before he fell; he never entered into it according to Hebrews. The Lord took up flesh and its responsibilities, and without slighting what God instituted, man having failed, He died out from under the whole. This is the thing that made such a hubbub in Scotland—this sabbath question. A well-known minister said he found Moses dead and threw him out of the pulpit. I say no man has died in Christ away from under the law, which has power over a man as long as he lives. I believe it is a very bad sign indeed if a man slights the Lord's day. God has given you a day free to use for Him, and you make light of it or turn it to mere pleasure. I ask, what use do you make of it, for yourself or for Him? It is all connected with the question, Is the law the thing we are still under? It is perfectly true that the Christian by love fulfils the law, but if I have to do with the law as such, I have not died to sin; because the law has power over a man so long as he lives. I remember one, a most blessed man too, who would not wash his hands on the Lord's day; he was acting up to the light he had, I do not doubt.

The "greater works than these that ye may marvel," are His raising the dead, and many works that He did; He raised Lazarus when he was stinking. They all knew that if the Lord had been there Lazarus would not have died, but He did not go purposely before his death; raising him was more than healing.

Now in the doctrine that follows, Christ does not take up mere weakness, but He goes on to death. We are dead in sin, and He says, “As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will”; and judgment too is committed to the Son alone, “that all men may honour the Son even as they honour the Father.” Both Father and Son quicken, but judgment against the wicked is committed by the Father to the Son because He is the Son of man. The Father chastens: that is another thing.

I get these two ways in which the Son is honoured, quickened souls own Him, and the wicked must, for they are judged by Him. There is no confounding of the two things, or rather destroying the certain truth of the first by bringing it into question in the second; by bringing all up into a common judgment, as if the thing was not settled already; but you have the two ways through which the Son is honoured. Then the heart will ask: which place am I in? “He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into judgment [“condemnation” is not the same word], but is passed from death unto life.” I see in that verse the whole system of Romans and Ephesians brought out. He that is under the quickening power will not come into judgment, that is Romans; but, not merely his responsibility is met, he is passed from death unto life and gone over into the new creation; that is Ephesians.

As I said, when you come to the doctrine He goes on beyond the case of the paralytic. Doctrinally, a man is dead in sins, and by grace passes out of death into life, and does not go into judgment at all, so as to raise any question as to his acceptance; though he gives an

account of himself. The bringing all men into judgment upsets all the truth of Scripture about it, because saints are raised in glory. What an odd thing it is to talk about raising a man in glory, and then judging him! It is upsetting the whole of grace right on to the glory. Then people say it is done only to declare a man just. But he is declared just already; all that believe are justified from all things, and glorifying declares him just, surely. Take for example; there is Paul who has been these eighteen hundred years in heaven, and you are going to take him out and judge him as to whether he is fit to go there! It is striking folly.

The Son quickeneth whom He will, but when you come to the end of the chapter, you get the responsible side. You have the testimony of John the Baptist, the testimony of My Father, the testimony of My works, and the testimony of your own scriptures (where you think you have eternal life) which testify of Me, and yet you will not come unto Me that you might have life. I have four witnesses that there is eternal life here for you, and you will not have it. It was the rejection of the One in whom life was present from God.

Now as to responsibility; power is not the question at all. If my will were right, there would soon be power from God. Here is my child tied under the table by the leg, and I say to him, “Come with me “; and he says, “I won’t.” I say, “You must”; but he will not, and I go to flog him. But then he says, “I was tied by the leg to the table”; but I say, “that makes no difference, I have a knife to cut the cord, for you would not come. It is the will that is the difficulty. I have lent ten thousand pounds to a man; he comes and tells me he is not responsible to me for his debt, for he has not a penny left—all is

squandered. He has no power to pay but that does not destroy my claim.

In chapter 6 we see a beautiful picture of the Son of man in lowliness. In chapter 5 we have the Jewish means of healing, and here follows the Jewish passover, for which His own sacrifice is substituted. He shews Himself as Jehovah in Psalm 132. “He shall satisfy the poor with bread,” He shews that here, and they own Him for a prophet, and then they are going to take Him by force and make Him a king. That gives two of Christ’s titles. But He will not be king in this carnal way, and goes up into the mountain, and takes the place of priest. Here is Christ, who would not be king, was a prophet, and intercedes on high, His people toiling below. Then you get Christ, the food of His people now while He is away, in a double character; He is the bread that came down from heaven—the incarnation; they reject that, and then He goes farther and says, you must eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood. They say, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” I get the revelation that, if you do not take a dead Christ, you cannot enjoy a living one come down from heaven. You cannot enjoy Christ as bread come down from heaven, unless you come in by atonement. You must come in as a mere sinner, or else you cannot take Him to eat for the maintenance and food of life.

Verse 57 says the living Father had sent Him, and He lived on account of the Father, so we li veby reason of Him by eating Him. We have the two things, it is eating both for reception of and for maintenance of life. I remember a person once saying he ate Christ once-for all, but it is not so here. In verses 54, 56 you have in the Greek, the present participle for “eating,” in the others

the aorist tense. I come in by Christ's death, eat His flesh and drink His blood—that is eating to have life; but I go on eating Him after, though my life is the consequence of eating. Verse 56, "dwelleth in me and in I him," goes farther than the first statement.

"I will raise him up at the last day" shews perpetual security on into another world. "I bring in death, as the true way and you must come in by death; you cannot have the old thing; nor can you have a living Christ to be your Saviour, it is only by death, and then it will be in resurrection, that you get the blessing"; and then you get the statement that it goes right on to the end, and then when the present period is closed "I will have them all up in resurrection."

There is a distinction between the eatings. It is the aorist tense in verse 51, and in verse 53, "have eaten," which having no present participle, borrows another word in the next verses, 54, 56, 57 and 58; the first (aorist) is the one act eating for life, and the other is now eating for maintenance of life. "The last day" is the last of this period when Christ comes of course. 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." The age of the law went on and Messiah did come, but they would not have Him, and the whole thing stopped; 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.

The times of the Gentiles in Daniel, and the parenthesis of the church, are not at all contemporaneous; for the

times of the Gentiles began in Babylon, being the times of the four Gentiles beasts in Daniel. The times of the Gentiles will not end at the same time with the church, but go on a little after we are caught up. The temple of Jehovah on earth was set aside when the people were carried to Babylon, and they never got the ark again, but a remnant of them was spared to present to them Messiah.

I know what a person means by “the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven,” but we belong to a heavenly thing in an interval, and there are no dispensations in heaven. The kingdom of heaven is a dispensation, the dispensation of the gospel is an administration. The “I live by the Father” in verse 57 is the sense of dependence: (dia with a genitive is the instrument); with the accusative as this is, it is the reason. It is not “by,” “through,” or “for the sake of”; but by “reason of,” “on account of,” is right.

We have had that Christ was a prophet, and was not King, and had taken a place on high. He had left the disciples, and while absent they toiled against the sea, and when He rejoined them, they were at the land. He was their food, and in our coming to Him we must come by eating His flesh and drinking His blood; and then we saw that it was completed in resurrection, “I will raise him up at the last day.” You have proof there that it cannot be the Lord’s supper, for whosoever eats Christ will live for ever, be raised at the last day according to the life he has received. The aorist, in verses 51 and 53, “has eaten,” is the thing done; where it is “eats,” the participle is used, verses 54, 56, 57 and 58. I am an eater of Christ, I go on eating, I feed on Him. It is first feeding on His death, and then feeding on Him

continually. This shews what poor Romanists do in transubstantiation; they deny the whole truth in their doctrine of concomitancy. If the blood be in the body, it is no atonement at all, and therefore you eat the flesh and drink the blood separately. Theirs is a sacrament of non-redemption, instead of a sacrament of redemption.

It was not “old corn “here. It is the Father sending the Son to be the Saviour. In the end of Galatians 2 it is faith on Him in heaven, it is not a question of eating there. I prefer “on him” to “in him,” because it is on Him as an object there. “The faith of him” is simply that He is the object. “Have faith in God” in Mark 11:22 is in Greek “the faith of God”; that is, has God for its object. What is in Galatians is this, I am dead, and then I get two things, “nevertheless I live,” and “I live by the faith of the Son of God.” But whenever I have Christ as life in me, it is by faith of Christ as an object; He is my life and makes me live on Him, my eye rests on Him and I live by that. “By faith of Jesus Christ,” in Romans 3 is the faith which is characterised by that name, so to speak, and the owning of what is in Him.

John 6 refers to communion and feeding. Then the Lord adds “the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life,” the mere carnal eating is nothing. Flesh profits nothing—I am speaking in a spiritual sense, that is, not literal—a guard against that, though we eat Him as incarnate. Flesh may take it up in a way, and then it becomes a mere awakening of a sentiment or feeling, just as the daughters of Jerusalem wept for Him at seeing a man carried off to the cross, but there is no conscience in that. But when I go to Him and am cleansed by Him, this is a different thing.

I must “have eaten” in the first instance; verses 51 and 53 are aorists as I was saying; and in some cases of exhortation. It is “He that has eaten”; in verse 53; “Except ye have eaten,” etc., and in verse 57; “So he that eateth me [goes on eating] shall live on account of me.” In verse 54 the real force of it is, “the eater of my flesh and the drinker of my blood.” In the Jewish services the passover in the beginning of the chapter would answer to this. And “Christ our pass-over was sacrificed for us.”

It is striking how the Jews are always viewed as rejected, and uniformly oppose Him in this Gospel. Nor does He say a word to make His words intelligible to them. And the disciples many of them went away, and the branches of the vine were broken off. These were simply professors. Thus a man might be a disciple without being quickened, so far as following after Him goes.

The great thing is death first. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,” and when I come to talk of feeding on Christ, I must first feed on His death. The Lord’s supper is a symbol of the same truth of which this chapter speaks; but these words are positively untrue of the Lord’s supper. I would not connect the eating of the Supper with this chapter at all, but with the Christ who is spoken of in this chapter. The Supper and the chapter refer to the same thing, but not to one another. This chapter is the word of God about it, and the Lord’s supper is the symbol of the same.

In Luke 24,1 doubt not, it is the Lord’s supper; not actually sitting down for that purpose, but they sat down

to a meal, and the Lord took the bread and brake it. The "did eat" in John 6:58 is the aorist tense; "not as your fathers did eat," because they were not eating it now; and He adds, "he that eateth [or the eater—present participle] of this bread shall live for ever."

Then He asks, "Doth this offend you, What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before," You have in this chapter the incarnation, the death, and then the ascension suggested, but you do not get the resurrection referred to here. An incarnate and dead Christ are looked at as food of life. Death and resurrection is not the point of view in John; but simply departing out of this world to the Father.

I do not know what is the best reading of verse 69, as I trouble myself little about readings, unless there is something positive in them. Tischendorf's English Testament gives the English text all thrown into doubt; adding readings from three manuscripts for people to decide which is which, as if they could. The effect on my mind was very unsatisfactory. It is very difficult for people to enter into the merits of these manuscripts. These gentlemen turn up their noses at Alexandrian when they get others on their side; but the Syriac is older still, and it is said more often agrees with Alexandrian. As for leading people to any conclusion by quoting letters, it is no guide whatever unless to those who know the place and character of the various texts. The Alexandrian is of two distinct families in the Gospels and Epistles; and it is perfectly impossible for ninety-nine out of a hundred to know anything about them. Tregelles is very accurate and diligent, but he is onesided so that you cannot trust him. As for any truth, whether "Son of the living God "be there or not, it

makes little difference; no particular truth, I mean, is involved in it here.

To return, many of the disciples go back, but Peter had the consciousness of Christ's person; whatever the degree of his knowledge, he had what held him fast when other people went away, though he knew no better than they did what the eating and drinking was. You cannot take a lower condition of faith than this expresses: "thou hast the words of eternal life, to whom shall we go?" But Peter had got the person in whom the life was. In point of fact, the less the confession, the more strong would be the instruction of the passage. If I had got hold of Christ at all, I had got what was not to be shaken. Peter was negatively kept; "there is nowhere else to go but to you": after all it is a great thing to say so; simple souls are often kept when wiseacres fall. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." But "a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers." It is just like a child; a stranger may come, kindness itself, but it is not the voice of its mother; it will not do.

Quickening is the power of the Spirit by the word, of course. The Thomasites take up verse 63, and say it is in the "word" the Spirit is; and Campbellites too. One of them told me they were just as much begotten of Paul, as they were of the Holy Ghost, because they were begotten of him by the gospel. But I get the personality of the Holy Ghost in Scripture very clearly; He wills, distributes, is sent, comes, speaks, works, and so on; and this is somebody.

The business of the Old Testament is to reveal the unity of the Godhead; the business of the New Testament is to reveal the Trinity; and therefore, though you have got at the beginning “the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters” and elsewhere, it is not so clear in the Old Testament; there is no personal coming. As to the word “person,” use what word may be best, but the testimony of scripture is plain enough that what we mean by a person is said both of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

I do not think the remnant will see anything like so clearly as we do. They will be an earthly people, not a heavenly; they will never get the place we have. But you see we never say a prayer without the Trinity (Eph. 2:18). As far as the remnant take up promise and prophecy as to the church in the then past, they will see it is all over and gone. They will look for Christ, and the strongest expression of their intelligence that I know of is, “Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself,” Ps. 80:17. They will say, “Here is forgiveness, but the people are all gone that it was for; and I do not know whether it is for me.”

The Spirit of God will not be confined to the remnant, for there will be the everlasting gospel. But the thing now is, the Holy Ghost being come it is the firstfruits that we have got, and we become a kind of firstfruits of His creatures, and that is sanctification to God in a special manner, but it will not be the case with the remnant. And so now we get a far fuller insight into the heavenly things than they will then. God has reserved some better thing for us, than even for the Old Testament saints.

In chapter 7 comes the feast of tabernacles, and the Spirit instead of it. Of the feast of tabernacles there has been no fulfilment at all. None had then been fulfilled, but we had the passover in the last chapter and the truth connected with it; but the tabernacles Christ could not then have to say to, and He substitutes the gift of the Holy Ghost for the revelation of Christ to the world. That is the grand truth that is in this chapter. The tabernacles came after the harvest and vintage (that is, the double judgment of God) is fulfilled, the separative judgment and the execution of vengeance. Pentecost and passover are over. We have the fulfilment of them in Christ's sacrifice and Pentecost; but at the tabernacles they dwelt in booths, as a sign that they had been strangers, but are so no more. His brethren say to Him, "go and shew thyself to the world," but He says, "I do not go to this feast: your time is always ready." And, having gone up as it were secretly, on the last day, the eighth day—it was only this feast that had an eighth day to it—He then "stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He could not shew Himself to the world, for His time was not yet come, but He does go up in the middle of the feast, though He could take no part in it; but instead of that, there was this eighth day—not one of the seven days of the complete feast—and on it He speaks of the "Spirit which they that believe on him should receive." He could not shew Himself in the glory then.

The word "yet" in verse 6 is right, but in verse 8 it is doubtful the first time it is used. When you say," I go not up," it is different from "I go not yet." He did go up afterwards. The time referred to in verse 6 is the millennium. I believe the Virgin Mary had a family

afterwards, but “brethren “is used in a large way including relatives.

Christ cannot shew Himself to the world, but says, If any man thirst for himself—wants to drink for himself; it is not looking for gifts for others, but if any man is thirsty, let him come unto Me and drink. If he fill his own soul in the power of the Holy Ghost from Christ, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

We had a passover in chapter 2; in chapter 5 it was not one of the great feasts. I do not know what feast it was. But now the feasts give a distinctive character to everything.

The aspect of the Holy Ghost in John 4 is communion, as in chapter 3 life giving; in chapter 4 springing up into everlasting life and communion; and here, in chapter 7, it flows out to others, but I get a drink for myself first. In chapter 20 it is the power of life in resurrection. It is not sending it from heaven, but just as God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul, so Christ breathes into His disciples the breath of life. It is an immense advance on the Old Testament, but here in chapter 7 the waters flow forth again from them; it is far more than they had in the wilderness. There they “drank of that rock that followed.” Here the rivers flow forth from them. This chapter 7 is immensely important, but not so objective, and therefore simpler.

He could not shew Himself, for the feast of Tabernacles will be kept in the millennium, and His time was not yet come. But the seventh day completed the week of the feast properly speaking, and as when Christ rose it was the beginning of a wholly new state, the eighth day was

the first day of another week, the beginning of another world for man. The seven days are the figure of the millennium, the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles; the first of the seven was a holy convocation. Only here Christ does not shew Himself to the world for the seven days, but at the last He announces the gift of the Holy Ghost to connect us with Himself in heaven. It will be an immense relief to see the world delivered from evil, no doubt; but what you get here is for the meanwhile the Holy Ghost till Christ returns.

Just a word or two back. In verse 17, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” The first “will” is emphatic— if he wills to do it; if he wills, he shall know if the word is right. There is a difference between the people and the Jews. The people in verse 20 ask, “Who goeth about to kill you?” But in verse 25, “Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he whom they seek to kill?” He had gone to Galilee to the poor of the flock, and they did not understand that any were going about to kill Him; but the Jews from Jerusalem knew very well; and the controversy between them and Christ constantly comes out in John. All Christ’s work was in Galilee except a very occasional thing, the beginning of Matthew tells you so; but in John it is nearly all in Jerusalem bringing out His controversy with the Jews. It is very striking that in Matthew in the end of chapter 4 you get all Christ’s ministry in about four verses. “And 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 sick

people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with demons, and those which were lunatic, those that had the palsy, and he healed them; and there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan;" three verses; and then He goes on to tell them in chapters 5-7 what kind of people were fit for the kingdom. The rest unfolds His person and dispensational ministry as come among the Jews ajid what took its place.

In the close of the chapter, John 7, poor Nicodemus shews himself, and says a word for Christ, just what he dared. Then in chapter 8, with other things, you will find His word rejected. Instead of the millennium we have had the Holy Ghost given; the Bread of life had before come down from heaven; and now it is the word in chapter 8. They bring Him a woman taken in adultery.

The first verse of chapter 8 should go with chapter 7. The divisions are of no authority at all. The chapters had been arranged, and verses put in the New Testament in 1551. The first divisions were in 1200 and something for the New Testament. Stephens was the first to issue the text so divided. There were Dutch printers who in 1624 published an emendation of Stephens, calling it the text received by all, and then people got afraid to change anything. Here and there a word was taken from Beza, but at large the text was from Stephens. In the Apocalypse Erasmus had but one manuscript, and that mingled up with a commentary. Stephens had some thirteen second-rate manuscripts. Erasmus employed a man to cull out the text from the commentary. The last verse he translated into Greek from the Vulgate. We

have now a hundred manuscripts of the Apocalypse, with five uncial ones; but the first translations having been all made from the one text, we may say that of Stephens, it looks now as if we were changing what we were all used to. This narrative in John 8 was left out where it was found avowedly for the sake of morality, and this was so stated near as early as we have any copy at all.

The Lord here takes up the law in this way; they bring the letter of it to Him that He may condemn the woman. They thought they had a great advantage against the Lord, for by the law He must say, “Stone her”: but if so, then He was no Saviour; and if He said, “You must not stone her,” then clearly He had broken the law. Really in them it was no respect for the law, nor compassion for the woman either; but the Lord takes it up and says: Quite right, The law condemns, but I must apply it to all of you: whosoever “is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” And the oldest went out first, because he had the most character to save. So the Lord gives the law all its power, and the woman is spared too. “Hath no man condemned her?” “No man, Lord.” “Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.” The law is not set aside, for if you give it its proper authority, all are condemned together; and that is just where we all are, all gone in the light of the law for Christ to come in. Like a man attempting to conduct a business; I say to him, You ought to do so-and-so; but he replies, “What is the good of telling me that? for my money is gone already.” We have got debts and no capital, counsels for righteousness are of no avail; and what are we to do? Then the Lord says, “I am the light of life.” “I am the light of the world, and he that followeth me shall not

walk in darkness, but have the light of life." That is not the law which was death, righteous death to everybody, but it is the person of Christ who is the light of the world, "and the life was the light of men." The writing on the ground was just giving them time for conscience to work.

You have no forgiveness of sins in this gospel unless administrative forgiveness by man. I think this is characteristic. Christ does not here forgive or condemn. It is characteristic, for instead of that He is in constant conflict with these Jews in respect of who He was.

And now follows that which declares this testimony: "I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." And so He taught in the temple, but "no man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come." He tells them, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "He that sent me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him." Some of them believed on Him, and He says to them, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." They say they are Abraham's seed; but if you commit sin, you are the slaves of sin. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed, but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you." This shews that being under law and being under sin are tantamount. The Jews—people under law—are slaves of sin. The slave does not abide in the house always, but the Son abides ever and He could make free.

There is a mis-translation in verse 25. It should be "Who art thou? Altogether that which I said unto you." It is His

word still. It is the same in verses 32 and 36: the word sets free. But it is the living Son's act. The passage is important to shew how the word and the living person go together. It is not "from the beginning" in verse 25; it is "altogether what I also say to you." That is true of every honest man in a certain sense; it is not "from the beginning," but in principle or absolutely. The word that Christ spake was the absolute expression of what He was. I am what I speak, that is the thought expressed.

Then the truth sets free and the Son sets free. There may be this much difference, that you do not connect grace so much with the word as with the Son. When I say the truth, I think of God as coming and judging everything in men by the revelation of truth by the word, bringing what is good and divine by that word. When I say the Son I speak of living power and authority working in love. It does not appear that it was divine faith the Jews had who believed on Him; but it might be in some.

Then comes another principle; our Lord says, "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word." They did not understand what He said because they did not take in His thought. In human things you must understand the language, the technical terms, before you understand the thing; but in divine things you must understand the propositions in order to understand the words. If I say, "Ye must be born again," the words do not give an understanding of what it is. Until I know the liberty of Christ, until I have the thing in freedom, no words make my understand what "free" really is. Christ has to say to them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the

truth because there is no truth in him; when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin; and if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God, heareth God's words." And in verse 51 He says, "If a man keep my saying he shall never see death." The Lord's words expressed Himself, and these words are the Father's testimony to Him, and they would not have him. Later on He says "Believe me, or else believe me for the very works' sake."

Then they drive Him to say that He is God Himself.

It is the day of His glory, I have no doubt in verse 56. But now, instead of executing judgment on His enemies, He allowed Himself to be executed to save sinners. Abraham in a figure may have seen that day in Isaac. And then He says, "Before Abraham was, I am" —He is God. People may quibble now and again, but the Jews understood it very well, and took up stones to stone Him for it, but He passed away. This is His word rejected.

In chapter 9 it is Christ's work. "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth; and his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." It is not the word now, but the works. I suppose they thought Exodus 34 was being carried out in the man because his parents had sinned; though that had been abrogated in Jeremiah and Ezekiel really, and it became, "the soul that sinneth it shall die," that is, the death of the person himself who had sinned. It is not

spiritual death either; it has done a great deal of mischief, using that as spiritual death, it was temporal only. God's governmental dealings with the Jews.

The word "soul," though often used for living person simply, as it is in English yet, in the Old Testament is for soul contrasted with the body. Still "life and incorruptibility are brought to light by the gospel." Life was intimated in a way, "Thou will not leave my soul in hell [hades], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Suffering and disease are the common lot of a poor world, lying in sin and ruin; though they may be special chastisement. But the Lord displays His grace to the man. He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle; you get what comes from the earth, and what comes from Christ's person. The Lord typified in this clay that the only effect of His presence was, that, if it were possible to make a blind man more blind, it did. The man was blind already, just as the Jews were; but the effect of the presence of Christ was to make them more blind still. Only He goes to the pool of Siloam which is by interpretation "sent"; and the moment anyone saw Him as the sent One of God, they got their sight. You have got Christ there present as a Man before the eyes of the people, and that is not giving them sight at all, but the contrary; but the moment the word in the power of the Spirit of God opened their eyes, it was healing and sight at once.

You have a very distinct principle here, as to the way of the operation of divine grace. When the man is questioned, he says, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." And that is the only way of knowing that is worth anything, while the external knowledge of Christ

is only double blindness. But the moment there is the power of the Spirit of God giving the knowledge of Christ as the sent One of God, you get eyes then, spiritual eyes of course. The Jews do what they can to confound the man; they bring his parents who are afraid to say a word of who did it, because “if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue “; but the only thing their testimony is worth anything for is, that he was their son, and was born blind—just what the Pharisees did not want. And then the man begins to reason with them, that He has opened my eyes, and you cannot tell whence He is. Himself the subject of divine power He knew it was such. “Oh,” say they, “but he does not keep the sabbath,” and there was a division among them. Then they tell the man, “Thou wast altogether born in sins,” the very thing he was not; it was their blindness that said so.

And now Christ has got a sheep, and He goes before him. The man had said that He was a prophet, and when he was cast out and Jesus found him, He asks him, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God,” and he said, “Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?” The word of Christ had already power in his soul, and this leads him directly to the knowledge of Himself as Son of God, as with the Samaritan the reception of the word is really, though only implicitly, the reception of Christ. “And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.” The man gets to know Him as Son of God, and he worships Him; and then Christ has got His sheep with Him. The sign in itself had no effect on the Jews though the sign was there; there was power in the word spoken which gives the knowledge of the sent One. The clay on his eyes was Christ, and the Jews

had the clay, but nothing else morally. The pool, morally, is the word of God in the power of the Spirit of God, and thus Christ known as sent of God.

How these poor Pharisees are baffled! We see again, wherever Christ has visited the soul bringing the word of God, He is owned a prophet; and when the soul owns the prophet, the word of God presents Christ as the Son, and you have the Son too. You cannot separate the word from the person of Christ. If we receive what He says, we receive Himself. We have done with that history now. We have the Lord, His word, and His works rejected, and now therefore He says, “No matter what the opposition, I will have my sheep,” and the porter opens the door.

Verse 39 shews the blindness of their judgment, and that looked at as to the effect the Lord came to judge. “When he putteth forth his own sheep”; the blind man was one of them. “I am the door of the sheep.” “I am the good shepherd.” Verses 14, 15 read, “I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep and am known of mine, as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father,” that is, “As the Father knows me and I know the Father, so I know my sheep and am known of them.” He puts His sheep and Himself in the place which He and the Father had been in relatively. The relationship between Himself and the sheep was the same as between Himself and the Father. It is a beautiful expression of Christ in connection with the sheep. He is taking them out of the Jewish fold. You get Christ from the time of His lowest subjection to the will of the Father entering by the door until He says, I am one with the Father.

The “porter” signifies the power of God by the Spirit of God opening the door to Christ, in spite of the Pharisees and everybody else who would shut Him out. They would have shut Him out if they could, but they could not succeed, and the sheep hear His voice. There had been thieves and robbers who had set up to be Christ before, but “he that cometh in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.”

The door is made for people to come in at, and Christ did not climb over the wall, but came in by the door. Whatever had been appointed to Him, He came in by that, a lowly man. Then we read He “leadeth them out,” that is a new thing; He is taking them out from Judaism. And then He is the door, the appointed way.

“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” It has often been noticed that this is one of the most familiar images in the world, because they never drive sheep except in England, and perhaps in Ireland, but go before them, and the flock follows. And “a stranger will they not follow but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.”

“I am the door of the sheep.” As He came in by God’s appointed way, He is God’s appointed way for everybody else, and so He is the door. “By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved” —now He is not taking them out— “and shall go in and out and find pasture.” What you call folds are hardly intelligible here; there were wild beasts there, and the fold was many feet high, that animals should not jump over. Now He takes His sheep out of Judaism, and they are saved, and they are free, and they find pasture; before they were neither safe nor free, nor

had they pasture. But if a soul go in by Christ, he gets salvation, liberty, and food. If I am entering, and they say, Where are you going? I do not know, but I am sure it is all right if Christ is the door; like Abraham going forth, not knowing whither he went; it is all right if Christ leads. Further, our safety comes from the personal care of the shepherd, and not from the prison of a fold. With Christ, we have salvation, liberty and pasture.

Then “the thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” He was going to give it them in all the power of resurrection and ascension. That was the Good Shepherd that gives His life for His sheep. I do not think the object here is so much atonement as devoted-ness, when He speaks of laying down His life for the sheep, though atonement of course was in laying down His life. At any cost the sheep must be kept. The hireling fleeth and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep. There is an important word there to notice: “catcheth” is the same word as in verse 28 is rendered “pluck.” The wolf can lay hold of them so as to scatter them in this world, but he cannot lay hold of them so as to pluck them out of Christ’s hand.

Verse 15 involves atonement, but it is especially the devoted-ness with which Christ loves His sheep. The “again” in verse 17 is not connected with “much more by his life “in Romans 5. That is the life that comes after death; here it is the life He lays down in death, and so lives again.

The “other sheep” are Gentiles which are not of this fold. “Them also I must bring and they shall hear my

voice, and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd." It was ecclesiastical feeling put in "one fold," because they understood not one flock. "Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it up again." To me that is a most astonishing testimony to the person of Christ. We love God because He first loved us; but here I find one that would give a motive to the Father for loving Him; it is not merely that the Father is pleased to delight in Him, as in us. We cannot give motives to the Father to love us, but Christ could. In that sense of the word the Father was debtor to Christ for all His own glory. It is the burnt-offering character of Christ in sacrifice. What is tantamount to the meat-offering is found in "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." At the same time the Lord absolutely refuses to go out of the place of obedience, as He says later, "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do." He was a divine Person who could give a motive to His Father for loving Him; and at the same time He was a man that was doing all in obedience.

Verse 24. "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? if thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me; but ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." Here again you have the distinct election principle of John "because ye are not of my sheep." I do not know why it is said here "it was winter," except because it was another occasion. The verse shews He had gone up for that feast as He never stayed in Jerusalem.

As to the “more abundantly” of verse 10 it is not only that they should have life as every believer from Adam had life, but the liberty that redemption brought them into, and life in resurrection power and character. Of old, they had differed nothing from a servant, though lords of all.

You never find the Lord saying He is the Christ, except to the woman of Samaria, “I that speak unto thee am he,” and that was to a person who had no right to Christ. He delights to call Himself Son of man. We learn from this that He knew He was come to give His life a ransom for many, and so could not speak of Himself as the Christ. The Gospels are really the history of His rejection. In Samaria it was out of the way to do it, in one sense, because salvation is of the Jews. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.” You get this principle of election; then the character of the elected, “they hear my voice”; what He does for them—gives them eternal life; and then they will not perish, that is, inwardly so to speak; and no man plucks them out of His hand: no inward perishing, and no outward force can destroy.

Then He takes the low place, My Father gave them, and He keeps. And then you come to His glory, “I and my Father are one.” The Jews felt that and took up stones to stone Him. And you see He does not reason with the Jews to convince them, but to silence them. “Is it not written in your law, I said Ye are gods?” In the Pentateuch “then his master shall bring him unto the

judges" is Elohim, that is, to God, so that this is literally true in its very letter— "if he called them gods unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?" And He left them.

In chapters 5, 6 and 7, you have Christ revealed and bringing in what grace is, in chapters 8 and 9 you have the rejection of His word and of His work, but in chapter 10 He will have His sheep and that closes the whole thing. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 are before His public ministry, what you may call introductory. Chapter 4 is a transitional scene. Chapter 5 is the Son of God; chapter 6 is the crucified Son of man; chapter 7 the giving of the Holy Ghost instead of the glory. And now what we get is the testimony borne to Christ by God in all His characters. God would not allow Him to be rejected, without giving Him a full testimony to what He is. Then there is the episode of a heart that owned Him in His rejection and death, and His character of Son of David and Son of man; that is in chapter 12.

Chapter 11 is what He is as Son of God, a testimony to Him as the perfectly obedient One as servant, but still the Son of God with power while death is allowed to come in. That is the character of it here. He was the rejected One, then death is allowed to come in, and He is manifested as having power over all that Satan and death can do; and this shews that He is Son of God. Therefore He says: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." You get nature expecting Him to do the old work, that is, to come and heal the sick man, but that could not be here. Of course the miracle came from

His divine power, but in that way merely it was what many a one might have done, and He had done often before, but you find no act of His will merely, nor of human kindness even. We read that He loved Mary and her sister and Lazarus, and they sent unto Him to say, “Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick.” One might have expected that He so full of tenderness would have gone directly; but He said it was not unto death, and abode two days still in the place where He was. He does not stir; He had no expression of His Father’s will for Him to go, and so He stayed.

Verse 9 has reference to the Jews seeking to stone Him. He says “it is a question of my Father’s will, and so it is all light before me.” In the light of God all was plain. He does not go when natural feelings would lead Him, but He does go when it is His Father’s will even if death were before Him. And we get the divine object of it—” that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” It is not the Son of David, but the Son of God declared with power by resurrection. He knew that Lazarus was fallen asleep, and says, “I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” The disciples did not understand Him and He says plainly, “Lazarus is dead.” Some people talk of the sleep of the soul, whereas the sleep here is simply death itself, the death of the body. A man here goes to sleep—dies; but there is no such thing as a hint of the soul sleeping afterwards. He says, “lam glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe,” because He was going to raise him up from the dead. Healing would have been no such proof of His divine sonship. It is just what they all say, “Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? “But there Lazarus

was dead, and the question was, the power of the Son of God who raises the dead. It is beautiful to see Thomas brought in here (v. 16), because Thomas was the doubting one after Christ was risen, and his character is given beforehand so far as it shews his attachment to Christ at any rate.

Well, there was to be no mistake about Lazarus being dead. Many of the Jews came there; it became a great public testimony. Then we get the character of Martha and Mary, both in a state of partial unbelief, they could only look for healing; that is, if Christ had only come in time, Lazarus would not have died at all. You have Martha running out uncalled, and Mary sitting in the house till Martha called her; as Jesus Himself did not go until God called Him. It was no harm, as men say, in a certain sense in Martha—no evil intended of course; but she rushes out from her own feelings instead of waiting for the Lord's call.

In verse 26 the Lord had gone beyond all Martha's faith. Christ begins by resurrection, taking people out of death, and He was there with that power, but she has no idea of that; what the Lord was bringing out she did not understand one bit, and that makes her go and call Mary. Mary had been sitting at Jesus' feet and heard His word. Martha tells her, "The Master is come and calleth for thee" —like saying, "He is talking about what I do not understand, and you must come." The Lord says to Martha, "thy brother shall rise again." She has the general truth like evangelical Christendom in the present day, but of a special resurrection in power, He being the resurrection and the life, she has no idea at all. But you find the Lord Himself moved and exercised when Mary goes out; she is sent for in a way, and went

as called, and she falls at Christ's feet. There is a great deal more feeling as to Christ, than is in Martha, but she is in much the same state, and has no idea of present power over death; so she says, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died": no thought of His present power in resurrection; they were all alike as to that. There was no sense of a power that could take away the power of death; and that is what makes the Lord weep—the power of death that He saw lying on all their spirits. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in spirit and was troubled and said, "Where have ye laid him? "There was sympathy there, but it was the full character of the Lord's sympathy that strikes one, that is, His understanding the power of death that lay upon them. It lay on their spirits, but not on His. There was no weeping for Lazarus on His part. It was His full sense of the power of death resting on their hearts, no matter how advanced they were. The groaning was for others—something like the groaning in Romans 8. Then you have Martha's unbelief coming definitely out, "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." The Jews said nothing more, but "behold how he loved him." Again groaning in Himself, "He cometh to the grave: it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it." That groaning is a very strong word; He troubled Himself withal, stirred up His heart in its depths in His sense of man's state under death; His soul went into the power of the death lying on others.

All through this, at the same time, you see the Lord taking distinctly the place of subjection and service both, and so here He says, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me

always.” Then He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.” There was the power of the Son of God. Poor Martha! hers was a positive unbelief, or belief in the power of death, “Lord by this time he stinketh,” instead of the power of resurrection. Jesus said unto her, full of patience, “Said I not unto thee that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” They took away the stone, and when He cried, “Lazarus, come forth,” “he that was dead came forth.” It was the testimony to the Son of God come amongst us, and His power over death—He is the resurrection and the life—and of His thorough entering into what the power of death was.

He never healed a sick person, I believe, without His heart entering into the power of the evil that was there as distress and sorrow on man. There is another thing to note—what you find in James about Elias. He had said, “As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain these years, but according to my word.” It seemed simple authority and power. But James teaches us how the power of the Lord was in the prophet, for he says, he “prayed earnestly that it might not rain”; that is, where a person acts really in the will and power of God, you constantly find his intercourse with God clear and simple. Paul went up to Jerusalem at the wish of the church, but he tells us in Galatians he went up by revelation. And here Christ had the power in Himself, because He was Son of God, but still He says, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.” He never swerved from His place of subjection. The great thing is that He was really Son of God, though rejected. And then He must die; it is desperate, the dreadful hardness of the Jews. Afterwards they wanted to kill Lazarus

again because he was such a testimony. And we have the utter unbelief of the people—not only unbelief, but positive hostility; we must get rid of Him [Christ]. “If we let him thus alone all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.” But at Christ’s death the temple and all connected with it was disowned, high priest and everything. Then Jesus walked no more openly among them, but went to Ephraim and waited for the passover.

The “high priest that year” is named because the Jewish things continued till Christ died. There were two high priests. The Romans meddled with everything. Large sums of money were given to get to be high priest, and they were changing constantly. As yet things were not altogether gone from the Jews; there was the pool of Bethesda and remnants of blessing one way or another. The opening of Luke gives us a remnant in the midst of the iniquity, Simeon, Anna, Zechariah, and so on; a most lovely picture of how grace was ripening in these poor things whilst the Pharisees were ripening in iniquity.

Now we come to Bethany. There they made Him a supper; Lazarus was there as a man alive through the power of resurrection, but death had come in first. Here we see Mary goes to Christ in the consciousness of the other side of the truth—that He must die. She was not a prophetess at all; but at the hostility of the Jews her heart rises up in love with the instinct of what that hostility sought and meant. She was the opposite of the Jews; it was the fulness of affection that moved her though she was no prophetess.

You may see continually the way in which personal attachment to Christ gets His secret by some means or

other. Mary Magdalene was all wrong, seeking the living among the dead, but still her heart was entirely on Christ, and if she did not get Him she got nothing, and she is the messenger to the apostles themselves of the highest privileges we have. “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”; she is sent with it to the apostles, who learn it through her.

It is the same in other things: the poor woman that was a sinner did not know forgiveness, but she clings to Christ, and there comes out the forgiveness of her sins, “thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace,” the fulness of the gospel. So with Mary; she did not understand resurrection and life as she ought to have done, but the thing she does is the thing she ought to have done, and it is what she felt was right. It was from attachment to His person that she comes and anoints Him with her ointment. She might have put it in a bag, and given it to Him, but that would not do. Judas shews how the wrong thing leads people away. It was Judas said, “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?” and they were all led away by it (Matt. 26:8). The disciples did not shine at this time at all. They all ran away too from Him later on, but her heart enters into it all. The Lord gives a voice of intelligence to her act, the wickedness of the Jews was rising up to the point of putting Him to death, and her heart had the sense of it, the Lord leading her no doubt.

“Let her alone,” He says: “against the day of my burying hath she kept this; for the poor always ye have with you, but me ye have not always.” It was His person He meant there of course. This is a beautiful expression of Mary’s heart, and it shews how a heart fixed on Christ gives the right thing; though there may be a want of intelligence,

it does the right act. The poor woman in the city acted rightly and confides in Him; though as yet unforgiven, the light and love of God are both in her heart. There was the confidence that love produces, and the sense of sins that light and love both produced. So with Mary Magdalene; it was the right thing to seek Him among the dead in a sense. And here Mary anoints His feet—His feet were worth it—that is the thought, I think; but generally they would have put ointment on the head.

Mary is a figure of the heavenly remnant in that sense of the word. Martha was one of the heavenly remnant, I suppose, but we do not see much of it in what she did, she had been busied with care. The heavenly remnant belong to heaven, whereas the earthly remnant get their portion on earth. Mary was on the heavenly road, she was entering into the spirit of Christ's death. She anointed Him for His burial, though nobody could die with Him; and her heart went with Him. She could not weep and raise from the dead, but she could weep and anoint. Her heart went with the sense of what was coming; she saw the way in which He was being treated. They had plotted the death already. That is just what we get here, not intelligence, but the heart right, and it does the right thing, that which is intelligent, so to speak. It is, very largely, want of attachment to the person of Christ that keeps people in the systems around us if they have not any particular motive.

Now we get the Son of David sitting on an ass's colt; afterwards in verse 20 the Son of man comes out. They go to meet Him and cry, "Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord," taken from Psalm 118, which is the introduction of the millennial day. "Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord," and so on.

The Greeks are the nations coming up, or individuals of them. They are Hellenes; Grecian Jews are Hellenists. “Jesus answered them saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.” He was Son of God in raising Lazarus; He was Son of God in the world without dying; He was Son of David too, and ought to have been received as such according to Psalm 2, but when He takes His place as Son of man, according to Psalm 8, He must die. He cannot take the heavenly place of glory and be over all the works of God’s hand without dying. And then we must follow in that, “he that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me.” A very important word; if you want to serve Christ, you must follow Him. It is not as if you could do so much service in a kind of independent way, but if I serve Him I must follow Him where He is. And then His own soul enters into this death. “Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say; Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour.” Not so deep, but like Gethsemane. And then you get His perfectness brought out, seeking only His Father’s glory, at all cost. He cannot be glorified without thus dying, and on the perfect submission the sense of the glory comes into His own soul. This is very instructive to us. And then comes a voice from heaven, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” You have had the Father’s name glorified in the Lord in raising back Lazarus to this world, and He is going to glorify it again in raising Christ from the dead. He was declared the Son of God with power here as given in Romans 1, and raised from the dead by the glory of the Father in Romans 6. Then in verse 32 He says, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I

be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Having submitted Himself entirely, and having looked only for His Father's glory, He says that the thing where He glorifies God is the way to His own glory. Wherever we bow to a dealing of God that brings us down, we find that it is the path of more glory.

As a living Messiah He had to say to the Jews, but as Saviour of everybody, He must die— "Will draw all men unto me." It is not the Father drawing to Him here, but the attractive point to which men are drawn.

Verse 32 is the cross, and the effect of it goes on; every soul that is brought in is the effect of it. The drawing goes on, but it is to a crucified Christ they are drawn. A living Christ was for a Jew, but it is by a dying Christ salvation comes to the world. When living, He says, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

When it says, "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," He is quickening; it is then, and goes on still. It is the Son of God in power; here it is the Son of man dying. The "lifting up "is lifted out of the world, though not gone to heaven. Here it is the mere fact stated, but it is the atoning Saviour.

The character of resurrection answers to the condition in which Christ is. At the grave of Lazarus He raises back to this world; but now He is at the right hand of God, He quickens us into the character of His own place. We have Him only spiritually now, and we only live spiritually. But when He comes back into the world, those who are quickened then will receive a life accordingly. The power of resurrection or of life answers to Christ's position. He raised back Lazarus to the place

where He Himself was alive; and so too it is now, to where He is now alive, and When He comes again He will raise up the body or change it to His own likeness then. Lazarus was merely a restored man.

“Now is the judgment of this world.” That is the consequence of the Lord being lifted up; and the prince of the world is cast out. By death He has “destroyed him that had the power of death” —that is, annulled his power. Though it says, “shall be,” his power is now destroyed. The sentence is passed, but not carried out. It is the cross that is referred to. The world is a judged world. Satan has led it to crucify the Lord. He is its prince, but by that in which this was fully shewn his power was broken. I quite admit that, until Christ comes again, he is not cast into the bottomless pit, but through Christ’s death Satan’s power is annulled, and therefore “now is the prince of this world”; it was “shall be,” but that was then. And he is only called the prince of the power of this world when we come to the cross. To faith his power is annulled now. And so it is as to everything; you will find it is “yes” for faith, and not yet for full accomplishment fact. I have eternal life and yet the end is everlasting life. I am looking for salvation ready to be revealed, yet He has saved us and called us. We are really quickened, and have the Holy Ghost in our souls, we receive the end of our faith, salvation of soul, but not the result. I think it is a great thing to see that Christ is lifted up, and has nothing more to do with this world. That the breach was total and final: “O righteous Father the world hath not known thee.” Then we get the unbelief: “Who is this Son of man?” and the Lord says, “Walk while ye have the fight, lest darkness come upon you.”

Verse 34 gives the meaning of “lifting up.” It is contrary to abiding here. Then you have two references to Isaiah, verse 38, (quoting Isa. 53) which is His rejection, and goes on to death; and verse 40 (quoting Isa. 6), which we are told Isaiah said when he saw His glory.

Then you have another terrible warning. “Many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.” Such would be lost. They were convinced, yet would not own Him. The principle is in Romans 10: “With the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” That applies now. I do not believe there are many of whom it is true now or ever— that many are ashamed to confess Christ, and yet are truly saved. I could not say they are saved. God knows what is at the bottom of their hearts. Some are afraid, it may be, of acting in certain ways, and yet they confess Christ in a more open manner than we do. We must leave such to God, like Nicodemus who goes secretly by night for fear of the Jews. And the counsellor Joseph, who had been hidden, comes out when the disciples have all run away. These two confessed at last, when they said as it were, We cannot go on with all this wickedness, this is too much for us.

By “He that is not with me is against me” is meant taking the path of faith, you must take your place for Christ, or else you are against Him. The world has manifested itself as entirely against Him. The open breach is come, you must take your place either one way or other. We have Christ practically rejected—“lifted up”—and in chapter 13 we pass on to His going out of the world altogether.

The Epistle to the Hebrews says He could not be a priest on earth, because there were priests here already. Christ offered Himself; He was kept up three days—three years if you like better—as a pure victim. He offered Himself up on the cross. It is on the cross the Lord lays on Him the iniquity of us all, when He gave Himself a voluntary offering. But the offering Himself was not a priest's office: the priest only began when He took the blood, he had nothing to say to the offering until he accepted the blood. On the day of atonement the priest put his hand on the head of the scape-goat and confessed the people's sins, but there the whole nation was looked at as separate from God, and for them he confesses, though that was not exactly a priestly thing, though done by the high priest as representing the people. Christ offered Himself through the eternal Spirit without spot to God, but then He so far answered to the priest that He confessed our sins on the cross, and then after that He is properly a priest. Christ as now on high is not a priest for sins, He is an advocate with the Father if we sin. When I look at Him as suffering for sins, His work is done once for all, as in Hebrews 9, 12; when we fail, we have an advocate with the Father, for then it is a question of communion with the Father; but His sacrifice was for sins. He was a priest, He stood as priest, but He is not priest for sins now, but for grace to help that we may not sin and ever in God's presence for us the witness that our sins are put away, the reconciliation is made, and this was once done for us, where He stood as our suffering representative.

Christ did not, as the high priest in Israel, confess His own sins, for He had none (I need hardly say that), but the high priest on the day of atonement had his own to

confess too, but Christ did only stand there as His people's representative. If He were on earth, He should not be a priest at all, and in the Hebrews you get the exercise of His priesthood now, which does not refer to sins because He has done with that question for ever. You get Him as an advocate in John, but there it is dealing with communion, and hence the question of imputation never comes up, but communion is destroyed for the time.

Looked at as an instrument used, this chapter applies to ministry. The word, in Hebrews 4, detects, and is the means of washing in that way. The word detects that which leads to falling away; the constant tendency to apostasy runs all through Hebrews. I would not include advocacy in priesthood. Intercession is a general word. He ever lives to make intercession for us. Intercession is commonly used for priesthood; but it is more a question of what is meant by words. Advocacy much more corresponds with Numbers 19.

What we come to in chapter 13 is that Christ's hour was come to depart out of this world unto the Father; up to this it had been His place and rejection on earth. Only when testimony was given to Him, He had declared He could only take that of Son of man, unless alone by dying. As to Himself there was now an end to all His sorrow and trouble, but His service He now shews us is not over; He goes up into the glory, and is there going to be our servant: "I have loved my own, and I love them through and through," that is the meaning of "to the end." He could not stay with them down here, but did not give them up; but He was now going to God perfect as He came from God, and the Father had given all things into His hand. He was returning spotless to God

Himself, the glory being His. He could not stay with them, could they be with Him there? This is the solemn problem in this chapter. He solves it in ineffable grace. He rose up from supper, “and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself, after that he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” Peter objects, but the Lord says, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” Peter says then, “Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” “Jesus saith to him, He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” The two words “wash” in verse 10 are different; the first is washing the whole body, “bathed,” and the second is washing hands or small objects. And you notice the “hands “are left out, for it does not apply to our works, but to our walk. It is bringing the light of the word to judge inwardly when a man has done wrong. Those who have received the word have been bathed, they are clean as chapter 15:3. Here not all because Judas was still there. The statement alludes to the priests, who were washed bodily once for all, and afterwards whenever they went to any service, washed their hands and feet. The consecrating with water was done once for all. So with us; but we are set to walk through this world, and in danger of defiling our feet as we go.

The words in Hebrews 10, “bodies washed with pure water,” refer to the first bathing, and not to this action of Christ or what it signifies. It is “bathed “there. And then Christ comes in as an advocate, and cleanses me when defiled in walk, and restores me to communion. It is like the red heifer when a person touched death; there

was no fresh death appointed for that, but the application of the word, moral cleansing based on the death already accomplished.

As to the washing of regeneration, the priests were not washed at the laver at their first consecration; but they had to wash their hands and their feet at the laver every time when they came to serve. “Regeneration” in Titus is the same word as in Matthew 19, and not used elsewhere. It is the millennium in Matthew, instead of the present state of things. It is a change of state in both places. It is connected with what you are brought into, and what you are brought out of; for you are brought out of one, and into the other.

The action is very beautiful as to the Lord’s loving and lowly service, and is really the glory of grace in providing for, and meeting moral evil in every shape for us that we might have communion with that which is on high. It is the fruit of the perfect love of Christ whatever is needed, the Lord sets Himself to do it, for love likes to serve: “having loved his own which were in the world he loved them unto the end.” “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand, and that he was come from God and went to God, he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself.” It was with this glory present in spirit though actually future. In all the glory to which I am going, I shall be a servant as much as down here: such is its meaning.

It is “to God” in verse 3, because Christ’s returning in the spotless divine perfectness in which He left God is thus affirmed; He is just as perfect as ever, and is going back as such to God—goes back just as He came from.

He did not go half way, but came from God and went back to God. And then He must bring us into the same place too; either He must give us up, as He could not stay here where we are, or He must do all for us to fit us to be there where He is. And He will have us have part with Him in everything the Father gives, and be with the Father as He Himself is. So He has washed us and made us partakers of the divine nature. It is the new birth, only it is looked at in its moral character rather than in the life-giving power of the Spirit's work; though they cannot be separated. In His love He takes up a slave's work; Peter objects, and the point He insists on is, our having a part with Himself. "Ye are clean, but not all," is because Judas was there. And then He tells us to walk in the same spirit of serving.

Next, He puts the reception of an apostle on the same footing as the reception of Himself. "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." It had been already true, even of Judas, but still it is true always practically, and we know it—he that receives Christ's servant receives Him.

Then you find the Lord coming to the time of His betrayal. He is troubled in spirit. It is remarkable to see how the Lord feels everything thoroughly and personally; you never find in Him any failure as to that; but He is always Himself in it, the very opposite of insensibility; circumstances draw out His feelings, but it is what is divinely perfect, which is there to be drawn out. He says He knew who was going to betray Him from the beginning. And who is it? He is to have every sorrow. One of His intimate companions who had been with Him all the time. Through the devoted affection of women,

you generally find them clinging to Him and so in the place of confidence, but here you have the one instance where a man comes into that good place. John was sitting close to Christ not from his seeking it then but from habitual nearness to Him, and Peter is obliged to ask John to inquire of Christ, who it was that should betray Him. It is an instance of what I mean; John was not there in order to get the information, but he was in the place to get it, the disciple whom Jesus loved and close to Him in order to be there, but there in the place to know His mind. That is the point; it is of all importance to be in a position so to learn of Him.

Now we get an important statement; after the sop, Satan entered into Judas. There is much in that; there is a familiarity with Christ in an outward way, which where the heart is wrong is a deadly inlet to Satan's power. Satan had already gained Judas's lusts, and suggested the evil; but here he takes possession of him in a personal way, Satan enters into him. He hardens his heart against every natural feeling.

If you take Luke as giving the order of the thing, Judas broke bread; having received the sop, he went immediately out. Luke says, after He had given both the bread and the cup, "the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." But here in John we have nothing to do with the Lord's supper; I merely get the fact that the sop was given to Judas. I think it has nothing to do with the Supper, whether Judas was there or not. Christ washed his feet, and there was intimacy at the table. It is important to notice that, because of the guilt resulting from it. If anybody quotes it as to fellowship now, then you would have betrayers at the table. Further there was no evil manifested, and you cannot of course put a

man out where no evil is manifested. Besides, after all, people do not mean that they would have a table of Judases, and if you put it so to them, they will reject it. The Lord knew it Himself of course divinely, but that is no ground for us to act on and the disciples knew nothing of it, nor was their conscience exercised as to it; nor was the church founded till the Holy Ghost came.

As to Judas you first get the lust, and then the acting on it; he was a thief and had the bag; and then comes an occasion suggested by Satan to gratify the lust, who thereon enters in and hardens the person's heart against even his natural feelings, for many an unconverted man would not betray a friend with a kiss. It is at this point when all this has come completely forward that you get "Now is the Son of man glorified," that is, in the cross the perfectness of His work was His glory, perfect devotedness and love were in it, and obedience at all cost to His Father, suffering all things where His glory called for it and it was a man's glory to make God's glory good and in such a place, "and God is glorified in him." All that God is in His character is there made good by a man much more than a man, no doubt, but one who was a man— "God is glorified in him; if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and will straightway glorify him." He does not wait for the glory of the kingdom, but goes straight up to God's right hand. God thus is perfectly glorified by man, so that man goes into the glory of God. And that is an immense truth, for the fact of our sins being put away, if it stood alone, would not entitle us to the glory of God. But that which has done it has. But Christ has gone into the glory of God: so Stephen saw and said. But man could not follow before this was all done; you must have

the ark in the bottom of Jordan, or the people could not come over. Peter had confidence in himself, and so he denies Christ. If we come in flesh into the place of Christ, it will only be to deny Him there.

The “in himself” in verse 32 is in God, and Christ went straight into the glory of God. It is an immense part of the cross that, the ending of self and all confidence in self. The Lord told Peter he could not follow Him. And now the Lord in a certain sense assumes that He has gone out of the world, and He looks at things in that aspect, but their heart is not to be troubled at it; and in chapter 14 He gives them the ground on which it is not to be troubled. In the first place they get the comfort from God by believing in Him; and so would it be with Christ; and the next point is, in Christ’s going away: it was not to leave them behind and He go alone, but He is going to prepare a place for them. It is not only a place for me, but there are a number of places, and I am going to prepare one for you, and “I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” Now that part of the chapter is complete in itself; they believe in Him instead of seeing Him; there are places in the Father’s house and He is going to prepare us for them; He cannot stay with them where they are, but He will have them there with Himself.

Now comes, in the body of the chapter, what the comfort is while He has not come back. That is divided into two parts; what they had in His person, and what they would get on having the Comforter. The first part extends to about the end of verse 15. The three or four verses about their doing greater works come in by the bye.

The first part of the chapter is exceedingly beautiful and simple, when once you get at what the Lord is at. The point was “Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” Thomas answers, “Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?” There was a good bit of unbelief in Thomas, his mind made difficulties, but he loved the Lord; and the Spirit delights to shew it (chap. 11:16); and the answer is this, “I am going to the Father, and you know what He is, because you have seen the Father in me, and therefore you do know where I am going; and you know the way, because having come to Me, you have found Him.” Such is what the Lord says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me: if he had known me, ye should have known my Father also, and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us; Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father? “and so on. If they had seen the Father (in seeing Christ) and Christ was going to the Father, they both knew where He was going, and they knew that He was the way, because in Him they had found the Father. They had had this upon earth, and they ought to have known where they were.

It is “from henceforth” in verse 7, because He had revealed Himself and told them plainly now; but they did not understand. But they said, “now speakest thou plainly”; but they deceive themselves. He says, “I came forth from the Father, and come into the world, again, I leave the world and go to the Father”; they say, “by this we believe that thou earnest forth from God.” They had

no idea of the Father after all. Still there it was: they had it, though they did not realise it. Then you get the two things He has once or twice insisted upon, as in chapters 8 and 9, His word and His work, “Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very works’ sake.”

Then in the second part (you may connect verse 15 with it if you like) “I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not neither knoweth him, but ye know him for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” Now I get a second element, not the Father and the Son, but the Spirit. The Father had been revealed in the Son, and He had declared the Father’s name on earth; but now comes another thing, He was going away, as we know, and the second Comforter was to come. He was not to be sent into the world, the world cannot receive Him. Christ had been presented to the world, and the world would not have Him; but the Spirit is not for the world, the way that He is known shews that the world cannot know Him. He abides with you and shall be in you. The first Comforter, Christ, was neither to abide, nor to be “in.” But the second would not go away, He would abide, Christ could not abide. As to whether it should be “dwelleth” or “will dwell,” in verse 17, for the Greek, or indeed for the sense, it is just as good in one case as the other; it is a mere question of a Greek accent. The “Comforter” is the character He would have in coming to them, He is the Spirit of truth as well. It is to me evidently the point, the difference of the first Comforter, that is, Christ, that He could not stay with them, and the second could. Christ was not in them

either, but with them; the second should dwell in them, and abide for ever ("abide" is the same word as "dwell") not be merely with them. In the power of the Spirit of God they should do "greater works," and a glorified Christ should be the source of them. The very shadow of Peter would do; a handkerchief or apron from Paul, and so on; three thousand be converted in one day. But Christ had come in the character of humiliation.

The "I will come to you" is Christ in Spirit now, I believe; Himself in Spirit. It is not merely the Holy Ghost, but what the believer can always count on. There is a particular promise in the case of two or three gathered in Christ's name. There is not only individually dwelling in our hearts by faith, but the particular way in which He comes to two or three gathered.

The "manifest myself to him," is where a person walks right; he gets Christ specially revealed to his heart. You have a very great additional fact in this second part of the chapter which you could not have in the first. What is in verse 20 that they could not have known then: "in that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you," it was only when the Holy Ghost came that they knew that. The person of Christ was in the Father, that they knew; at any rate it was there to be known; but also they were in Christ and He in them: this they could know only by the Holy Ghost. Now you come to Judas—not Iscariot—and the realisation of all this. We may look at verse 15 here; "if ye love me, keep my commandments," if you love me, do not be thinking of keeping Me down here, but do you obey Me. They were sorrowing about His going, and His words are; then, "keep my commandments." There is a connection here (He is looking at them in the character of obedience,

though it is not the motive of His praying in next verse) with Acts 5:32, “and so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey him.”

The difference between “commandments” and “words” is that words go farther rather. In Acts 13:47 you have a quotation from Isaiah, “for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” He calls that a commandment, though it was a word of prophecy, but the moment they understood it, it was a commandment. The whole thing is comprised in obedience whether words or commandments, we are “sanctified to obedience.” If they had words which gave them the knowledge of God’s will, they are commandments really.

You will find in all this part of John the responsibility of the disciples in the first place, and that, in the verse we have just come to. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” It is the Father loves us because we love Christ, it is not here, “we love him because he first loved us,” but with disciples, it is “he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him.”

It is no question here whether he is a child of the Father, but what he is to the Father as a child; there is more expression of love and kindness to an obedient child, than to a disobedient one. And He adds “if a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode in him.” That goes farther, the “abode” will be more constant

than the “manifestation.” “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.” Notice before in verse 21, it is not he that keepeth my commandments when he hath them; but knowing what the commandments of Christ are when we love Him so as to give heed to what He says. This is an important principle. A loving child enters into its father’s mind, and knows what he would like and does it; a careless child will not know a bit what his father’s wishes are.

In John 10:17, “therefore doth my Father love me,” etc., it is not here so much for those for whom He is laying down His life, the motive is rather the immense value of glorifying His Father. Children that are living in their father’s house, might all hear their father’s voice and words, but there is instructive perception of what he intends on the part of the children that love him best. Which of us would settle quite clearly from Isaiah 49: “I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth,” that we were to go and preach the grace of God? Paul did in Acts 13:47. It is quite clear we must have the commandments if we are to use them, but the loving attentive person will have ten times more knowledge of them than a careless one. Mary and Martha are a kind of illustration; you get the example of the listening there or the lack of it.

In this chapter the Father sends the Comforter, not Christ; Christ sends Him in the close of the next chapter, and in chapter 16:7. It is in Christ’s name here, but the Father sends Him, and “he shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” The value of sending in His name is seen in this. If you come

to me in a person's name now, I should receive according to the value to me of the person in whose name you come. Then He says, "Peace I leave with you," and then it is "his own peace." You will find that as to everything. He puts us into His own place. It is His own peace, the peace He had in walking through this world with the Father, as a man with God. Christ says it of "joy," "glory," "peace," "words," "love." The world may give liberally sometimes, but it has another kind and way of giving. It has no longer what it has given. The emphasis is on the word "my," "my joy," "the glory thou gavest me," "the words which thou gavest me." But we find another thing here which I have often referred to, but it is one of the most wonderful things in Scripture as to Christ. He expects us to be interested in His happiness, not merely to trust Him as interested in ourselves; but "if ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I." That is, if you love Me, you will rejoice because I am going out of this world into happiness. He expects that His disciples should be really interested in His happiness and glory.

Then we come to verse 30, "hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." "Prince of this world" is an important expression; it was then that the devil was proved to be the prince of this world, and he is never called so until Christ was rejected, so long as there was a possibility remaining of the world receiving the Son and owning Him; but in the rejection of Christ, the devil was able to raise both Jews and Gentiles against Christ Himself, and even the disciples ran away. His full power was shewn. And therefore too now, the devil is a judged

being— “the prince of this world is judged” —and the world shewn to be under Satan’s power. He its god and its prince. The opposite is in Christ, “has nothing in me.” And Christ loves the Father, and is obedient (v. 31).

Satan finds plenty in us. He had the power of death in us, but he had nothing at all in Christ. It is a beautiful expression of Christ’s perfectness. He was divine, but He was also man, and perfection as to both comes out so wonderfully. He would not talk much with His disciples, for the time was over. The devil is coming, and I cannot talk with you much more. The thing is all finished. In chapter 14 we get Christ’s person and the Comforter; and now we go on to find the connection of people with Him upon earth, not with the Father.

In chapter 15 it is His relationship with the disciples on earth, and in the end of the chapter He has gone up on high, and sends the Comforter Himself, and it closes with the testimony. In chapter 16 it is the Comforter down here; He is not sent but come, He has been sent. In chapter 15 you get Christ in the earth, and His people on the earth. There is an analogy to this now, but what He is looking at is His being the real vine Himself in contrast with Israel on earth.

“Now ye are clean” is “already ye are clean.” The “ye are not all clean” in chapter 13 refers to Judas, here there is no exception for it, Judas had gone out. The point is, Israel was the old vine, and Christ takes the place of Israel, and is the true vine. If you look at Isaiah 49, you will see distinctly how he replaces the nation:” “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” “And now, saith Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him,

though Israel be not gathered," and so on. Thus it is Christ is the real servant—Israel a vine, but Christ the true vine. So you get in Matthew, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." Hence Christ is the true Man for God—the true Servant—the true Vine. The true Man, God's Son, has taken up all that in which the first man had failed. Then, when Christ was upon earth, there was no church union; there is no question of planting vines in heaven nor of pruning to get fruit. He says, "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it"; and in verse 3, "Now ye are already purged"; it is the same word. They were clean in the sense of "purged," only that the purging continues; like "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet"; this is the first of these washings. "Ye are already clean"; you are "already." And then comes, "abide in me." It is all responsibility here. The person's conduct is put first, but there is this difference made, when He speaks of ruin and destruction; He turns from "you" and says "a man." In the middle of His exhortation He drops the "ye" and says, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned"; there it is positive destruction.

In "if ye abide in me," the "abide" is to "hold fast in dependence and communion." "Without me [that is the opposite], ye can do nothing." He does not say, "I will abide in you, and so ye will abide in me." He puts His people first all through, for it all rests on responsibility. Only in verse 6 it changes to "a man," and speaks of destruction, which could not be of a true disciple in Christ. Judas was taken away. There they were, all branches in the vine; for I do not think anything of the

expression, “men gather them,” because He is speaking of the figure. There is another point in verse 7: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you “I can dispose of all power, when the words of Christ govern my mind and will. “Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

In verse 2 taking away is utter destruction; for He is taking in all there who were associated with Him; they are all branches there till they are broken off. “If ye continue in my word,” He says to the Jews, “then are ye my disciples indeed”; they were His disciples, but did not continue. Hebrews 6 is in analogy with it.

Then I have another point still. I have the service and fruit-bearing, and then, “Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” But then, further “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: abide in my love” —the divine favour of Christ. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” There I get-a plain proof that it is no question of divine delight in the person only, but of the path in which the Son enjoyed the Father’s love, and the path in which we shall enjoy it too. Now we have the “joy”; we had the “peace” before; now it is joy walking in His words, and abiding in His love. The love of grace seeks a sinner, but “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” That is not grace for a sinner; here it is for His friends. It applies to the disciples only, and is not here grace for sinners. “Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.” A friend is a person with

whom I communicate, not because I have business with him, but I tell him my thoughts and feelings as to that with which he himself has nothing to do. He puts them into the place of fruit-bearing, and tell them to ask of the Father whatsoever they would, and He would give it them.

Fruit that “may remain” is fruit to this day, you are it, if you please. We are here part of the fruit, and shall be to eternity, though the fruit is more down in the world in this passage. Now comes a third principle. Abiding in Christ and His word, and abiding in His love; and then “love one another.” But now the converse: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you; if ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” The world never can stand being outside; they will stand your having a religion, but they cannot stand a peculiar people “purified to himself.” This puts the disciples in a very blessed place, for it puts them in His place— “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”

And then the history of Israel on the ground of their responsibility closes. He being the true vine, the old vine is judged. As long as anything was not done to Him, all was forgivable, as it were; but now “they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.” In verses 22, 24 it is again His word and His works; and then the Son had been manifested, and the Father in Him, so that their conduct had been really hatred of the Son and of the Father, and what was to be done? We have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, but they had hated both—and that without a cause. It was all gone now, and then you get the Comforter and the disciples in the

world. He says now, “The Comforter whom I will send unto you,” because He has gone away. The difference is clear; before the Holy Ghost came, they could not tell of Christ’s glory in heaven, but they were to testify what Christ was upon earth. Still it was by the Holy Ghost. He shall “bring all things to your remembrance” (chap. 14:26), when the Father is spoken of as sending the Comforter; but in this place Christ sends the Comforter, and He is the witness of the glory in which Christ is sitting. You have a humbled Christ, and a glorified Christ, and the disciples bearing witness through the Comforter. But the Comforter Himself brings down the heavenly glory. Then you get in chapter 16 the Comforter on the earth. Read verses 1-3.

A person may be perfectly sincere, just as Saul was, in trying to blot out the name of Christ from the earth, but it is only proof that they have hated “both me and my Father.” Where there are truths held that go to make part of my religious credit, there I can go on; but the truth that comes to test my heart, to that I object. A person might be a Protestant boasting of justification by faith, and do it to trample on a Romanist; but if you talk to him of the living presence of the Holy Ghost down here, and of the Lord’s coming, he will persecute you from the bottom of his heart. A Jew could boast in the unity of the Godhead, for it was part of his own credit religiously; but the moment he was asked to own the Father and the Son, he would stone you for it. It was the thing that was then testing a man whether he was right or not. The Jews were blind in the darkness of unbelief, yet they held what was very true all the while. Romanists hold the divinity of Christ, and His manhood, and the Trinity, and atonement; they would burn a man

if he did not hold them, if they had their way; but if you come and say, A man is not justified by sacraments, they will burn you too, if they can.

Then another thing. He says, “I go my way to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? but because I have said these things, sorrow hath filled your heart.” In one sense it was very natural. God deals with the thing we are resting in; and takes it away, as now His Son from the disciples, it is not a thing that springs from the dust. God must have some intention in it. Christ is going, and they do not ask where; they felt the trouble of their loss and that pressed on them. He was not going to die like an ordinary person put in the grave, but they never asked Him where He was going. God has an intuition of love in our sorrows, our hearts should look beyond our sorrow to His hand and ways in it.

Peter did ask Him at the end of chapter 13, “Why cannot I follow thee now?” But it was the general state tile Lord refers to here. Peter did not think of going through death and up to heaven with Him. He was not thinking of God’s mind in Christ’s going away, but of some place where he could follow Him. It is a glorified Christ who has gone on high, and who sends the Holy Ghost to build up the disciples while He is there. Sometimes one is afraid of getting truth through mere feelings. I say merely, that is not power. I do not believe that anybody before, ever got the knowledge of divine truth that the church has now; but if you look at power, it is like none at all. It is right according to God, as God’s way with us; but it is only a “little strength” indeed, incomparably less power, though so much truth. The Thessalonians were waiting for God’s Son from heaven, which is a very

superior state; but they had not the word, as we have it, to study. Certainly they had not got this Gospel, they might have had Matthew's perhaps. I think there is always a danger of awakening and decaying, and that you have to watch. I speak merely of the whole character of the thing; not that I do not believe it is God's mind, for all the evil is seen by Him, but we have to recognise in a certain sense where we are. And even as to truth, we must get it really. I feel the word of God is an immense thing, "thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name" —Christ's—the word of His patience too; and there was then the confession of Christ in the midst of a people that would not receive Him, just as in not denying His name when professing Christianity are apostatising.

Then remark, the coming of the Holy Ghost is a distinct definite thing consequent upon Christ's exaltation. There was no coming of the Son until the incarnation, though He created everything; and the Holy Ghost in the same way, though working, did not come until Pentecost. We were looking a little at that before. All direct action as to the creature was by the Holy Ghost, but He did not come before Pentecost, unless you except His coming as a dove on Christ. And there it was personally on Him alone. You get Him acting, as at the beginning of creation, but Christ says, "if I go not away the Comforter will not come." That is of immense import as to the character of His presence. The world is judged, and the Holy Ghost is not sent to the world, "whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him. But ye know him; for he abideth with you and shall be in you." The world ought to have received Christ, the Holy Ghost it cannot; and He comes

consequent upon a rejected Christ and a glorified Christ, and it is a Man who sends the Holy Ghost, sends Him from the Father. You get His action when down here. He demonstrates to the world, sin, righteousness and judgment. If He convinces a man, he is a believer; that is not the power of “reprove” here in chapter 16:8; it is used much to that effect, but it does not suit this place, and there is no English word that has so wide an application as the Greek word has. He does not reprove the world of righteousness. His presence is the demonstration to the world that the whole world is guilty of the death of Christ, just as if God were saying to Cain, “Where is Abel thy brother?” That is to the whole world; this world is a world that has rejected the Son of God. So that it is a very solemn thing to the world that the Holy Ghost is here.

It is the “world,” just as “he came into the world.” What I see in the history is that God takes out of the nations one man and his family to be a nation for Himself, and He tests them and tries to find any good thing at all in them, as a specimen of the whole, to tell what the mass is, and they are shewn by it to be bad altogether. Suppose I find a “slob,” as you call it, in Lough Foyle, and I take out twenty acres, and spend an immense amount of labour upon it, but all to no good; well then, I do not try the rest. So Israel was but a sample of what all were, children of wrath. In saying the Gentiles, “which do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves,” the apostle is reasoning in the first place thus: “if you have the law and do not keep it, the Gentiles who have not the law but keep it, are better than you.” But as Gentiles also they are without excuse upon the ground

of the testimony of creation, and the fact that when they had the knowledge of God, they would not retain it. I will tell you the result of a pagan acting up to his conscience, if you first shew me such a one. Cornelius was a converted man before Peter saw him. We have the sample of what man is in the Jews.

Let us go back:—God calls Abraham when the world would have the devil and idols instead of the one true God. Then comes law, and that was all broken; then Christ and then the testimony of the Holy Ghost as we read in Stephen's case, and they resisted that. I do not believe a thing about Gentiles, that I do not believe about myself: my flesh would go and do lawlessness. But they are not condemned for not having received Christ when they have not heard of Him. But the Holy Ghost not having been presented to the world, they have not so rejected Him, but the world is convicted and judged because it killed Christ, and in the testimony to Him where that is it now resists the Holy Ghost. The Jews had the law, and the prophets, and the Just one, and Stephen charges them, "ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye." That is the demonstration of sin. Then "of righteousness." If all the world is under sin, where am I to find righteousness? You will find it in two things, which are, "I go to my Father," and the other "you will see me no more." Christ's going to the Father is proof of righteousness, for He is the one that deserved to go; and I see Him no more, is proof of righteousness against those who have rejected Him.

In "and ye see me no more," it is you see Me no more in that character of mercy come as a Saviour; every eye shall see Him in His new character as Judge. If I receive

the demonstration of the Holy Ghost convincing of righteousness because Christ has gone, I have ceased then to belong to the world, and have become a believer. The demonstration of sin may come fully to the conscience, in a certain sense of the word, but if the will is not changed, I gnash my teeth on the man who brings it to my conscience as they did to Stephen. Then there was conscience with a bad will. The sin of Christendom is the practical denial of the Holy Ghost; I say "practical," because orthodox people own Him as to statement. The root of the gospel is here, "righteousness, because I go to my Father." I do not get a man's sins dealt with in this demonstration, that is not the point; but it is the broad general truth of the general standing of the world. The One righteous man having gone to the Father, the world will never have Him here again as such, though believers may go to Him there. The world was judged in chapter 12, and the prince of the world is judged in this chapter. You do not see righteousness fully displayed anywhere save in the glory. The cross is the declaration, not of righteousness, but of the contrary. It is the ground of righteousness. But if I look no farther than the cross I see the only righteous man that ever lived forsaken of God. The "judgment" is not come. It is not merely Satan is judged but the world; the whole world, having come up against Christ whom God put at His right hand. But I see Satan the prince of it all, and the whole thing is bad from beginning to end, and the whole is judged.

The judgment was not actually come; there was a demonstration of judgment because the one who had the power of the world had committed himself fatally, against Christ; but the presence of the Holy Ghost

shewed it was against One who had broken his power and gone up to heaven. The presence of the Holy Ghost shews that Christ is in heaven, and righteousness is shewn in setting Christ there. The same thing demonstrated that judgment was there; for the one who had allowed it was in direct opposition to the one God had set at His right hand. But it was not the execution of this judgment yet. The prince of the world was cast out, for the world had fatally committed itself against the One whom God had set at His right hand. All this demonstration is in the world; what follows is among the saints. “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come; he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you.” We have had the testimony borne by His presence in the world and now His work among the saints. First He guides into all the truth. That is a present thing. Then things to come are shewn. In all He glorifies Christ, taking His things, all the Father has, and securing them to them. It is for the world from verse 8. I take it that the expression “because I go to the Father,” which He employs everywhere in John, flows from His speaking everywhere as the divine person who was come and went back, not as the dying man, though going through death, when all was over. He says, I am going away, and to the Father. No man takes My life away, Satan has nothing in Me. I am a divine person going to My Father; and when the proper time has come you will see Me again. They did not understand, and He says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice, and ye shall be

sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." It is not thus death and going to Him that He sets before them, but seeing Him again, which is a totally different thing.

In verse 13 "of himself," is "from himself." He will speak from the Father and the Son. The distinction between verses 13 and 14 is that the one is what He does, and the other is the object of it. He does two things—gives you all present truth, and shews you things to come, that is prophecy, of which there is plenty in the epistles and the Revelation, to say nothing of what He explains of earlier writings, and of Christ's teachings, which was more bringing to remembrance, but all part of the truth of course. Verse 14 is what He does: "He shall shew it unto you." But it is Christ He glorifies. The Holy Ghost reveals all that the Father has, and that can be, revealed, and all these things are part of Christ's glory. He specially speaks of Christ as gone. "He shall receive of mine," is not Christ's history as on the earth, so much, but all this new scene, though He does the other also. Here it is the new. They were wrought on by the Spirit to remember themselves what had passed on earth. They had seen it all; but here the Holy Ghost comes down, and, coming down brings the things they had not seen, that is, everything which the Father has and which belongs to Christ.

The point in the "little while" is that the Lord is not going to be lost, but as soon as God's purposes are accomplished He will come again. It is a great thing to take what is in a passage. And it was accomplished as far as resurrection went. The statement is that they would see Him again, for He was not gone and lost. The world rejoiced when He went away, as gone and done

with. As far as it went, it was verified when He rose again, His disciples did rejoice greatly then; but it was not confined to that. It says, “your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” And it was. In the sense of verse 16 we have seen Him. It does not say, we are sorrowing at His being lost; but they did sorrow, and it speaks of the condition of the disciples in their place. The world was delighted to get rid of Him, but He comes up again, and His disciples see Him and rejoice. We have not got into the one or the other case entirely. Christ is gone in a certain sense, and yet we have seen Him so that we are always rejoicing. The entire fulfilment will not be until Christ returns.

I was referring to verse 22. As to the present they have lost Him again, after they had been glad when they saw the Lord, but they never got back into the sorrow they had had. I think the passage refers mainly to the resurrection, the then present thing, though it is not entirely fulfilled until we see Him. As we were saying before, I have eternal life, and am looking for it, and even for justification in one sense as in Philippians 3, “that I may be found in him not having mine own righteousness.” The disciples then were wonderfully dull of heart about it, and they had no understanding because the Holy Ghost was not given. The point to me is, they would see Him again which they did when He arose. The world would see Him no more, but they see Him again, and have a consciousness that, instead of a lost Saviour of Israel, they had got a complete one for the eternal purposes of God.

He is putting them here, as being Himself with the Father and having everything in His hands, in contrast with being a mere rejected dying man on earth as in the

other Gospels, and puts them in the presence of the Father in grace, saying, “the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father.” He is not here a dying man but a divine Person; I come from the Father and go back to the Father, and shall come again. The disciples got that, or part of it, when they saw Him raised from the dead, although the full result will not be until He comes again. They did not understand it then though they professed to do so, for they say, “by this we believe that thou earnest forth from God.” From the Father they have not entered into. The Father is looked at as giving Him all things, not merely is it that Christ came from God and went to God—that was the moral connection, He was going back to God in all His perfectness, but now He takes His headship over everything. “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name”; we ask the Father as brought into immediate relationship with Him, and in His name, as the one in and through whom we are thus in relationship with the Father. What title else have I to go to God? As to the Lord’s prayer, here is one reason why it should not be used now: it would not be asking in Christ’s name.

There is often great failure in going directly to the Father; it is in Christ’s name, but people go not in Christ’s name, in the Spirit of adoption, but to Christ if they could not go to the Father, like Martha: “what thou shalt ask of God, he will give it thee.” They go as sinners, but inasmuch as Christ is there, they can go. Now that is not at all where Christ puts them here; “the

Father himself loveth you"; all for Christ's sake, it is true.

Then the passage has been used for a very bad purpose indeed, "ye shall ask me nothing," as if you are not to look or pray to Christ Himself, a mere abuse of the words. They were not to come to Him like Martha and say, "I know that, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." The Lord says, "do you come yourselves to the Father and do not be asking Me that I should go for you." But in all that concerns the administration, or what concerns His lordship on earth, the Christian prays to the Lord, not to the Son in that character. As a child and son I go to the Father, but it is to Christ I go, not to the Father, in matters that relate to His service. If I am a child, I go to the Father, but if I have something of administration in the church, I go to the Lord. It is a definition of a Christian that he calls on the name of the Lord Jesus; and you have Stephen's example, and Paul besought the Lord thrice. You cannot properly address the Spirit, but this is for another reason, the Holy Ghost being the One who is in me, and so He cannot address Himself. It is the different place the Holy Ghost takes in the economy of grace that is the reason of this. He is the agent in us to sustain us in prayer, for by one Spirit we have access unto the Father.

It is not intelligent to use that hymn, "Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove." God does not make a man an offender for a word, but it is not intelligent. "These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "In me "not merely, not apart from me, but "in me." Godly persons have prayed for an outpouring of the Spirit. It was a mistake in divine

knowledge. That was done on the day of Pentecost. But they meant well and earnestly desired really the more abundant action of the Holy Ghost. I have no feeling of attacking what is merely a want of apprehension, though I have no doubt such lose greatly by it. I believe too, it is necessary for the church of God that there should be the clear truth seen.

Chapter 17 is different from all other chapters in Scripture. It is not all a prayer of intercession but the thing that is peculiar, and which there is nothing else like is, that Christ is not speaking to His disciples but to His Father in their hearing. So He opens out all His mind to His Father while they are there to hear it, or, if you please, we are there to hear it. Of course this is a wonderful thing to be admitted to listen while He is unfolding to His Father all He has to say to Him about His disciples. And firstly He lays down the position. “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” Christ always has His Father’s glory in view. And when He says, “glorify thy Son,” we may remark these two points: He never, though Son of God having become a man, goes out of the place of receiving all from the Father. He does not say, Now I will glorify Myself; but glorify Thou Me. When glorified His object as such is to glorify the Father in that higher place and way though all was perfect here. Then he continues, “as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” He has title over all flesh, but with a special object too in that. He has power over all flesh; but the special intent is that He may give eternal life to as many as have been given to Him of the Father.

“And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” That is, as I was saying, when you come to grace, it is Father and Son; it is the name that eternal life and blessing come in; it is the only full revelation of God Himself.

You get the three names we were speaking of brought together in Corinthians: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord [that is, Jehovah]—Almighty.” Almighty, Jehovah, and Father. Abraham’s God Almighty, Israel’s Jehovah, Father is God’s name with us. Most High will be millennial. Father comes out in John 17. Almighty did not give eternal life, but kept Abraham from one people to another; and Jehovah was faithful to His promises, making them all good to His people. But this did not give eternal life, nor is it eternal life; but the moment the Father sends the Son, here is the grace that gives eternal life. God sent His only begotten Son that we might live through Him. We do not live through the first Adam. The Almighty watched over Abraham, but that did not give life, nor yet the government of Jehovah, but the name of the Father sending the Son does, and, receiving Him, we get it; that is eternal life. The Most High goes on to the millennium, and we have not come to that yet. “Father” is the special name that we have; it was revealed while Christ was upon earth, but not understood, because they had not yet the Spirit of adoption. Then comes the position we get this in; that the Father glorifies the Son, all power being given to Him to give eternal life to as many as God gave Him;

and that eternal life was in the knowledge of the Father, the true God, and of Jesus Christ as sent.

Then comes another point. His work: “I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” He had glorified God down here, and finished the work given Him to do. It is wonderful how the work itself is all passed over, but it is finished and He is looking at the one passing out of the world to the Father; and that is what has made the difficulty of understanding the seeing Him again, for He did not actually go to the Father till the forty days were ended: the work is finished, and then He goes back as Man into the glory of the Father. And then it is He makes us sons, glorifying God by His work, and we have part in the effect of it as sons. So you get the whole framework of grace in this chapter. He takes the glory as man having accomplished the work. “Glorify thou me with thine own self.” “With” means “with Himself, along with Himself.” He has just the same glory as the Father, but He never goes of Himself out of the place of humiliation. He was with the Father before the world was—one with the Father. You get that equality all through the Gospel. So here, “I have glorified thee,” now “glorify thou me”; but He never says, “I have glorified thee, and now I will glorify myself.” He receives everything, and will take everything as receiving it from the Father.

As to Isaiah 53:11, “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many,” the meaning is very different. Christ does not justify us by His knowledge. The Hebrew word has two meanings. It is to justify; but it is also to “instruct in righteousness,” though it goes farther, for

He might instruct, and they not learn. But the meaning is they are really instructed. To justify by knowledge is very crooked. “It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant instruct the many in righteousness, and he shall bear their iniquities.” It is “instruct the many,” but in the last verse it is “bare the sin of many,” without “the”; there is a “the,” or article, when it says, instruct the many in righteousness.10 Notice now verses 4, 5. Christ receives as Man, what He had been in as a divine Person before ever the world was at all, and then you come to the next step, to bring out the part of those who were given Him. “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.” It is the Father giving to Him as Son of man, and He gets the whole place as receiving it of the Father, and having finished the work, He brings us into it, and then He manifests the Father’s name to bring us into relationship in which He is as Son. He has communicated to them all the communications of the Father to Him as Man down here, so that they should enjoy the relationship as exercised in these communications. “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” Thus we get their place settled. First, He manifests the name; and next, whatever the Father had given Him He passes on to them that they may have the full enjoyment of it.

In verse 26 “thy name” is the Father. “I have declared, and will declare it.” If I think of God as thus revealed, I think of the Father; because that is the name He has taken with me. Christ having become a man, has “emptied himself,” and He looks up to the Father. To deny His deity is to take the opportunity of His having humbled Himself for our sakes and sins to deny the glory due to Him because He laid aside the form of it in love to us. He made Himself of no reputation and then as Man humbled Himself. Still, though He said, Freely do I come; when a body was prepared Him, yet He therein took the place of the sent One. But His moral glory was the greater; therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down My life that I may take it again. Now, He could say, is the Son of man glorified. When I get the perfectness of the love, I find the Father sent the Son forth into the world. If I get a man sent from God, whose name was John, he has a mission; but when I see the Father sent the Son, I get the infiniteness of the Son in love, become a servant. If you go back, you will see the thing the devil sought was to get Christ out of the place of servant, and lead Him to command— “Command that these stones be made bread.” “No”; as it were, He says, “I have taken the place of service, and I will keep it.”

The sent One, as such, is not equal to the one who sends Him. But then you get Him, the Jehovah, and Jehovah says, “I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.” Isaiah saw also Jehovah in chapter 6; and in John 12, referring to that passage it says, “These things said Esaias when he saw his glory, and spake of him.” What he saw was, “Jehovah sitting on the throne, high and lifted up.”

But again, I do not admit that He came merely as man. He undertook to come and do this will of God, a place of distinct service. “Mine ears hast thou opened” (“digged” in margin); Psalm 40:6. He undertook the service freely, and God prepared a body for Him. “He wakeneth mine ear to hear” as the learned, “the Lord God hath opened mine ear,” that is, to learn down here; Isaiah 50:4, 5. God formed the place of service, and prepared a body, and Christ says, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” We hear of the undertaking to come when the body was only prepared; He comes to take it and became flesh. Then His ears were opened morning by morning, and finally according to Exodus 21:6, as He who had completed His full service, loving the One whose due service He had performed, His wife, His children, in death He became a servant for ever. Compare John 13. His present place, and Luke 12 when He comes and takes those who watch for Him to Himself. I came forth from the Father, and came into the world.

There is no such thing in Scripture as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It is in Revelation 13, “Whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb slain.” If people merely mean that the Lamb was slain before the world in the counsels of God, that is all very well, but in no other way.

Then He prays and first for the eleven; further on He says, “I pray not for these only” —all Christians are the gift of the Father to Christ; though the immediate application is to those brought in by the apostles. “I pray not for the world” stands in a way contrasted with Psalm 2. He leaves the world and does not pray for it. Intercession is only for those who actually believe. “I

pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." He will ask for the world hereafter, but He does not occupy Himself with it here. It is in this verse that He begins to pray. "Glorify me" in verse 5 is not prayer. "And all mine are thine and thine are mine." It is precious to see these two motives given to the Father to keep us. If thou carest for Thine own thou must keep them, and if thou carest for My glory thou must keep them, for He adds, "and I am glorified in them." This gives two motives for keeping them, they belong to the Father and Christ is glorified in them. "And now I am no more in the world; but these are in the world, and I come to thee." There is His position taken. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." As yet we have only got the disciples—the apostles. "While I was with them in the world I kept them in thy name, those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." We get the name withal in which they are kept. Kept as by a Father, but as a holy Father, there is all the love and care of their being His own children, but the holiness of God's nature is the character in which He keeps them.

And now I have another thing to mark, and that is the three unities. First, it is the apostles "that they may be one as we are," and then the next is that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," and that is for the others who believe through their words— communion as 1 John 1. And then there is a third, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may

be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." That is the glory. Display of the Father in the Son and of the Son in the saints.

The unity of the apostles was unity by the power of thought and work of the Holy Ghost. They were identical in counsels and purposes, being entirely under the Holy Ghost, they were all of one mind, and it was one thing. Then when the persons who had believed were brought in, they are brought into communion with the Father and the Son which the apostles enjoyed that they might be "one in us" as is said, may have communion with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The apostles brought such into fellowship with them, and they then had communion with "us." Those who believed were brought into unity and communion, though they did not go out in action and counsel; but they are brought in to enjoy it in the Father and Son, and have fellowship with them. That would be the same as in John's first Epistle. It is unity of communion, not of divine action and counsel, and work. The third unity is simple; for there you have the glory, and you get what is descendible, so to speak, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me."

The first is divine action and counsel and everything, referring to the twelve; the second refers to those who believe through their word, the Holy Ghost working by them, and these brought into communion, and all one that the world may believe; and then the unity in the glory, the glory given that they may be one even as we are one. The Father, glorified in Christ, and Christ glorified in us, and this glory He gives us that the world

may know; for when they come out in glory the world will not “believe,” but will “know” that God sent Christ, and, wondrous word! loved us as He loved Him, for they will see them in the same glory together. It is three steps, the giving out of the testimony by the apostles; the reception of the testimony through their means in the beginning; and the glory. The last is the same as in Thessalonians. “I am glorified in them” is also now, but He will be perfectly glorified in His saints. You get a picture of it in the Acts too. Well these are the three unities. “And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” There you have them put in His own place with the Father “my joy”; nothing less. “I have manifested thy (the Father’s) name.” I have brought them in here, and I am glorified in them, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. Even then, all the words His Father had given Him He had given them. He had put them completely in His own place before the Father.

And now He puts them in His own place, not with the Father, but in respect of the world; “I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them.” It is in the same place of testimony that He had been in. They are in the same place as Himself with the Father to the end of verse 13; and then He begins to put them in the same place as to the world, and He prays, “not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” There I learn that He has made their place that which His was, giving them His testimony, the Father’s word, not words here, and the world will not bear it; if you get into this place the world will not stand it. The world will bear a deal of

religion, but not the Father. The Father dwells with the Christian; you are all outside, if you belong to the world and not to the Father. The Father has taken His Son up to Himself out of the world; and the Son says, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.” “I have manifested thy name” and the effect is that I am rejected. The world has not known the Father, but the Father takes up the Son to His right hand, and the world is all left behind; but Christians are put in His place before the Father and before the world.

“Holy Father” is the name He uses in verse 11, where He asks for them to be kept; here it is “righteous Father” in speaking of the world. It is God, of course, but the friendship of the world is enmity against God, and God is righteous in reference to it. In verse 16 He says, “they are not of the world even as I am not of the world,” and then goes on to how they are practically made not of the world as Christ was not of it. The Father’s truth, and the Son at the right hand of God, these are the two great elements. “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.” I want them apart from the evil, they are not of it, as I am not of it; thy word, the divine word, is truth, truth to separate them from it. And then “for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” It is not only the Father’s truth brought down by the Spirit so as to bring what is in His mind into ours and form us by it judging the evil; but Christ has set Himself apart as the One in whom all this truth is realised in glory, and as the object of their affections, so that they should be sanctified through the truth. Just as He had said before, “the truth shall make you free,” and “the Son shall make

you free." This is an important sentence; it is the way in which you are morally put in the place in which we are detached from the world. The truth shews us the divine nature, Christ, His death; it is the Father's word that comes from Christ who is gone on high, and it is with the additional fact that in Christ Himself it is all realised in glory. We have had now their place with the Father, their place in the world.

Then He prays "for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." And then comes the third position—the glory—s "that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." The difference between believing and knowing is not sufficiently noticed. When the glory comes the world will know that we have been loved as Christ was, for we appear with Him in the same glory. What a wonderful sentence it is! The Lord delights to shew that we are in the same glory with Himself. Like Moses and Elias in the same glory with Him on the mount. In one sense this closes the teaching of the chapter.

The last three verses of the chapter alone refer to heaven. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." He will have His disciples up there in the glory where He is; but this involves the question between Him and the world. And He appears to His Father to judge between the

world and Himself. It is His direct desire for having them in the glory in verse 24, and then the decision as to the world comes in verse 25, and in verse 26 He says, “I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them and I in them.” That is a present thing. It is not “declaring,” as before, that the world should know, but to the disciples; when the glory comes, the world will know that we have been loved as Jesus is loved. But we are to know it now, and for this purpose He has declared it, “that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.” He has made the Father’s name known to us that the love wherewith He was loved may be in us, and He dwells in us as a kind of conductor of this love down to our hearts. There are two kinds of love known in the heart: God’s love shed abroad there and the love of relationship in the Father; and different measures of it, according to our spirituality; but the living in it is the place we are in rightly, one child may feel its father’s love better and deeper than another, but each is always in it. As a child, he has the Spirit of adoption and cries, Abba, Father; as to righteousness, he has it; and if I speak of a son, he is one. And he is all this through Christ. He has brought us into the same place with Himself. Such is the subject of the chapter. But you never find Christ taking us into the same place with Himself without His divine glory shining out and marking a difference in Him all the while. Still as to us and the ground of the relationship we are all in the same place. It is another thing whether the heart of the Christian in looking up has the consciousness of the same favour resting on him as rests on Christ; that may vary and in the same person too, but the settled consciousness of the favour is there.

In “He that sanctifieth and they Who are sanctified are all of one,” we have the same thing. Before God we are of one, but He sanctifies, we are sanctified. And the nearer we are to Him the more we shall know it. You always get the difference kept up of the “sanctifier”; and they “sanctified”; but He does bring us into His own place, the same place in righteousness and life, and love. It is not merely that my sins are put away, through the work of the cross; that is not relationship, my debts are paid, and I have to be very thankful for it, but it puts me into no relationship with anybody. But Christ bring us into the same place as Himself, and then we come not only into relationship with Him, but also into His relationships.

Then just look a little at this expression—I feel it often in our worship meetings— “in the midst of the assembly will I sing praise unto thee.” Christ is singing the praises, but He raises the song of praise as the consequence of His own place and ours being the same. He comes and brings us into this place and says, I will sing in the midst of the assembly He went down into the place of death and drank the cup of wrath, and comes out into all the blessedness of His Father’s delight, not only as His eternal delight, but as having done the work for God—comes out and tells us His name, and then says, “you must come and sing with me.” It shews how wonderfully He puts us into the place of relationship. And we cannot sing with Him unless we have found that deliverance which put the new song in His mouth. Even the bearing of sins and putting them away, though an everlasting ground of thanksgiving, is not a new relationship. What we are brought into is what the Father is to Him when He has accomplished the work:

“thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”

“That the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them and I in them.” It is a very wonderful scheme of God, to be sure, to bring poor worms, sinners, into the place of His Son; and all His glory is in it, His love, His righteousness, His holiness, His majesty, all are made good in that by which we were; that is what we have here, Christ glorified His Father—things for the angels to look into. “Herein is love with us made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment” is different, in this, that there I have judgment before me, and you cannot have this here. That is the thing as I look at myself as a responsible being: responsibility leads me to judgment, but Christ has come in and cleared me from it all, and I am accepted in Him. But here I have another thing; what is He going to do with these redeemed people? He makes us “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” “and shew the exceeding riches of his grace in us.” He must clear them from sins first, that is true, but He had this thought in His counsels to set us before Himself in love, “having predestinated us into the adoption of children (sons) by Jesus Christ to himself.”

John’s epistle is the other aspect of this, from the judgment side of it; it is not the union and relationship side but the other side so that, when I think of judgment, it is no judgment for me. “Boldness in the day of judgment,” is a strong word, but that is what the epistle gives; it is in the aspect of judgment. If I am the same thing as my judge, I need have no fear of judgment if the judge acts according to what He Himself is, because I

am the same thing as Himself. What I feel so important is, that consciousness of relationship should be insisted upon. It is more than that question of judgment, only here it is all the same position as Christ, as well as in the epistle. I find so many brethren who linger round the fact of clearing us from our sins, and do not enter into the consciousness of our relationship in Christ with the Father. Every Christian ought to have a sense of relationship, just as a child has on earth. The moment I take my place in Christ by faith, I say "I am loved as he is loved," and I understand the aspect of the Father's love towards me.

I do not say if we are sealed, that we should not say, "Abba Father," but such an one may not enter into what it is to be loved as Jesus is loved, and that Jesus would have it so, and dwells in him that he might. You will find many brethren who really know they are forgiven, and yet have never thought of being loved as Christ is loved. It is to be known by faith, in the power of the Holy Ghost looking up and being there— through the word of course.

The Lord says at the end, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." These have come unto Me, they have received the message. There is "the world "on one side, and "these" on the other. "I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." And then comes what these souls get: "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Before, it was the righteous Father, and He decides between the world, and Christ, and His disciples; and the love comes in and puts them in His place. He does so now, just as the Father had said, "I have both glorified it,

and will glorify it again" —as He had done in Lazarus, and would do again in Christ. As to the same glory: there is the divine end of it so to speak, and the other end of it. We are one with Him and He is one with the Father. Christ and His disciples go together, and the Father is to decide between them and the world, "O, righteous Father."

He goes over the brook Cedron, and still you get the same divine character. You have nothing at all, not a word, of what is called Gethsemane, or of the praying and crying to His Father; it is not that side that we get here. They came to take Him, and He puts Himself forward. You get a divine Person who is giving His life, and He says, "Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also which betrayed him stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground."

It is all power. He had only to walk away then. As soon as divine power was manifested, they all fell to the ground. Then He asks again, "Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that 1 am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." He puts Himself forward, and all the disciples escaped, not in a very grand way, but still they are safe —the Good Shepherd puts Himself in the gap, and the sheep escape.

Now Simon Peter, who had been sleeping when he ought to have been praying, comes forward and resists. He cuts off the right ear of the high priest's servant, but Jesus says, "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it."

This is not resisting; and it is all the Gethsemane you get here—a divine person as man, bowing to whatever is done as the Father's will. The Father has given Him the cup to drink, and He will drink it. He was a divine person, but a servant. Simon Peter denies Him; the high priest asks of His doctrine, and He answers He had ever openly taught in the temple; those who heard knew what He said. There is no recognition of authority anywhere though He submits to all. It is the Son of God who gives Himself. They lead Him to Pilate, and then what this Gospel so brings out is here again shewn, and that is perfect contempt for a Jew. Pilate asks, "Am I a Jew?" All through this is so. Our Lord says to the Jews, "Ye are of your father, the devil; ye have not the love of God in you." Pilate had the feeling of utter contempt. When the chief priest wanted to change the title on the cross, he says, utterly despising them, "What I have written I have written."

They claim that He should die. Pilate goes again, and asks, "Whence art thou"; and when He did not answer, he says, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivereth me unto thee hath the greater sin. And from henceforth Pilate sought to release him." The Jews cry, to work on his fears, "Thou art not Caesar's friend." "Therefore he that delivereth me unto thee hath the greater sin." Pilate had no power against Him really at all. If he believed that He was the Son of God, and there was at any rate fear in his conscience, he was helping on the devil's work against the Son of God, and any way he saw that in the Jews it was hypocrisy and envy.

Pilate's saying, "What is truth?" shewed he did not know what truth was. It is just what infidels say now. Their minds are always "open to truth," as they say, and this shews one clear thing—they have not got any. It is an old saying— "A fool can ask a question that nine wise men cannot answer." You will never find them state a truth; at best, everything is hypothetical. One said to me, "How can I get any good from anything I do not understand?" "Do you know how your heart beats? "I asked," and do you not get any good by it?" He was confounded, but he got some good by it. And if I have truth, my love of truth is shewn by keeping it.

We find a complete apostasy of the Jews here. "It was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour; and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your king! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar." This was apostasy. It was denial of Messiah, their hope and everything else. That stamps their character.

They had a double council—one at night when He was taken, and then they came to a formal sentence in the morning. The narrative leaves much out here, as the interview with Herod, and many details. But it is all Christ in peace, who delivers His mother to the disciple, and then, knowing that all things were accomplished, He received the vinegar, and said, "It is finished." He was crucified at our nine, I suppose, and the darkness was from twelve till three, and then He died. There were six hours from the time when He was crucified, and the darkness was for three of them. Neither in Geth-semane,

nor on the cross, have you a word of suffering in this Gospel. He bows His head, and gives up His own spirit.

He says “I thirst,” that the scripture might be fulfilled. The suffering was all there of course, only this Gospel does not bring it out. In Matthew you get it all fully. In Luke you see a great deal more suffering in Gethsemane, and none on the cross. “Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” There, and all through Luke, I get the Son of man, and not so much His divine person. As Son of man He goes through all sorrow, looked at as a matter of faith, in Gethsemane, and in spirit and heart He drinks the cup, so that, when He comes to die, the whole thing is perfectly calm. You get that side of it in Luke. And that is just what we ought to do—I mean, to go through all the sorrow and trial that is before us with the Father first, and when the sorrow itself comes, go through it in calm. Jordan overflows all its banks, it may be, but it is dry to us. Then in Luke it is simply said He expired.

Matthew gives us the sufferings on the cross fully: there I see the victim and the drinking of the cup. Is it not a wonderful thing to have the Lord brought down to us in this way—as Son of God and Son of man especially, all divinely developed for our souls to see what was going on? The vinegar was a kind of drink the soldiers had. Some have thought it mockery, but this is not the way in which it is presented here.

Certainly this is that death, where God and sin met in the sinless one, and death was what it could be to none but God, and yet He must be a man to die. He looked at it as the cup of the judgment of sin, God hiding His face,

and yet there was perfect obedience manifest in man, besides the perfect love of God in it. There is no place like this; even the new heavens and new earth depended upon the cross, because God was perfectly glorified here as to the whole question of sin, and nowhere else; good and evil met perfectly; hatred against God and the devil's power and all possible evil in man to the highest degree. Christ, man perfect in obedience and love to His Father, having no sin, but made sin for us, while the judgment of God in righteousness against sin, yet in perfect love to the sinner; so that the question of good and evil might be settled and settled for ever, and by God Himself, the Son of God giving Himself as man for it.

Unrepentant sinners will be judged of course; will be judged, and justly, according to their works; but the cross has settled a great deal more than that; it has settled all that is in God's character as to evil and as to good. Christ says, "I have overcome the world," but also, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And that work can never lose its value, and therefore I get the everlasting value of it when I get it at all. It was dealing with sin; but so as to put it away, and thus I get the new heavens and the new earth founded on it. Innocence was in the first earth, or garden of Eden, sin is in this, and righteousness will be in the next. The cross was to put away sin for God, and you get the new heavens and the new earth founded on sin being put away before God; righteousness then comes in. "He appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The result is not produced yet at large, though it is in respect of our consciences. Heaven and earth shall bow to Christ, but that is things

in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth too, and that is final. Now God has been glorified finally, and this cannot change; and everything new is based on it.

The Lord's making John the guardian of His mother explains, "what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." But when His hour was come, and He had done the work, He could turn to recognise the relationship, seeing He was now no longer engaged in serving His Father on earth.

It was the scene that stands by itself. Pilate was alarmed and uneasy all through; his wife came and told him she had suffered many things in a dream because of Him, and he was to have nothing to do with that just man, but the Jews press Him on, though Pilate did it himself. Everything was exactly opposite to God; the disciples that ought to have been faithful to Him, run away, another betrays Him, another denies Him; the chief priests, who ought to have interceded for the guilty, plead against the innocent; Pilate, who ought to have justly acquitted Him and set Him free, condemns Him. Everything was exactly opposite to what ought to have been. The cross being there brought everything to the test.

Pilate represents the power of the world committed against Christ, and that has been fatally compromised there: it was the abuse of the power committed to the Gentiles by God. The Jews were the agents in it all, but Pilate was the government of the world recklessly rejecting Christ at the instigation of wicked men.

When the Lord returns, He will find the beast in power, and the Antichrist there. Evil will have all ripened into

some positive shape, but otherwise it will be exactly the same. That is the reason why the Lord, as to circumstances, took the sorrows of the remnant upon Him. He had to do with the apostate nation, with the king Cassar; He had to do with them all, but did he find faith on the earth? The remnant will have to do both with apostasy and Gentile power, with this immense difference—that Christ went through judgment for them, and they will not have to do it.

The Jews have a tradition that Antichrist is to be of the tribe of Dan; and they look for Messiah Son of Joseph to suffer, and for Messiah Son of David to reign. Many now look for nothing at all. There is a rationalistic movement among them, and an attempt on the part of some to join the Socinians. Some will tell you that Christians have done a great deal of good, and many have read the New Testament, but many are infidels, and this is growing among them—on the one side the Talmudists, and the rationalists on the other, and some few in between these; but they are all uneasy.

In Revelation 13 we have Antichrist with two horns like a lamb, that is his royal character. In the first part of that chapter, the Roman power comes first, and they will both go on together, and play into each other’s hands; but then the beast has not as yet actually come into Palestine; when he has, the second beast has truly his prophet character.

John alone of the evangelists mentions the flowing of the blood and water from Christ’s side; he alludes to it in his epistle too. It is a beautiful testimony of divine grace, answering the last insult man could heap upon Him. They drove Him outside the camp, put Him to death on a

cross, and then, to make assurance doubly sure, the soldier gives Him a blow with his spear. Salvation was God's answer to man's insult, sin in his rejection of Him, for the blood and water were the signs of it.

In John's epistle the water is named first, because, looked at on God's side, water comes first; in the history it cannot: "Forthwith came there out blood and water," in the epistle; "not by water only, but by water and blood." The point is that eternal life is not found in the first Adam but in the last; the witnesses to this are the water, the blood, and the Spirit. You want purifying to have eternal life; you will get it nowhere but in death, and in that of Christ in grace. You want expiation, and the blood of Christ makes that; you want the Holy Ghost. Christ is not only dead, but glorified, and the Spirit is given, the witness that there is no life in the first Adam but in the Son. Its power is found in that which marks the total breach of the first man with God and of God with him, save in sovereign mercy. In the epistle John is shewing that moral cleansing will not be enough. The Spirit is named first when God applies it. The word is the instrument, but it is by death itself: you must have cleansing, but the cleansing is death. The water, coming forth from the side, is purity; and you can have purity by death only, and by His death. Then Joseph comes before us, and Nicodemus too, when the thing comes to a point.

But in chapter 20 we get the whole picture of the dispensation, from the remnant of Israel that first received Him risen, to the remnant that will know Him when they see Him again, represented by Thomas. Mary comes early to the sepulchre, while it is yet dark; her heart is there, and she has no rest without Him. The others came when it was light—the natural hour to

come. When they had been buying spices for the body and what they were going to do next morning, they come at the light. But Mary Magdalene has no heart to be without Him, and, before the light, she is there. The church began by a remnant, but John never gives us the church, but the remnant at the end, and in verse 17, “My Father and your Father, my God and your God” — two dispensations if you call them so.

First, Mary goes to the sepulchre and finds the stone rolled away. She runs and tells Peter and John, and they go to the sepulchre. Peter goes in first as usual; those two constantly go together, they both loved the Lord, but in very different characters. They do not shine in this history. They come and see and believe, and go away to eat their breakfasts, or for something at home. They did not know the scriptures, nor did they stay to be anxious about it at all. They saw and believed, for they knew not the scriptures. It was not faith in God’s word but sight convinced them. The clothes all lay quietly there; there had been no stealing away, and they said He must be risen. Afterwards Christ reproaches them for their unbelief. At any rate like Mary, they might have inquired. Mary stays when they have gone off; and there she is weeping, and thinks when she sees Him He is the gardener, and says, “If thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” She feels she has a right to dispose of His body, and talks to the gardener as if he knows all about it— “Tell me where thou hast laid him” —just as I might go to a house where one is ill, and say, “How is he?” without stating a name, because all hearts are full of the sick one. Then Christ brings out (the angel had done so too) where her heart was; and, when that is done, He calls

His own sheep by name, and she turns and says to Him, Rabboni, that is, Master. Then she would have taken Him by the feet, but He anticipates her, for she thought she had got Him back again for the kingdom. You must not touch Me, “but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.” It is the highest expression of personal relationship, and she is the messenger of it to the apostles themselves. He has accomplished redemption, and they are His brethren, for He has put them into the same place as Himself. The women in Matthew touch Him, but they were no messengers of a higher calling in contrast with the kingdom. They thought nothing about the act save as a mere token of respect and attention, and He let them do it.

The Lord was not seen by Peter first. The women are not named in 1 Corinthians 15, because Paul is speaking of witnesses there; he speaks of Peter, and the twelve, and five hundred, and James, and that was all he wanted. “Then of the twelve”; that marks it.

It was written in the Book of Psalms, and his “bishoprick let another take.” That was both reason and authority for choosing another. He has another to witness of His resurrection, because the Psalms said it was to be done. The number “twelve “is the perfection of human things in government; the foundations of the city, new Jerusalem, are twelve; so twelve apostles of the Lord. “Ye shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” There must be twelve.

Luke takes them all in a lump—Mary Magdalene and the other women, and puts them together; this is Luke’s way — all in a lump together, and then he picks out perhaps

a single circumstance in which deep and interesting moral traits are developed and that he gives at length. In verse 18 we get Mary Magdalene's testimony. The seeing and believing left the disciples at home, individually, but through her they receive testimony. Mary Magdalene is the figure of the remnant.

Then another point. We see them gathered, and Christ pronounces peace upon them. He had said before, "Peace I leave with you" —His own peace in the world, but here there is not only resurrection brought in, but the relationship. "My Father and your Father, my God and your God." And then He comes in a sense into the midst of the church gathered together, and, instead of saying, "Fear not," as He was wont while here below, the door was shut for fear of the Jews, and He says now, "Peace be unto you," for He had now made peace by the blood of His cross. As though to say, "I cannot stay with you, but I leave peace with you"; and He breathes on them too, and says, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." "As I cannot stay, here is a provision for you if I go "; such is the force of it. It is the Holy Ghost in the power of life in resurrection, not sent down from heaven. There is nothing special in the "eight" days, in verse 26. In one place you will find "after six days," and in another, eight. John never gives us the church as a doctrine, but we have historically their gathering together and He in their midst.

As to peace He says, "Peace be unto you; as my Father has sent me, even so send I you." It is characteristic now to be so. The word "peace" is an amazing word in scripture. "The God of peace shall be with you." He is never called the God of joy; it is never given as His character. He is, as God, always in peace, and never up

and down as we are. Joy is a feeling that a man has when he is up, and presently it subsides, and he goes down again. Christ now brings peace—He has made absolute peace, perfect peace, and He brings it.

Then comes the breathing on them. It was the figure of the Holy Ghost coming after He had made peace; but as a fact it was the power of resurrection life. Just as God breathed into Adam's nostrils, so the resurrection Son of God breathes into them the power of the life He gives them as risen. In Acts 1 you get the sending of the Holy Ghost, not the breathing on them, not the power of life, but the Holy Ghost Himself received anew for others from the Father by the Son, and then by Him shed forth.

As to "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." They were the administrators of it in the world; first in the preaching of the gospel if you like; but afterwards, in the proper administrative sense. Here it is the apostles. But Peter in a sense remitted Cornelius' sins. Paul says, "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also." And yet, if such an one is a believer, he has eternal life and forgiveness all the while. That is what I mean by administrative. Not the forgiveness in which the soul is justified, but the present conferring the forgiveness in the ways and government of God. James says, "And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." If discipline is carried out, there the sin is bound upon the person. It is spoken here of the disciples, that is the eleven. The question has been raised, I know, whether there were one hundred and twenty that obtained this power, or only eleven. The great thing is to get what the Spirit of God is at in the passage, and afterwards the context as much as you like. Thomas is not there the

first time. There might have been more than the eleven present.

As to binding and loosing the only thing that I see it conferred upon, after Peter, is in Matthew 18: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name”; forgiveness of sins is not named here, though this is part of it. The thing He is here speaking of is their administrative capacity. In those early days there was no such thought as receiving in anyone, and he not having his sins forgiven. It is the very thing, they, the disciples, were “sent” out for—to announce the remission of sins to give knowledge of the salvation of His people by the forgiveness of sins: only He gives the administration of it to them. I believe that any assembly of two or three in Christ’s name (provided they look to Him, and do it in His name) have the power to bind and loose, and forgive sins; only this is not eternal forgiveness.

As to chapter 18:28, it is a question of whether Christ anticipated the Passover, for they began it in the evening, and among the Jews the evening began the next day, and was reckoned with it. It was dark when they went out. I did look into the thing once, but those things do not occupy me much. “That they might eat the passover,” falls in completely with Christ being sacrificed on the paschal day; it is merely a question of why He ate the supper previously, and still it was on the same day. As to the title on the cross, here we get the whole— “Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.” One Gospel gives one part, and another another; but here you get it in full.

To return to the forgiveness of sins in chapter 20. He says “Peace [be] to you”; first by itself, and next, both on

the Lord's day, says, "Peace [be] to you; as the Father sent me forth, I also send you." He brought the peace to them, and then He sent them out with the peace. Then He breathes the Holy Ghost into them, which, looked at as figurative teaching, in the dispensational teaching here given, is the same as sending it from heaven; but historically it was the power of life, and not the giving of a person.

When they brought the message of this peace and preached the gospel, that was the character of their mission; then there was restoring souls in details. The offering once offered, we have absolute remission, when it is a question of our acceptance with God; and then the administrative thing, as "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins," to Paul. It is well to see that, as to forgiveness, it is not a mere perfect work by which I am to be forgiven, but I am forgiven. It is more than mere declaration. The woman in Luke 7 was forgiven in the mind of God, but she herself had it not until the Lord said to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." I could not say that a person is sealed in the mind of God, because sealing is not a thing in a person's mind at all, and forgiveness is. I may have forgiven you an offence, but you are not easy until I tell you so; whilst sealing is a different thing in its nature. The woman did not get the forgiveness until He said so, though she saw the grace in Christ that drew her to Him. You find that constantly; you get it in pious souls, the sense of the grace that forgives without the sense of forgiveness. They love the Lord, but if I say, "Are your sins forgiven?" the reply at once is, "Oh, I could not say that." You find hundreds such. You see it as to salvation in Cornelius. He was to call Peter and hear words, whereby he and his house

should be saved. He was safe really already. Justification is in the same way. People talk about eternal justification; but justification is not only what is in the mind of God, but in the man's receiving it, and therefore you get justification by faith. A person really is accepted, and there is the sense of the forgiving grace in the person of Christ, but the word of known forgiveness is not in the mind of the person himself. The same of justification. That is the force of the word, "He was raised again for our justification," because justification there is an active word in Greek—for our justifying—and then it adds, "Having been justified by faith," and so on. Faith must come in in order to our actually having it, and the man has not got it until faith. Suppose a thousand pounds given to me, I must sign my name for it. Actually I do not get it until I sign my name.

In Matthew 18:15-18, the inheritance of binding and loosing is given to the two or three. Thus the binding and loosing power which is claimed by clergymen and others, and which was given first to Peter, has its succession in the two or three gathered together, and not in clerical successors. And that has its importance in these days. In Matthew it is not absolutely the same as in John 20:23, for it may apply to other things. The main point is the same no doubt, and has always been considered so, though not exclusively that. It is almost always "heavens," not "heaven." The place is lost sight of when we say "heaven," because we talk loosely of going to heaven. It is the "kingdom of the heavens"; that is, belongs to the heavens and not to the earth. "Heavens "is the place more, but "heaven" is characteristic. You may use both so, but I should say, "The heavens are higher than the earth." We use the

heavens more materially in a way. There are habits of that kind in language which are not absolute.

Peter is represented as having “keys,” but it is an important point to notice that there are no keys of the church; that is a mere blunder. “I will build,” says Christ; and Peter had nothing to say to it except the privilege of getting the name “Peter.” The administration of the church was not committed to Peter, but of the kingdom. The church in this sense is not even built yet; whereas the keys of the administration of the kingdom of heaven upon earth were committed to him; and he lets in the Jews and the Gentiles. That is the force of “keys.” “The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder,” Isaiah 22:22, has the same meaning. It is the charge of administering the kingdom of heaven down here. That is where popery has made an immense blunder, though very natural to the state of that church. It has taken Peter instead of Paul; there is no successor to Paul, and they do not attempt it. Peter had to follow Christ, and Judaism came to nothing, and the circumcision church died away at Jerusalem. They take up with Peter because the church dropped into a Judaical state. You never hear of a pope as the successor of Paul. The entire thing is ridiculous, because after all you have no succession of Peter. As to successors to Timothy, whom Paul appointed in a way (but not to be his successor), nobody has thought of that, except in some general idea.

It is curious how and where things come out. There are those now and doctors of divinity too; one of them goes through all this, and declares there is no ordination to the ministry in scripture, and no sacraments in scripture, and that one person is as competent to

administer as another, that certain things must be done, but there is no authority in any clergy from scripture. He says there was no such thing in the early church at all. And it is so—there was not. He admits that the apostles appointed elders, as indeed is plain, but it must be taken for granted that they did it with the concurrence of the people, because Clement says so. Clement owns no bishop. Vigilantius was cursed by Jerome in an awful way; but he stopped on his way back and stayed among the Vaudois. Tillemont says of Jerome, "we may learn from this what a church saint is." He is as abusive and vengeful as possible, only he praises celibacy. Chrysostom and Augustine fell under his lash.

But we were at forgiveness: and now we get the remnant in the last days, and the three times that Christ reveals Himself to them, as it says in chapter 21:14: "This is now the third time." He had seen them ever so many times, but as to this kind of definite public and positive shewing Himself, the first time was on the Lord's day (chap. 20:19) j then when Thomas was there eight days after in verse 26; and then in the last chapter picturing the remnant at the end. Calling this the "third time" is a proof that the third time is used with a kind of specific figurative character. Thomas being absent the first time, had no part in this Christian mission, but he comes in afterwards, and believes when he sees.

Let us look now at the different missions in the different Gospels. In Matthew you have no ascension, and you get the mission from Galilee. The angels tell the women to "go quickly, and tell his disciples," not "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God," but "that he is risen from the dead, and behold he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him: lo, I have

told you." And then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee unto a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him they worshipped, but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." There you get the mission in resurrection from Galilee, and from the remnant of Israel looked at as thus gathered, and going out to disciple the nations or Gentiles. And that never was carried out in scripture, except it be a hint in Mark at the utmost. And not only you do not get it carried out negatively, but you also get positively the going to the Gentiles given up to Paul. The apostles gave it up, and agreed that they should go to the Jews, and "that we should go unto the heathen." You find it in Galatians 2. And then you get the church an entirely new kind of thing. As Matthew's mission, everything was provisional, not carried out.

But there is another thing which gives an intimation about it, and that is, when the Lord sends them forth, He tells them (Matthew 10) "If 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." But in Acts you find that, on persecution arising, they all fled, except the apostles, and that must be taken into account as to the way in which the instruction was practically carried out. For the Gentiles there is an entirely fresh start from Antioch when Paul is sent out by the Holy Ghost. There was then very nearly a split between Jerusalem and Antioch, but

they were united and kept together as you find in Acts 15.

Well, the mission in Matthew starts from Christ's connection with the remnant in Israel. In Mark, it is more general. You get more the service of Christ there; and in chapter 16:15, He said unto them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature "; that is the largest and most general commission you have, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." It is the more remarkable because that is the part of Mark which the learned Germans reject from verse 9 to the end. In what precedes you get this Galilee revelation of Himself, but no heavenly revelation, no Bethany revelation at all. In what they consider genuine in Mark you do not get the ascension; they only go to the instruction in verse 7, and stop with "They were afraid" (v. 8). But in Mark they are sent to Galilee, and the history is pursued regularly on that basis up to the end of verse 8, but if you stop at verse 8, it stops all of a heap, and you get no mission at all. In these last verses you get His appearings to them, and the facts are what are recounted in Luke and John, and the mission is added in verse 15; it is not said in what connection, and then He is received up into heaven. They go forth, the Lord working with them, so that there you get the mission from heaven with power. It is the Luke commission from verse 9. In Luke you only get the last part of Mark, who gives Matthew up to the sepulchre, and parts of Luke and John. In Luke 24 "It behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." He, taking the mission from

heaven as Paul did, takes in Jerusalem as much as the nations, “the Jew first, and also the Greek.” Then “He led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lift up his hands and blessed them; and it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.” So Luke’s mission practically comes from heaven, it is in Bethany and not in Galilee. Galilee is the mission to Gentiles only from a risen Saviour in the place where He had the poor of the flock; Luke’s commission is from heaven, and is Pauline in character. In Mark you have “Go to Galilee,” but you have no Galilee mission at all. In John you get no going to heaven, but you get them sent out for the remission of sins: “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” It is a mission from the divine person, not from a place at all. And then it is by the Holy Ghost: He gives them the Holy Ghost and the forgiveness of sins; and so there is no ascension in John, for this would give a place, though a heavenly one.

And now it is all purposely mysterious in the end of John. It is remarkable—all the puzzling of men’s minds about these things, when it is just an inlet into the fulness of truth. “After these things” (chap. 21:1), it is all mysterious. Peter was going back to the old work from which he had been called. Peter might have wanted his dinner. But it was ordered of God for His own purposes. And they went forth, but that night they caught nothing. When the morning came, Jesus stood on the shore, and asks, “Have ye any meat? “They answer “No.” He says, “Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.” And they were not able to draw the net for the multitude of fishes. “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved [the secret of the Lord was still with him who

loved and kept close to Him], saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, 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."

But the Lord had fish already; He had got the remnant with Him on shore, and then you get the millennial haul. It is all purposely mysterious. Where did He get the fish He had? It does not say. But "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." Now when the gospel haul was depicted (Luke 5:6), the net was broken; but here, the Lord being there, the net did not break. The gospel net gathered fishes, and does now; but as a whole, the net broke, and they began to sink. Here they haul them in, and the Spirit of God notices that the thing is complete. The fishes gathered out of the sea are the nations; but the Jewish remnant is on the shore already.

We may here remark how Augustine makes a mess when he gets on the unity of the church. It was settled at that time that they should not re-baptize heretics, and so the Donatists say to him, "You do not re-baptize those you call heretics because they have already received the Holy Ghost by our baptism, but how could we give the Holy Ghost if we have not got it? "And Augustine could say nothing, for it was a decided thing already. They confounded the outward thing with the inward. Augustine felt the reality of divine things, and was trying to unite the two—the outward and the inward He took

the outward thing as the union with Christ, and said there was no salvation out of it.

“Jesus then cometh and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples after that he was risen from the dead.” And now He begins with Simon Peter and the mission He has for him. There is a mission that goes before Christ’s coming— a kind of John the Baptist mission; and after that they go out and bring the nations in. The disciples had not yet the Holy Ghost, and understood nothing. Israel will be the head of nations, and the nations will take hold of the skirts of a Jew, saying, “We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

The unbelieving Jews before that will join the Gentiles in total unbelief. Any who are converted will be persecuted horribly, and their blood will be shed like water. The Gentile haul will be for the millennium. Compare Revelation 7. The Jews will understand it, as everybody will then.

The net full is the millennium all through; it is merely a general idea of a whole body of people, but these passages refer to the beginning of it all. In the last, of Isaiah you find the Gentiles will bring the Jews all in. Matthew 25 is the judgment on the nations. But the remnant, you remember, is distinct from the haul. Matthew 25 is at the beginning, and so is Revelation 7, where they come out of the great tribulation; both these speak of the beginning, but in the haul, the net not being broken the effect goes on. The gospel net is going on now. The net breaking is simply that the system gave

way. Then we see the Lord and the disciples eating together. This completes the picture.

Then Simon Peter comes, and the Lord takes him and tests him as to his fall. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” That is what he pretended to do. “He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love [am attached to] thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.” He asks a second time, and Simon replies the same, but the Lord changes the words then into “Feed my sheep,” or properly, “Shepherd my sheep,” not “feed.” It is one of the defects of the English translation, that they have put the same word where the original has different ones, and different words where the original has the same. Then the third time, instead of using the same Greek word for “lovest” as in the first two questions, the Lord changes the word, and uses the same word [phileo] that Peter had used in his two answers. He took Peter up as it were on his own expression, and asks him, “Art thou attached to me”; Peter answers, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love [am attached to] thee.”

The Lord never reproaches Peter for the fault, but He probes him—probes the root that produced it; and when He has thoroughly humbled him so that he is obliged to appeal to divine knowledge that he did love, then He commits all that is dearest to Himself to Peter. He had said to him before (Luke 22) that He had prayed for him, “that thy faith fail not, and when thou art converted [brought back], strengthen thy brethren. And he saith unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me”; and now, when Peter is

broken down and the flesh proved, can He say, as it were, “you are fit to serve.” You see how He takes that up, “when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest,” there is human will; “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.” That is exactly what Peter had pretended to do; he had said, “I will follow thee to prison and death.” Now He says, Of your own will you cannot. It is a beautiful expression of the Lord’s love and a pattern of the Lord’s restoring grace.

Everyone has to go through that, though you see many a person serving sincerely who has not been broken down yet. Yet I believe it must be got; if one does go and make messes, he gets it afterwards. There is a positive breaking down of flesh, and then when you know it can do nothing but mischief, which is all it can do, there is still the watching of it after its back is broken, so to speak. Peter’s mission to the circumcision comes to nothing in the outward sense, and he follows Christ. As to outward work for the Jews, Christ’s mission had come to nothing, and so had Peter’s: Jerusalem was taken, the Jews were rejected, and the church as Peter had it was altogether nothing, being supplanted, as you may say, by Paul’s. So with Paul himself, when Jesus spoke to him, and he fell to the earth, he asks, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Before, in his own energy, he had had no hesitation what to do, and went very vigorously about it. And afterwards he was away for three years to learn, though he was first allowed to give a full testimony at

Damascus; “And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” In that way Moses needed to have forty years in the desert before leading out the people.

Then Peter asks about John, “Lord, what shall this man do?” and Jesus says, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.” John does not come under “Follow thou me,” but has to continue until Christ comes, and not be cut off as it were. John always speaks so of himself; there is a fitness for John’s ministry in it. It shews a complete attachment to Christ personally. You never get the church in John’s ministry; it is always the individual; and, Christ being personally the thing he clings to, all that is vital and essential to souls (supposing the church goes to the winds) is there still. And John was just the one to hang over the ruin of the church and carry out the essential of Christianity. John’s ministry did tarry till Christ came, next the Antichrist in his epistle, and then the church spued out of Christ’s mouth, and so on. The other disciples took the words as if John would not die, but this was not said. Then you have no Paul, no founding of the church, as a distinct thing, no ascension here: we are in Galilee with a mysterious intimation of what was going to happen, and Christ is in Galilee, not in Bethany when it ends, but He here gives no mission from Galilee; we have Peter following Him, and John tarrying till He came again, mysteriously, and meant to be so.

But Peter in his second epistle gets beyond this into new heavens and new earth. And you have the day of the Lord in which “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” Peter’s epistles are the government of the Lord, the first

being the government of the saints in the world, and the second more the government of the world—its judgment. And therefore he carries this on to the new heavens and new earth. But you have nothing of the Lord's coming except that the wicked despise it.

The first epistle is government for, and the second is government against; the first is taking care of the saints, the second is power over, and judgment on, the wicked. Peter forms in that way a connecting link. We are not of the world at all, but there is an application of the government of God while we are passing through it. We find the saints suffering for righteousness' sake, and suffering for Christ's sake, and God's care of them in it all. That is in the first epistle. The second is government in respect of evil. John's ministry was different; his life hung as it were over the seven churches.

"Whither thou wouldest not" means against Peter's will. With his flesh unbroken he could not follow Christ at all, but afterwards he would. It is in the fullest contrast with Paul in Philippians, a totally different kind of thing. It is just the opposite to Mark 10. The young man is righteous according to law, and, instead of counting all dross and dung, he goes away sorrowful because he has great possessions. Instead of the righteousness of faith, the young man was looking how he was to be righteous in his own way. It is a wonderful thing— God's mind being all brought before us in this way. The leaving out of Paul and all that belongs to his ministry strictly is very striking here. His was an extra mission, being "one born out of due time"; and even Peter speaks of him as writing "things hard to be understood" in his epistles. There is nothing about demons in John's Gospel: "ye are of your father the devil" you get, but no demons

possessing men. You have the Lord in His own divine person, and the devil is the adversary.

8 Notes of remarks made partly in reply to questions at a conference.

9 Authority to take that place which the saints had not before.

10 Compare Daniel 11:33, and 9:27; and the end of Romans 5.

Compared View Of The First Three Gospels, Etc.

Part 1.

I apprehend that the Gospel of Mark, which brings under our view the service of Christ, and particularly His prophetic service, and, hence, records simply the accomplishment of that service, as the events arose, is that of the three first Gospels, which gives generally the chronological order of events. Luke places, in general, events in the same order as Mark, where he follows chronological order at all. In a large portion of his Gospel he drops the chronological order, and gives a general series of instructions, of which the occasions and elements are found scattered in the other two Gospels, or are found only in Luke. I take Mark, therefore, as presenting, in the main, the historical order. It is to be remarked, that, as is stated in the end of John, very few of the events or miracles of our Lord's life are recorded: only such as shew forth His ministry, and specially in the earlier part in Galilee, and then at the close of Jerusalem. In these the Gospels, in the main, go together. Luke has a large portion of the middle part of his Gospel occupied with general moral teaching. But the way in which this comes in is not difficult to perceive, as in chapter 9 it is said that the time was come for Christ's receiving up. In all the Gospels the common history of the concluding events begins with the healing of the blind man near Jericho. In Matthew the method pursued by the evangelist is very evident; and the displacement of subjects, where they are found, is connected with that method. I will begin with him.

The birth of Christ itself—not found in Mark—is treated in connection with the subject of the evangelist, or rather of the Holy Ghost, by his pen. Luke's account of Christ's birth, far more detailed than Matthew's, bears its own stamp too.

But I will now consider the order of Matthew and the reasons of it, as far as God enables me. Matthew gives us the presenting of Messiah-Jehovah, Son of David, to the people; and the form His service took in consequence of His rejection, with the substitution of the new thing which took the place of Messiah's being then received—the church prophetically announced, and the kingdom of glory. The residue of Israel have also their place beyond the intervening epoch of the church, existing on to the close. The general subject of the Gospel, what characterises it, is the presenting of Messiah-Jehovah according to hope and promise, and its consequences. Hence the genealogy by which the Gospel begins50 is Messiah's genealogy, traced to David and Abraham, the two great depositaries of promise and heads of blessing to Israel by original promise and given royalty. Christ was heir of both. It begins -also the Gospel; for the accomplishment of this blessing, according to promise, is its subject. Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers. Luke has his genealogy elsewhere, after the whole history of Christ's birth has been given in connection with Israel, but in Israel's subject-place in the world. From heaven only the angels announce its universal scope. It is connected with the opening of His ministry, and goes up to Son of Adam, Son of God.

To return to Matthew. In speaking of Christ's birth, Joseph is addressed as son of David, Mary being espoused to him. The child's name thus divinely born is to be called Jehovah the Saviour, for He is to save His people from their sins; all coming to pass, that the prophecy of Emmanuel's coming might be fulfilled. He was the Emmanuel of Israel who was thus born.

Next, at Bethlehem, according to the prophecy, the Gentiles come to own Israel's king, in contrast, moreover, with the false one. Such is His place; but, from the beginning, to be rejected in it. But He is to begin Israel's fortunes afresh, so to speak, as called out of Egypt, the true vine. In due time He returns back, but it is to take His place with the remnant of Israel, the poor of the flock, in despised Galilee, and be called a Nazarene. Such was the place in Israel of Jehovah-Messiah: fulfilment of promise—the place to which He had really a title, what He really was—His place, in fact. Such are the three great elements of the history of the introduction of Christ into the world, as given in this Gospel. Of course, this is not in Mark; but it gives to'us- the character of the Gospel. Matthew then passes on to —the opening of His ministry, John preparing His way. This, and the temptation, are given in all three Gospels, as the two opening facts, but with some characteristic differences. As to John's ministry, it is simply generally introductory. In Luke you have "All flesh shall see the salvation of God"; and various moral instructions to different classes; and the title of "generation of vipers" is applied to the multitude in general. In Matthew he is simply to prepare the way of the Lord (Jehovah). His prophetic appearance is noticed. The Pharisees and Sadducees only are a generation of vipers. In Luke he

preaches the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; in Matthew “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” As regards the temptation, Mark only briefly mentions the fact. The only point to be noticed is, that Luke puts the temptation of the pinnacle of the temple last, giving the moral order: Matthew, the offer of the kingdoms of the world; after which, he sends Satan (now fully manifested) away. Luke, consequently, does not notice this last circumstance, not necessary for his object. Matthew and Mark both notice that Jesus’ ministry commenced after John was cast into prison. This makes Him go into Galilee.

In Matthew, thereupon, a fact is noticed which casts a light on the course of the Lord’s ministry, connecting Him, as it does, with the poor and despised of the flock in Galilee. He came and dwelt in Capernaum, leaving Nazareth; accomplishing thus a remarkable prophecy of Isaiah, directly connected with the most specific prophecy there is, of the separation of the residue in Messiah’s time. (See Isaiah 8:13, and following.) All this is generally stated in Luke (chap. 4:14,15), only His preaching in Nazareth is given51—of that when we speak of Luke.

The call of Andrew, Simon, James, and John, follows, as in Mark; for here what naturally followed historically has its place in Matthew. It is not merely preaching, but the beginning of the gathering of the residue round His own person. They leave all, and follow Him. They believed on Him, note, already (John 1). Luke here leaves the order, to give the character and service of Christ’s ministry, with which the Spirit is specially occupied in that part of that Gospel. Mark had already stated, generally, His preaching on His going into

Galilee; and then proceeds with historical circumstances in Capernaum, etc. But Matthew opens out here, into a large general view of His public ministry, and the attention it drew; and then gives a full summary of all the principles of the kingdom He was preaching, and what characters had a place in it. Hence, after His beginning to gather the residue, he tells us of His going all round Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Mark says, kingdom of God), healing, casting out devils, so that His fame spread throughout all Syria. The report went abroad, and multitudes followed him from all sides. This, of course, embraces some considerable time, and presents, purposely, a general view of the work, and its effects; a picture, in a few verses, of the effects of His ministry. The gospel of the kingdom was spread abroad, and attention universally attracted, for it was accompanied with power.

Hereupon, the Spirit of God, without defining any time, but merely saying that the sight of the multitudes gave occasion to it, enters into a full statement, well known as the Sermon on the Mount, of the great principles of the kingdom embraced as preached, before it came in power, by a faithful few, to whom persecution for righteousness, and for His name's sake, is presented as a probable part of their lot. These principles are the spirituality of the law, and the revelation of the name of the Father. Israel was on the way to the Judge. It was not the great, wise, doctors, Pharisees, but the poor of the flock that entered into the mind of God about the state of things—were like Christ—who would enter into the kingdom. It is not preaching the gospel of salvation, but the principles of the kingdom. The suitableness of this, after shewing us how the preaching of that

kingdom had attracted the notice of all, is evident. The comparison of Mark 3:13, and Luke 6, shews, I think, clearly, that these are the same occasion; but Mark does not give the sermon; and Luke, who does more briefly, shews it was when He had chosen the twelve. This last circumstance is not given in Matthew. They are noticed as already chosen, at the time of their sending forth (chap. 10:1), which was a subsequent act.

We can hardly speak of date in Matthew for the sermon on the mount; because, while Mark gives details of Christ's ministry in Galilee (of which Matthew, indeed, gives many afterwards), Matthew here gives a general comprehensive view of that ministry as a whole. Still it was, in a general way, at its commencement; and the sermon is introduced, out of its historic place, before all the details of the ministry in Galilee, in order to give the character of the heirs of the kingdom, when the fact of its preaching in Galilee, and the public attention it had excited, had been brought before us. The place which these instructions have in this Gospel is entirely determined by the subject. He gathers the residue round Himself. The kingdom is announced in all the prophetic country (Galilee) with power, the report spread, the character of the kingdom given. This closes the great introductory portion. We have then the details of the presentation of Jehovah Messiah, and the result gradually developed: and that at once very rapidly and characteristically. For the great statement, as a whole, of what was doing as regards Israel, was closed with the sermon on the mount.

A second portion of this Gospel closes with chapter 9:34. Into this second part I will now enter. First, He is Jehovah in Israel; for Jehovah alone cleansed the leper,

and the Jewish Mosaic ordinances are here owned. This miracle is introduced out of its place. It took place after the going into Capernaum, and healing Simon's wife's mother. But it gave the first grand characteristic of Jesus' presence in this Gospel—Jehovah Messiah in Israel. But Matthew teaches us the rejection also of this, and the consequent setting aside of Israel, and the introduction of the new thing. Hence, on the cleansing of the leprosy by "I will, be thou clean," follows the healing of the Gentile's servant on the Gentile's faith in the divine person of the Christ, with the announcement of the admission of the nations, from all sides, into the kingdom, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the children of the kingdom would be thrust out.

This, Mark does not mention. Though happening at this period generally, when the Lord was frequently at Capernaum, I apprehend, from the history given in Luke, that it happened later. It is introduced here for the great principle involved in it. What passed in the synagogue in Capernaum, in the first mentioned visit to it, is omitted in Matthew. It had no place in the purpose for which Matthew's account is given. But he takes up the latter part of the same sabbath visit, the healing of Peter's wife's mother, and a multitude of other sick, because it gives an additional character of Christ's presence, in which, in grace, prophecy was accomplished as to Him— His profound interest in the sorrows of Israel (and, indeed, of man), that is, His charging Himself and His own heart with all, taking them on Himself. This pity, note, is mentioned. His going out into the desert is left out. This scene at Capernaum is only so far out of place, as the account of the leper and the centurion are introduced before it, as the great

characteristics of His position, whereas they historically come after it.

Another characteristic element of His condition, as thus come in Israel, was that Messiah and Lord as He was, He had nowhere to lay His head. He was just going to cross over the sea of Tiberias, when He declared this to the scribe: but this happened later in His service in Galilee, as we see by comparing Mark and Luke. But it is introduced here in Matthew, without any note of time, as an important element in the position of Jesus. The circumstances of this passage over the sea, afford us another element of His history. Not only is He rejected and houseless, through man's hatred, and God's love serving man in spite of that hatred; but, if so, His disciples, the remnant, will be tossed about while He appears to be asleep. But they are in the same boat with Him who can calm the sea with a word, and still the raging of the waters, though He may allow them to rise for the trial of the faith of those that are His.

The healing of Legion comes in exact order as regards the passage over the sea; but as to the general order, is, consequently, displaced with it. But the picture it affords of the character and results of Christ's presence, tends to complete the divine instruction of this Gospel. Power was there to set aside wholly the most mighty, and, for man, unbridled and irresistible power of Satan. The time was not come for his being bound in the bottomless pit, and the demons therefore say, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" The effect on the poor maniac is not told here. That is blessedly given in Luke; who, therefore, only speaks of one in whom this effect was produced. The simple point here was the complete power of Satan, and the power present to set it aside. In

Luke we find the subsequent service of the delivered remnant unfolded. Here it is the present position of Jesus and the Jews. A word where His power is exercised, gives complete deliverance, and thus the remnant are set free; but, as regards the mass, the result is figured by the unclean swine. They hurry on to destruction. As to Christ, He leaves their coast.

Here Matthew returns pretty much to the general order of the history of His service in Galilee; but the bearing of the Gospel is fully maintained. The Lord heals the sick of the palsy in Capernaum, His own city, as it is called; for there He had fixed His residence when not going through the country. This case begins a new series, shewing the power, character, and efficacy of His coming, always keeping in view, and illustrative of, the general subject of the Gospel. That coming is presented here to Israel, according to promise; and its result as reaching far beyond Israel on His rejection. And here the case of the paralytic is presented with special view to this result; that is, to the place Jesus takes as rejected by Israel, and the grace and personal power from which that flows. Palsied as man, as Israel particularly, was, the source of this in the government of God lay deeper than outward circumstances. It was their sins that had brought them there. But grace had come; one having title to forgive, and specially here as regards God’s ways and government, though surely in view of, and founded on, the needed sacrifice. He is really the Son of man (far more than King of Israel); but, as such, He has brought grace and power into the midst of the people. The Lord meets the whole case—goes to the heart and conscience of the sufferer. “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.” In reply to the reasoning of the scribes in

their hearts, He, who searches the heart, replies by this wonderful truth: “The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.” Thus He takes not the title of Messiah, not the righteous man of Psalm i, nor the Son of God of Psalm 2, but of the Son of man of Psalm 8; His full title, when rejected in the former character, and, at the same time, of perfect grace, as entering into man’s condition and sorrow. To prove His title, He by a word makes the paralytic rise up and walk. This act then, under the title of Son of man, is of the largest import. It is grace, forgiveness so as to restore. He is Son of man—all Israel wants—but His title much larger; and meanwhile the Accomplisher of that which is the witness that He is the Jehovah of Israel’s blessing (though coming as Son of man), who forgives all their sins and heals all their infirmities. He proved His title to one by the accomplishment of the other. In this way it is very characteristic. Compare Psalm 103:3. The Lord, in this Gospel, never calls Himself anything but Son of man; others, Son of David; and the demons, Son of God.

Next, the Lord calls Matthew, or Levi. This is still in the historical order; but introduces most important elements of the Lord’s history, in connection with the subject of this Gospel. It is grace above all traditional, or even Israelitish thoughts (for he was the expression of Gentile dominion over Israel); but the Lord came as physician, not to call the righteous, but sinners. Note! to call, not simply to bring blessing to Israel (though labouring in Israel), and crown their hopes and state. He calls, and calls sinners. It is grace; but the Lord’s comment on this goes farther, and is more explicit. He cannot put the new wine of power, living power and grace, which He is bringing in, into the old bottles. The whole position is

brought out in its double aspect. The Bridegroom—the Bridegroom of Israel—was there. The faithful remnant of Israel, the disciples, the children of the bride-chamber, who recognised Him, and attached themselves to Him, could not mourn. How should they? Besides, the truth was, that these ordinances for flesh could not receive the new wine of grace, and of the Spirit. Thus, that He was present in Israel, and the impossibility of Israel, as it was, being the vessel of the power, grace, and purpose of God in Him, are both here brought out. The new wine was to be put into new bottles.

Chapter 8 gives, historically, His service, and its results. This applies its principles, shewing the grace that met Israel in Jehovah's presence; but, in fact, the impossibility of that power in its energies, being introduced into the system in which Israel then stood. In point of fact, He is rejected by the characteristic leaders of the nation.

In what follows in Matthew, we have the Lord's persevering grace in Israel, though the new wine, He well knew, had to be put into new bottles. Israel's real state is shewn, explaining why there must be this new power—life-giving power—introduced; but grace towards Israel is shewn, which will persevere across (however temporarily suspended by judgment on the people) the whole church interval of time, to resume its activity in the latter days towards the beloved and chosen people. This is remarkably brought out to the end of chapter 10. The disciples are sent forth, forbidden to go to Gentiles or Samaritans; and they would not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man will come. Chapter 11 brings out their present rejection, as having rejected John and Himself; the

revelation of the Father by the Son being the result—the resource of the heavy-laden, the easy yoke in the midst of sorrow.

I may remark here, that Matthew having, in order to shew the principles of the kingdom, introduced the sermon on the mount, already as a great general feature of the Lord's teaching early in the Gospel, omits here the choosing of the twelve; on which, after coming down to a level place (English translation, "the plain") a little lower down the mountain, the sermon seems to have followed. See Mark 3:13; and Luke 6. The case of Jairus' daughter, on the other hand, and of the woman who touched the hem of His garment, are introduced here; though this comes, I apprehend, historically, after the parables by the sea-shore, and Jesus' return from healing Legion; the last Matthew had, as we have seen, already given to complete his general picture of Jewish history.

The bearing of the two facts recorded in chapter 9, consequent on the teaching as to the new bottles and before the Jewish mission of chapter 10, on the course of the Messianic history as presented by Matthew, I shall now advert to. The real state of Israel was death. On the point of dying as seen by others, in God's estimate Israel was dead before Jesus came. He visited it as dying—He really found it dead. So it is treated here; but, come in life-giving power, Jesus will give it life. This will be accomplished when He comes again; but He was, at His first coming, on the way with Israel and the whole crowd around Him, and power in Him where faith was in exercise through grace, to arrest death, to give life where all else had failed. The poor woman thus represents the residue whose faith laid hold on Jesus in

the midst of the crowd around, and thus distinguished from it. These the Lord owned. They are healed and saved on the way. As regards the one for whom He set out, He must, when the time comes, not heal but raise from the dead. For God holds Israel yet as but asleep, though really dead morally. This will be at the close. Hence He acts in power with the blind in Israel, who own Him Son of David. On their faith, following Him even apart from the crowd and assured He could do it, He gives them sight. The dumb, in like manner, receives his speech. Sight and a voice to praise are restored to them. It was never so seen in Israel. The Pharisees, blaspheming, ascribe it to Satan. But we have seen that the subject here is the persevering grace towards Israel, of which the two forms were shewn in the woman and Jairus' daughter.

Hence, in spite of the blasphemy of the Pharisees, which yet shews the condition of Israel as a nation, the Lord continues His course of patient grace (chap. 9:35), and seeing the shepherdless multitudes, is moved with compassion, and utters to His disciples His sense of the greatness of the harvest and the fewness of the labourers, urging them to pray to the harvest's Lord to send them out; and in this spirit sends the twelve forth. These are sent exclusively to the house of Israel—the lost sheep of the house of Israel in the midst of opposition and difficulty; but their mission continues after Christ's death, but still viewed as exclusively to Israel, and omitting all notice of the church or Gentiles, and overleaps all the time in which the people are not as such in the land, and tells them to go through the cities, which they would not have done till the Son of man was come. He was there, but the Lord goes on till He be

come as such in power. It is, as I have said, the persevering grace to Israel distinguishing the remnant. This mission, relatively to what immediately proceeds, is not out of its historical order in Matthew; but its exclusively Israelitish character is only in this Gospel.

In chapter 11 the Lord returns to the present position of Israel in reference to Himself, and its results as to the place He was about to take, the real reason of His rejection. The preparatory message of John is closed, and he comes to have his own personal place according to his own faith. Great above all born of women, the least in the kingdom is greater than he. The Lord bears witness to him, not he to the Lord. He is rejected; Christ is rejected by the Jews: warnings and grace alike. But the real truth of this rejection was, not his want of worthiness, but that Christ's person is too glorious to be known by any but the Father; or the Father whom He made known, by any but Him, and such as He revealed Him to j all were dependent on this, that is, on Christ's revelation of the Father to them. That is the glory of His person as Son—as Man on earth is brought out. Next in reward of perfect submission comes full joy. He had learnt the sorrows of man; knew how hopeless to seek good there, and presents Himself in grace as the rest of the weary, and the spirit of submission as shewn in Him for repose of soul on the way. This is historically the complete change of the dispensation.

Mark has not this account, and the two parts of this discourse in Matthew (that is, the rejection of John and Christ, and the shewing what His rejection by the Jews, while guilty as to what they did see, really came from, that is, the divine glory of His person which none could fathom; and the blessed remedy in Christ's revealing the

Father to the babes) belong historically to different times. The latter part is found in Luke 10:21, where it is said, “in the same hour,” which is precise; and it is found after the mission to the seventy, where its connection is beautifully evident on the joy of His disciples on their return. It is general here, in Matthew 11:25; it was “at that epoch” or “season”: and such it essentially was, when His rejection, now after His ministry, took a definite form and a decided character. Luke’s statement in chapter 8, of what the Lord says as to John, has also a more moral character, that is, more reference to the moral grounds of rejection, less to the dispensational.

This change of dispensation is brought out in a very important point, in what follows in Matthew. The sabbath was a formal seal of the covenant, “I gave them my sabbaths.” See Ezek. 20:12. These were the intimation of, and based on, the idea of rest in the first creation, and that by man’s obedience under law, and the connection of Israel with God, as a people enjoying promise on the condition of obedience. Not only they had failed, but they had practically rejected the great Repairer of Breaches—the obedient One. The introduction of the facts relative to the sabbath here is only so far out of the chronological place as the introduction of other posterior events has pushed them forward. Their moral place, in connection with the object of the Gospel, the change of dispensation or ground of relationship with God, consequent on the rejection of Jehovah Messiah, is evident. Two great principles are presented;—the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath, and— grace—it is lawful to do good; mercy, not sacrifice, is what God delights in. Some interesting details are connected with it. David’s rejection opened

this liberty. Sacred things had become in a measure common. So now where David's Son was. The priests profaned it in the temple. The glory of Christ's person was above the temple, as the duties of that, because God was there, were above the sabbath. Had they understood mercy, they would have had moral light, and not condemned those who through the glory of the Son of man were entirely guiltless. His person was above the conventional bond He Himself had formed, His rejection (and Son of man, compare Psalms 8 and 2, implies that), broke it on their part wholly, giving place to this higher and wider title. Thus the sign of the first covenant with Israel, and expression of God's rest in creation, had found the place in which the truth of man's and Israel's state set it. Only sovereign grace took up the hope of rest; and, blessed be His name, through the unchangeable title of His person, above the effect of responsibility in His creation.

The closing scene is then beautifully and solemnly brought out. The Pharisees seek to destroy Him. The judgment of their system, and the introduction of supreme grace, was insupportable. But Christ was not now to execute judgment. He would shew judgment to the Gentiles, but personally then He would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax till He sent forth judgment to victory. Blind and dumb, healed by His power, are a witness to the people that He is Son of David. The Pharisees, unable to deny it, ascribed the power they cannot deny to Satan; blaspheming the Holy Ghost. For this there was no forgiveness. Sovereign grace may re-create and thus restore Israel; but the tale of its responsible condition is now told. The tree was corrupt. It was an evil and adulterous generation; no

sign would be given it but that of the Son of man in the heart of the earth like Jonas, and all their hopes buried with it, to be founded by grace on Him they had rejected. Nineveh and the queen of the south would judge them. The unclean spirit once gone out, would return with worse; their state and judgment would be worse than when they went to Babylon. The Lord then denies all His natural ties with flesh, that is, with Israel, in the person of His mother and brethren, and accepts only the fruit of the word in the residue, as that which belongs to Him.

In Luke 8:19 the circumstance of His mother's and brethren's coming is placed at the end of the parable of the sower, bringing out the moral importance of the word without any reference to the rejection of Israel, or mark of date, though there be such found in the English, not in the Greek. The teaching as to Nineveh and Jonas, and the statement as to Beelzebub, is all given together in that part of the Gospel of Luke which is not chronologically arranged, but events put together in their moral bearing, and so applied; chap, 11:14-36. The message of John in Matthew 11, and the internal change connected with it, to the revelation of the Father by the Son, has no place in Mark. If Luke gives the moral change, and Matthew the governmental one, connected with the rejection of Jehovah-Jesus, Messiah, Mark, who shews us the service of the Lord in testimony, does not present this dispensational change in either form. The immediate facts leading to it are of course given by him historically in their place.

We find, therefore, in our Gospel, before the parables (in which the essential service of Christ in the word is given, and the subsequent forms of the kingdom; and in

Mark, what is peculiar to him, the entire absence of Christ's direct ministry when these forms arose)—before this, I say, we find the blasphemy of the Pharisees, and Christ's preference of His disciples to all natural relationship. What follows the parables in Mark (save His being despised in His own country, which comes in its place in Matthew, and we will consider farther on), we have already seen transposed in Matthew to an earlier part of the history, where we have seen its application to the subject he treats of. The facts I refer to are the crossing in a storm, and the history of Legion which follows; the raising of Jairus' daughter, which happened on His return; the woman with an issue of blood, which all go together; and the sending out the twelve, which, as we have seen, is given a peculiar importance in Matthew, and is introduced in connection with a most general statement of His ministry, so as to imply no date; Matt. 9:35, 36. But Matthew introduces there, in their proper place relatively to what goes before the displaced series just mentioned, two facts omitted in Luke and Mark, which bore upon his subject in a way already noticed; Matt. 9:27-34. On this follows the general statement of His ministry and sending out of the twelve. Luke, in the main, here follows the order of Mark, that is, gives the history chronologically; Luke 8:22.

The parables we have frequently noticed as beginning a new scene, taking a wholly new ground for Christ as to His own ministry on earth, and as to the kingdom. He comes to sow, not to seek fruit. He brings with Him the only thing which can produce fruit; and the kingdom is not His presence in power, at any rate until the harvest. We get the public result in the world while He is away,

and then His aim and object, and the great result under His hand. But the result of His teaching in Israel was to be reckoned the carpenter's son, and to prove, that in his own country and house the prophet has no honour. This, in Matthew, is in its place only by the transposition of other facts, above noticed, to a preceding part. It is thus brought into direct moral connection with His rejection, and the general effect of His sowing the word. It is not in Luke as a distinct event. In what follows we have a development by facts of the great change taking place, rather than the unfolding of it in figure or teaching, until He opens out the new thing, and then, after that, the closing history comes on. With the evidences of the change already fully taught came the proofs to Israel of the character of Him who was rejected.

First we have the account (chap. 14:1-13) of John's imprisonment and death by the wicked and apostatising king of Israel, identified with the Gentile power of the west. But this does not diminish (chap. 14:14-31), though taking His full part in the sorrow, Christ's interest in the shepherdless people. He shews Himself to be that very One who in Israel's brightest days to come will satisfy the poor with bread (Psalm 132); but withal He dismisses Israel, and, while His disciples are toiling in His absence, is on high to pray; He rejoins them, and all is calm; v. 22, 23. There is such a thing as walking on the water by night to meet Him; but the eye must be fixed on Him. It fails for the earth. He rejoins the ship (the remnant of Israel), and all is calm, and He is owned Son of God. In Gennesaret, where He had been once rejected, He is now received, and all are healed. The death of John Baptist forms no part of Luke's history; he

refers to His imprisonment in closing the account of His ministry quite early in the Gospel; chap. 3. The results follow in the same succession here as in Mark. The greater part of them are not in Luke at all; that is, from the feeding the five thousand to Peter's confessing Christ; the whole of which forms one subject. The retiring into the desert, in Matthew, consequent on John's death, is, in Mark, connected with the rest given to the disciples on their return from their mission. In Matthew this mission had been displaced to shew all God's dealings with Israel in this respect. It is found in chapter 10. What I have spoken of just above (chap. 14), evidently forms a complete subject—a view of all His relationship with Israel from John's rejection to the millennium.

In chapter 15, we find the question of a Pharisaic righteousness, and tradition opposed to God's law, and all Israel's worship as a nation, rejected on Isaiah's authority. God would have the heart right. To the disciples He denounces the true character of the Pharisees. They had only to leave them alone; with leaders in evil they were to have nothing to do. They were leading Israel into the ditch. The disciples were dull in apprehending this truth; but He explains that truth to them in grace, shewing what man, man's heart, is. Christ having judged thus the Pharisaic Israel, an important event presents itself. He does not go out of Israel, but goes to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, which He could take elsewhere as a pattern of evil and obduracy. There a woman of the accursed race of Canaan meets Him. She appeals to Him in His character of Heir and Fulfiller of promise: on this ground she has no title, no answer. Christ fully recognised the people in

God's point of view. The bread was the children's: He is minister of the circumcision. The woman owns it; but alleges there was grace in God, out of pure goodness, which could reach beyond the dogs which had no title. Hence she receives the blessing on the ground of what God was: a principle of immense essential importance, and at this moment opening up a ground of God's dealings, which was to be the basis of all hope. Hence we see Jesus in the midst of Israel, and owning it, but a perspective of blessing which was founded on what God was in Himself, and applicable to the sorrows of one who had no title at all. In chapter 15:30, 31, the presence of persevering grace and goodness in Israel, so that every ear that could hear, and every heart that could feel, might be reached in spite of the Pharisees, is brought out in the power of Christ in grace, so that they glorified the God of Israel. Instead of this general statement, the force of which is evident as regards the place which Christ still held in respect of Israel, we find in Mark a special miracle of opening of ears, and loosing the tongue of the deaf and dumb man—Christ's personal power and its character (for He will do this for Israel as He does for us). Hence it is not glorifying the God of Israel there, but Jesus has done all things well—His service and its excellency.

The second time the Lord feeds the multitude, the act is presented in another way from the first, though the power be the same, and its character confirms the view we have taken. This is the case in Mark, as well as in Matthew. The second instance of miraculous feeding is not found in Luke. In the first it is the power of Messiah as King in Israel, and able to give this power to others. There is no need, says the Lord, to send them away,

“give ye them to eat.” In the second it is the patient and tender compassion towards Israel, of which we have spoken. The multitude had been long with Him, a,nd He would not let them go fasting away. The number twelve, as elsewhere remarked, is indicative of divine governmental power exercised in man; seven, of spiritual completeness; and such, I doubt not, are their bearings here. This patience of the Lord with Jsrael, though shewn everywhere in fact, was not the subject of Luke’s Gospel; it presents throughout, after the first two chapters, the morally new thing. The third chapter is transitional. The circumstances which followed the feeding the five thousand, in chapter 14, and subsequent reception when He had been rejected before; His absence on high, while the disciples were toiling on the sea, referring to the change which should take place in His relationship with Israel, have no place here; for it is His patient grace where that change has been already witnessed of and shewn. Indeed, what follows is the expression of the fact, that it is now already brought to light. The two great classes which composed the nation desire a sign: He refuses it; they could discern the sky, but not this time; they should have none but Jonas, and He leaves them; and warning His disciples against them, brings out the witness of their dulness to profit by their teaching. This closes this part of the history, and introduces the witness as to the entirely new order of things, which a rejected Saviour was going to set up—the church, and administration of the kingdom of heaven on the earth.

In Luke the demand of a sign is found, with other similar statements, and the Ninevites and queen of Sheba, in the general instructions of chapter 11. The prophetic

doctrine as to the church and the keys of the kingdom of heaven is found only in Matthew. The Father had revealed to Peter the person of Christ, and Christ gave him his place in the kingdom.

Here the disciples are forbidden to announce Jesus any more as the Messiah; and the Lord henceforth tells them of His suffering, death, and resurrection; and next shews them the glory and character of the kingdom in the world to come; the law and prophets disappearing and leaving Christ to be heard as Son of God. Thus we have Christ—no more to be announced—the future glory of the Son of man—and the Son of God to be heard now, the law and prophets disappearing. All this is directly associated with the glory that was to take place on His rejection. They were not to tell of it till He was risen. His (as to the Jews) provisional but rejected coming is illustrated by that of Elias in John the Baptist. What is said here of Elias, forms no part of this instruction in Luke; for there it is more moral power which forms the subject, and not dispensational history. We find, after the transfiguration, the anticipated display of the kingdom in heaven, the power of Satan manifested; the disciples were not able to cast him out. This marks the incapacity to avail themselves of Christ's presence here on earth as the reason of His departure; a solemn lesson in any dispensation of God. As yet, Christ Himself still exercises His patient power. The promise is given of displacing the most apparently solid seat of power if faith were there. This is remarkable after their incapacity to do the smallest thing when He was there. This is only in Matthew. In Luke there follows the judgment of the various forms in which selfishness displays itself. In all the three Gospels the cross is

taught. In Matthew there follows a circumstance which gives its character to all this part of the Gospel of Matthew only—blessedly associating the disciples with Christ. As children of the great King, they were free from the tribute paid to Him (the temple Didrachma), but which then, not to offend, He will pay. He shews divine knowledge, and divine power over creation, but He is subject; and He puts Peter into the same rank of son with Himself. Thus we have the church and the kingdom in administration and in glory. The matter of the didrachma had shewn in what spirit the true sons of the kingdom were to walk till it came in power.

Thereon (chap. 18) follows a series of incidents opening out this walk, and with a good deal of detail. The principles which should govern this walk personally and collectively are taught, the assembly of disciples taking definitely the place of the synagogue as to being within and without. This is peculiar to Matthew, as introducing here the new institutions of God. Others are found dispersed in Luke, in their place, as general moral instructions, which character they also have. In particular we have the unprofitableness of flesh, but the relationship God formed in it owned. These general instructions go to the end of chapter 15:28. As to the order of it in Matthew, there is no particular remark to make. It follows as in Mark. The general instruction of leaving all, and taking up the cross, is also found in a similar way, put before the last part of the Lord’s history at Jerusalem, which begins with His passing through Jericho; Matt. 19:16; 20:19; Luke 18:15, and following. They naturally precede historically His own rejection; but in Luke a mass of instruction comes in between the last chronologically stated fact (chap. 10:17) and this,

with much as to God's ways in grace peculiar to Him; with parts, however, of what we find here in Matthew, dispersed among other matter, according to the subject spoken of.

A few of the points in Matthew call for particular notice. The spirit of a child is the pattern of a Christian. God has His eyes on little children with special favour. They are to be received in Christ's name. It is not the Father's will they should perish; not that they are not lost in nature: but Christ came to save the lost sheep. The parable of the lost sheep is applied to them. This last part, as to God's dispensation as to them, is peculiar to Matthew. Next, extreme jealousy as to occasions of falling, in oneself; care not to stumble the weak; the means to be taken to preserve godly order as to wrongs done, are prescribed; and here the church, i.e., two or three assembled in Christ's name, is introduced as taking its place. It thus becomes the new centre—completely takes the place of the synagogue. What is there bound on earth is ratified in heaven, and what agreed thus to be sought on earth given from heaven. The two or three assembled in Christ's name become a constituted institution, sealed, when real, by the sanction and authority of heaven, and the inside or outside of it takes the place of Jew and heathen. This is peculiar to Matthew; this is extended to the spirit of personal forgiveness as regards the individual. Compare for both 1 Corinthians 6. But the kingdom of heaven (not the church) is hence like the King who forgives and afterwards brings all on the guilty where the principles of His own conduct were not accepted and imitated. Thus the Jews (with whom on Christ's intercession God dealt in grace, forgiving them the ten thousand talents,

refusing grace towards the Gentiles) came under the full guilt of all as to God's ways with them as to the kingdom. But the principle is now morally true, save the general principle stated elsewhere; this also is peculiar to Matthew.

The teaching of the Lord on marriage, is not in Luke, referring, as it does, to the peculiar instructions of Judaism. The latter part which introduces the special power of the new thing, while sanctioning God's original and gracious institution, is in Matthew alone, 1 Corinthians 7 answers to this. The case of the children and of the young man, in which nature as God created it is held blessed; the law, as applied to man (second table), shewn to be the path of life, if nature could keep it, is found in all. Sovereign grace is needed for being saved, for flesh is fallen and evil; and seeks, if outwardly blameless, its delight elsewhere than in God. This is more briefly stated in Luke, as a great general principle. The answer to Peter on this point, in Matthew, has this also in particular, that it introduces the dispensational glory hereafter in the kingdom, and thereon adds the parable of the householder and labourers, to guard, by sovereign grace and goodness, against the tendency to turn the encouragement afforded by reward into a claim of self-righteousness. It is on the seizing of this, and through this, and the already stated principle of the first last, and last first, depends. Only grace, and because it is grace, inverts it, and puts last first: while the former states the shortcoming of nature, that first shall be thus last.

The last events now approach, and Christ sets out on His way to Jerusalem. Here, all the three Gospels are together: only the request of Zebedee's children is not

found in Luke. This connects itself with the cross of which He had been speaking; and the sovereignty of God, giving to whom He would. Christ's answer is the manifestation of His perfect meekness in humiliation—His absolute subjection to the will of His Father—His perfectness, as put to the test in motive, and obedience, and self-renunciation. He could lead His disciples into suffering with Him, and tell them it would be so; but for the reward, as to their place and glory in the kingdom, He must refer them to the Father. But while the expression of perfectness in Jesus, it gave a moral character to the exaltation also. The least in self would be the greatest there. He came in perfect love, not to be honoured, and to give His life a ransom for many. Nor would there be thus merely Jews in the kingdom, according to their then hopes, and His presence on the earth. The redemption work in love was now about to be accomplished. This closed up the full character of the change, and the real work He came to do. In what follows the Lord takes again the Jewish character, because He was for the last time, and in order to suffer, presenting Himself to the people.

This last history is, in all the three Gospels, introduced by His healing the blind man on the roadside by Jericho. Jericho itself has a peculiar character in Jewish history. The first opposing power to Israel's taking possession of promise; marked with a curse as the seat of the power of evil when the power was overcome; visited by Elijah on his way to Jordan and glory; healed by Elisha on his return to Israel, when the glorifying of Elijah had been accomplished:—it had the stamp of a certain initiatory character in God's relationship with the land of promise, not the direct title of blessing, but the way of blessing,

through the curse, and the meeting the power of evil. Here the Lord, just as He was called out of Egypt, begins His last presentation to Israel. He heals the blind under the name of the Son of David—heals them who under that name called on Him for mercy, in persevering faith, in spite of the multitude. He had compassion on them. Luke adds here mercy to the chief publican, and the Jewish correction of the idea of the kingdom, announcing His departure, the responsibility of His servants, and the judgment upon His citizens, who, when He was gone, sent after Him, to say they would not have Him to reign over them.

The riding into Jerusalem on the ass's colt, follows, then, alike in all the three Gospels—His presentation to Zion as king, according to Zechariah. Some details are given in Mark; His survey of the temple, and going out again, and returning the next day, when He cleanses it. The general fact is merely stated in Matthew: that is, the result of His royal visitation as Jehovah the king, without holding to the order, for the fig-tree was cursed before He cleansed the temple. In Luke He weeps over the city; that evangelist again, as he is wont, presenting the Lord's moral grace and tenderness, the kindness of Jehovah. The cursing of the fig-tree is not in Luke. This is dispensational, the judgment of fruitless Judaism, as under the old covenant, adding with it the power that would accompany faith in God, in the new thing to be set up. The whole, apparently stable, power of that system would disappear. And so it has. What follows is common to the three Gospels: but there are characteristic traits. The question of authority in the priest is met by their avowed incompetency as to John. The parable of the two sons is peculiar to Matthew. It is the Lord's judgment as

to the fruit of His work among the Jews, His judgment of these last.

The parable of the husbandman, and the revelation of the rejected stone, are next in all three Gospels: the various classes of persons in Israel come up for judgment. But this parable is general: referring to aft that were active in the vineyard the Lord had planted. This was taken from the Jews. Broken now by stumbling on the stone, they would be ground to powder when He should fall on them, that is, all on whom it should; for, indeed, they will not then be alone, as they were in the stumbling on the stone. But responsibility to bear fruit was not all. They had rejected gracious invitations to the marriage of the king's son. This is not in Mark. In Luke 14 there is a similar parable. I am not quite clear whether it is the same. It is, if so, introduced in Luke in its place, and its absence from Mark here accounted for. It is not introduced in Matthew, with any connection of time or circumstance, as having been spoken at this time. Its place, as to the judgment of the Jews, is evident. They are judged in it for the rejection of grace, as they are in the parable of the husbandman for failure in producing fruit.

Some circumstances are added in Matthew, and which are important as to the judicial dealings of God, which are wholly omitted in Luke: while the moral tone and pursuit of grace, in spite of evil, is more largely delineated in Luke. The contrast of the dealings of God with Jews and Gentiles, with which last the house is filled, and the judgment, both of Jews and professing Christendom, is what characterises Matthew. The difference of the two parables in Luke and Matthew will make us sensible of the characteristic difference of what

is given of God in the two Gospels. I will enter, therefore, into the details of each, sufficiently to shew it. In Matthew it is a similitude of the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew, we have two messages; those, I doubt not, of the apostles in the lifetime of Christ, and of the same after His death, when all was accomplished and ready. It is, in a general way, made light of. By others, the servants are ill-treated and slain. Thereupon the murderers (the Jews) are slain, and their city destroyed. This is the judgment on the Jews and Jerusalem. Then the message is sent out to the highways (the Gentiles), and the wedding furnished. There a person is found (many are called, but few chosen) not having personally what belonged to and suited the wedding, and he is cast out into outer darkness. This is, evidently, more than an earthly dispensational judgment. In Luke, a certain man makes a great supper: it is not for the king's son, nor the kingdom of heaven. The two first summons of Matthew come together, in general, or are absorbed in one; the moral details of excuse are given, and there is no slaying and ill-treating of servants. There the poor of the city (that is, among the Jews) are sought out; but this does not fill the house, and the highways and hedges are sent to (the Gentiles), and the house filled. There is no judgment of the Jews, nor of the unworthy guests. The moral character in grace of the parable in Luke, is evident; the dispensational dealing in Matthew, equally so. Only the Jewish rejecters do not taste of the supper. We can well suppose it to be a different parable, though the Holy Ghost gives us but a very small part of what was done and said, and even of one and the same discourse only what instructs on the point in hand.

Next, the Pharisees and Herodians are judged, the opposed classes among the Jews, of strict and temporising Jews. Christ puts the Jewish position (and, indeed, of everyone) on the true ground; I mean as to their real relationship to the Gentile power or empires. Next, the Sadducees are judged, and the true nature of the resurrection shewn, and from Moses himself; only Luke, in addition, gives here a clear statement of the connection of the resurrection with the age to come; and, at the same time, affirms the abiding intermediate state of the soul. Next, the essence of the law is taught. The same instruction is found in the general teaching in Luke, not in the parallel place to this, and the parable of the good Samaritan is annexed. But this, I apprehend, was another statement to the same effect, as may easily be conceived. The true substance of the law being stated, the position the Christ was to take, unintelligible for the Pharisee, and consequent on His rejection, is then brought out, and silences the pretended wisdom of the Jewish teachers. The Lord's instruction is drawn from Psalm no. It is easy to see how this closes, with the most perfect fitness, these remarkable interviews.

But, in Matthew's Gospel, which certainly goes over to the future hopes of Israel, while judging its present state, as we have seen (chap. 10), we have, with the general instruction to beware of scribes, a remarkable passage, recognising their official status and authority. They sit in Moses' seat, Yet the actual practical judgment is more full and terrible; and to this is added, that, as they excused themselves from the guilt of the prophet's death, such would be sent (apostles, prophets, etc.) to them, and they would be put to the test on this point also, that, the wickedness being come to its height,

the blood of all righteous men, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias the prophet, might be demanded of this generation. This is peculiar to Matthew, and shews that a ministry was sent to the Jewish nation, as such, in the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, ending in the judgment of the nation. The connection of this with God's dealings with the Jews, as taught in this Gospel, is evident, and important for understanding other passages and dealings of God. In Mark this warning as to the scribes is very generally and briefly given.

The plaint over Jerusalem is not found in Mark. It is in Luke: but when Christ was in Galilee, and warned by the Pharisees, because of Herod. Its appositeness to Matthew's subject here is evident. It is, word for word, the same as in Luke, save that Luke says, "till [the time] come that," instead of "till": and Matthew adds "henceforth" after "ye shall not see me." I cannot doubt it is the same saying. I apprehend that it is introduced in Matthew in connection with the subject treated of, rather than in historical order of time. It is introduced without any verbal connection with the history whatever. However, I do not speak with any positiveness. It is in Luke, in the general, and, as to order of time, unhistorical part of the Gospel.

Mark and Luke relate here an incident omitted by Matthew— the widow's mite. It naturally belonged to Luke's Gospel to introduce it in its place, which is the same it has in Mark. It did not enter into the special teaching of Matthew here, as to the destruction and judgment of Jerusalem, and the dealings of God with the Jewish nation, as such.

In the two following chapters of Matthew (24, 25), we have a complete view of the state of things consequent on the Lord's absence, and His judgment on His return, including general directions and warnings for the conduct of disciples during this period. In Matthew it is much more complete dispensationally than in Mark and Luke. The four parables added in Matthew instruct us in what relates to Christians, and to the Gentiles on the Lord's return to earth; so that the whole scene is opened to us. Luke and Mark contain only the warnings to the disciples, viewed in connection with the Jews. In this part, also, there is a difference.

Mark, in the main, resembles Matthew; but there is a less exact division into what is general, and what refers to the final state of Jerusalem. Much—though that final state is spoken of—might be applied generally; and it is much more personally addressed for service. Hence there is found there (what Matthew omits) a direction as to what they are to trust to, when called up before governors, adding details as to evil and treachery, which, in Matthew, are found in the directions given, as we have seen, for the whole course of the disciples' ministry among the Jews, from beginning to end, in chapter 10. Compare Mark 13:11, seq., and Matthew 10:19, seq. Hence the question also is different in Matthew. There is added to the inquiry, when the destruction of the temple should be, "What is the sign of thy coming, and the end of the age?" Hence the direct application of the answer in Mark and Luke, is to the present service of the disciples: though, in both, it goes on to the end. In Mark, similarly to Matthew; and in Luke distinguishing very clearly the destruction by Titus and the subsequent events. There is more than one

difference in Mark; verse 10 of chapter 13 does not end as Matthew 24:14: “then shall the end come.” (The question went only to the destruction of Jerusalem.) Compare Mark 16:15, 20. Then the passage of Matthew 10 comes in. The abomination of desolation stands merely where it ought not. There is the absence of precision in the epoch of the signs; “in those days after that tribulation.” These circumstances shew, that though the close is certainly given, it is not the object. The Lord’s exhortation closes with “What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.”

The present testimony is spoken of in Luke 21. There is no abomination of desolation; the days of vengeance come, no unequalled tribulation. Jerusalem is trodden down and led captive, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. There is no question of an end coming. Verse 25, unconnected in period with what precedes, introduces the coming of the Son of man. The nearness then of the kingdom, and the exhortation to watch, closes the passage.

In our Gospel, Matthew 24, we have the general testimony of disciples among the Jews, with the fact of the gospel of the kingdom, which Christ had preached, going to all nations, bringing in the close. The bringing before kings and rulers, etc., belongs to chapter 10. Then the special last half-week of Daniel is entered into in detail, the great tribulation with false Christs, etc., closing with the immediate coming of the Son of man. The elect of Israel are gathered from all lands. To verse 44 practical warnings are given. In verses 45-51 we have the service of the disciples, in their own responsible relationship within to the household (and, hence, practically Christendom), brought out. The result

is, “the servant is made ruler of all,” on the one hand; or hierarchical connection with the spirit of the world ends in his judgment as a hypocrite, on the other. The parable of the virgins (chap. 25) gives the original calling of Christians, and their return to it: the talents, the liberty of divinely given ministry. The words “in which the Son of man cometh,” are omitted in all the best texts. Verse 31 of chapter 25 continues from verse 31 of chapter 24, and gives the judgment of the nations who have heard the gospel of the kingdom. Thus, the whole scene, from the service of the disciples, consequent on Christ’s death—that is, the testimony among the Jews, the responsibility of the disciples when things took the Christian form; the last testimony amongst, and judgment of the nations, with the special week of tribulation, and coming of the Son of man— are all clearly brought out.

The Lord’s preparing for death then comes on. It was two days before the passover. Luke is much more brief here. He leaves out the anointing by Mary; and the general fact of the priests consulting Judas going and accepting money, Satan’s influence over him, and his seeking to betray the Lord, are briefly stated all together, as an introduction to the whole scene. The local scene is much less given. All the moral character, and incidents, and heavenly result, are much more fully stated; as the thief on the cross, with the intermediate state, and other circumstances. It is usual with Luke to give the historical facts briefly and synoptically, and enlarge on special moral details. Mark and Matthew go together in order and contents. The statement of Jesus, that He could have twelve legions of angels, and Judas going and hanging himself; Pilate’s wife’s message: his

washing his hands, are all omitted by Mark; as are also the opening of the graves, and the resurrection of the saints. Otherwise, the accounts are uniform. We find in both the council of priests, the woman's anointing Christ, Judas' going to the chief priests, the meeting to eat the Passover (His conversation at table), the Lord's supper (only remission of sins is not in Mark), the going to the mount of Olives, the warning to Peter, Christ's prayer in Gethsemane, His appearing before Caiaphas, Peter's denial, Christ's appearing before Pilate, His mocking by soldiers, His crucifixion and death, with its effects on the centurion and His burial. Matthew adds, at the close, the account of sealing the stone, and setting a watch at the sepulchre.

In Luke we have many moral circumstances added, giving a different character to several points. As regards the passover, He speaks of its fulfilling in the kingdom of God, giving a present character to the effect, instead of leading onward to the world to come. Matthew and Mark had not this at all. So of the fruit of the vine. In Luke the Lord does not speak of drinking it new in the kingdom, but says, previously, He will not drink of it till the kingdom of God be come. The desire to partake of it with them, and the Nazarite character in connection with this (v. 16-18) are added, and besides the institution itself, the inquiry who should betray Him is just stated and no more; but the strife, who should be the greatest, is found here only, giving a peculiar insight into their state, and the moral position of Jesus and its consequences. The sifting of the disciples by Satan, and its connection with Simon's fall, is found also in Luke only; the change in their position as to the apparent care He would take of them also; His human dependence, and

the extreme character of His sufferings in Gethsemane, that is, the angel's strengthening Him and His agony and sweat as drops of blood, are carefully presented to us, while the circumstances are very briefly given, and are all much more fully in Matthew.

The circumstances of His answer to the chief priests are quite summarily related in Luke 22:66-71. The coming in the clouds of heaven, the future kingdom, is also omitted. It is the present position of Christ only which is noticed. Note—Both in Matthew and Luke, instead of "Hereafter" must be read, "Henceforth shall the Son of man sit," or "ye shall see the Son of man sitting," that is, He was taking now this new position. The answer before Pilate is related briefly in Luke, like the betrayal and His appealing before Caiaphas; and in its general effect; but the sending before Herod is found in his Gospel only. Royal apostate Judaism comes into the scene. The daughters of Jerusalem, and the Lord's answer to them, are found here only also. The intercession of Christ on the cross for the Jews, answered in Peter's sermon, the beautiful incident of the thief also are found, both of them in Luke only, as well as Jesus commending His spirit to His Father, that is, His confidence in His Father as a man. The centurion owns Him to be a righteous man. These are the chief peculiarities, and, as many have been seen, not unimportant ones, of Luke.

We now arrive at the circumstances attending the resurrection, which are different in each Gospel, and evidently enough connected with the object of each. For instance, the ascension is left out in Matthew, and Christ is associated with His disciples in Galilee, the place of His visiting the remnant, the connection with which is maintained all through Matthew, as in chapters 10 and

24. The first verse of chapter 28, I apprehend, was Saturday evening when Sabbath was past; the second relates to an event not in immediate connection with their visit when they came in the morning. The stone was already rolled away. Indeed Mary Magdalene seems to have been there before the others, while it was yet dark, and the stone was already gone. Matthew puts with the women's visit, in a general way, yet in a distinct paragraph, the effect of the circumstances attending the rolling away the stone: how the keepers trembled at the visiting of the tomb by the angel to roll it away; whereas, when the women came, the angel answered and said, "Fear not ye." They are told to go and tell the disciples He would go into Galilee, and they would see Him there. Jesus meets them as they return, and tells them the same thing. We are then shewn the final and wilful obstinacy of the nation in rejecting the testimony of their own instruments, which they knew and believed to be true. Christ joins the disciples in Galilee. There, in virtue of all power being given Him in heaven and earth, they receive their commission to go and make disciples of all the nations: the mission is now extended to the Nations, not confined to Israel; they were to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the great dispensational christian revelation, to teach them to observe what Christ had commanded, and He would be with them to the end of the age. This mission rested on the fact of all power being Christ's in heaven and on earth, and extended the previous missions of the remnant, instituting one which embraced the nations at large. These were to be made disciples of. The account is very general and brief, only adding how the stone was rolled away to the other accounts; the whole else is the meeting in Galilee and consequent mission. This is the

more remarkable, as Matthew must have been present at what John relates of Jesus appearing in their midst at Jerusalem.

Mark leads us at once to the morning of the first day, at the rising of the sun: and we have the details, as to the women, of what Matthew only gave the general result of. The same message is given: but it is not followed up farther. The meeting with Mary Magdalene, of which we have the details in John, is stated, and that of the two disciples going to Emmaus, of which Luke gives the details; also the general fact of His appearing to the twelve together at meat, of which we have details in Luke and John. We have then, His resurrection having been recounted, the universal mission and continuation of service in the power of Christ Himself, the consequence of faith and public acknowledgement of Christ on one side, and of the refusal of the gospel on the other. The fact of His ascension and session at the right hand of God; their going forth to preach everywhere, according to the mission and of the power which accompanied their service according to promise, are then recorded. This, while connecting the accounts of all the Gospels, as to the proofs of His resurrection, has the character of service and testimony, which we have seen belong to Mark.

The commencement of the account in Luke is pretty much the same as in Mark and Matthew: the women go to the sepulchre, and are told by the angels that He is risen; but no details are given, only it is said in general that the women told the apostles and the rest, and that Peter ran to the sepulchre. But we have large and interesting details as to the two who go to Emmaus: there is nothing as to going into Galilee. But two very

important points are brought out, not in the other Gospels. He opens their understandings to understand the scriptures, and they are to wait at Jerusalem until they are endued with power from on high; the two essential and necessary means of christian service, as it has always to go on. The apparition to Simon, mentioned by Paul, 1 Corinthians 15, is also mentioned, and, briefly, the Lord's coming into their midst when assembled. The corporeal reality, though it was now a spiritual body of His human nature, is very prominently brought out: He was still a living man with flesh and bones. He explains the Old Testament as to Himself, both on the way to Emmaus and here. His death and resurrection are shewn as in the mind of God, and repentance and remission of sins were to be preached to all the nations, beginning, according to the dispensation of God, and in grace, with the "Jew first." All connection with Galilee is omitted. He begins afresh with Jerusalem as from heaven, and so with all nations.

It is the gospel as we know it has been preached, and (leaving out the church) as Paul preached it; and the Acts present it to us. The account goes on as if Christ went out that same first day to Bethany, and that He then ascended thence—so entirely is Galilee left out. Yet Luke is he who in the Acts lets us know Christ rested forty days before He ascended; but he gives, by divine wisdom, like the others, what the truth was he was given to teach. Christ leaves them for heaven, blessing as He leaves. As to the first effect, while full of joy, they are daily in the temple. There Christianity had its cradle and its birthplace. The character of the close of the Gospel is evident. Bethany was the place Christ frequented the last week before He suffered: the home

of His beloved ones in grace, where He was anointed for death—where He shewed Himself Son of God in resurrection. This He transfers to heaven, and blesses as He goes up. They associate all with the temple. This was more than tarrying at Jerusalem, or beginning with it. What a true picture of it all! How much more we learn here of the great truths of Christianity connected with His resurrection than in Matthew or Mark. It is not simply the fact, nor continuing the scene or connection in which He had been, or merely extending it. John has as we know, while full in this part of the Lord's history, quite another character. Surely this comparison of the Gospels, and of the details as their contents, throws much light on the purpose of the Gospels, and of each of them distinctively, and abundantly confirms the divine inspiration of all, because the mind of God shines all through their structure.

[End Of Expository—Volume 3.]

50 Remark, that the Gospel of Matthew begins with this genealogy; for, coming in the way of promise, the connection of Christ with the stock of promise was the foundation-stone of His position. In Luke, the genealogy is not till chapter 4 and goes up to Adam. The connection is with man. What precedes, is a very full and most interesting statement of every element of the actual condition of Israel. Then begins the Son of man's history—grace.

51 It is a common practice with Luke, to give events briefly and synoptically, and then expatiate on the details of some one point which brings out moral principles and feelings.