

CHAPTER 11

In this chapter we have the history of that illustrious miracle which Christ wrought a little before his death — the raising of Lazarus to life, which is recorded only by this evangelist; for the other three confine themselves to what Christ did in Galilee, where he resided most, and scarcely ever carried their history into Jerusalem till the passion-week: whereas John's memoirs relate chiefly to what passed at Jerusalem; this passage therefore was reserved for his pen. Some suggest that, when the other evangelists wrote, Lazarus was alive, and it would not well agree either with his safety or with his humility to have it recorded till now, when it is supposed he was dead. It is more largely recorded than any other of Christ's miracles, not only because there are many circumstances of it so very instructive and the miracle of itself so great a proof of Christ's mission, but because it was an earnest of that which was to be the crowning proof of all — Christ's own resurrection. Here is,

- I.** The tidings sent to our Lord Jesus of the sickness of Lazarus, and his entertainment of those tidings (v. 1-16).
- II.** The visit he made to Lazarus's relations when he had heard of his death, and their entertainment of the visit (v. 17-32).
- III.** The miracle wrought in the raising of Lazarus from the dead (v. 33-44).
- IV.** The effect wrought by this miracle upon others (v. 45-57).

JOHN 11:1-16

THE DEATH OF LAZARUS

We have in these verses,

- I.** A particular account of the parties principally concerned in this story, v. 1, 2.
- 1.** They lived at *Bethany*, a village nor far from Jerusalem, where Christ usually lodged when he came up to the feasts. It is here called the *town of*

Mary and Martha, that is, the town where they dwelt, as Bethsaida is called the *city of Andrew and Peter*, ^{<414>}John 1:44. For I see no reason to think, as some do, that Martha and Mary were owners of the town, and the rest were *their* tenants.

2. Here was a brother named *Lazarus*; his *Hebrew* name probably was *Eleazar*, which being contracted, and a Greek termination put to it, is made *Lazarus*. Perhaps in prospect of this history our Saviour made use of the name of *Lazarus* in that parable wherein he designed to set forth the blessedness of the righteous in the bosom of Abraham immediately after death, ^{<462>}Luke 16:22.

3. Here were two sisters, *Martha* and *Mary*, who seem to have been the housekeepers, and to have managed the affairs of the family, while perhaps Lazarus lived a retired life, and gave himself to study and contemplation. Here was a decent, happy, well-ordered family, and a family that Christ was very much conversant with, where yet there was neither husband nor wife (for aught that appears), but the house kept by a brother, and his sisters dwelling together in unity.

4. One of the sisters is particularly described to be *that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment*, v. 2. Some think she was that woman that we read of, ^{<413>}Luke 7:37, 38, who had been a *sinner*, a bad woman. I rather think it refers to that anointing of Christ which this evangelist relates (^{<413>}John 12:3); for the evangelists do never refer one to another, but John frequently refers in one place of his gospel to another. Extraordinary acts of piety and devotion, that come from an honest principle of love to Christ, will not only find acceptance with him, but gain reputation in the church, ^{<413>}Matthew 26:13. This was she *whose brother Lazarus was sick*; and the sickness of those we love is our affliction. The more friends we have the more frequently we are thus afflicted by sympathy; and the dearer they are the more grievous it is. The multiplying of our comforts is but the multiplying of our cares and crosses.

II. The tidings that were sent to our Lord Jesus of the sickness of Lazarus, v. 3. *His sisters* knew where Jesus was, a great way off beyond Jordan, and they sent a special messenger to him, to acquaint him with the affliction of their family, in which they manifest,

1. The affection and concern they had for their brother. Though, it is likely, his estate would come to them after his death, yet they earnestly

desired his life, as they ought to do. They showed their love to him now that he was sick, for a *brother is born for adversity*, and so is a sister too. We must weep with our friends when they weep, as well as rejoice with them when they rejoice.

2. The regard they had to the Lord Jesus, whom they were willing to make acquainted with all their concerns, and, like Jephthah, to utter all their words before him. Though God knows all our wants, and griefs, and cares, he will know them from us, and is honoured by our laying them before him. The message they sent was very short, not *petitioning*, much less *prescribing* or *pressing*, but barely relating the case with the tender insinuation of a powerful plea, *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick*. They do not say, He whom *we* love, but *he whom thou lovest*. Our greatest encouragements in prayer are fetched from God himself and from his grace. They do not say, Lord, behold, he *who loveth thee*, but *he whom thou lovest*; for *herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us*. Our love to him is not worth speaking of, but his to us can never be enough spoken of. Note,

(1.) There are some of the friends and followers of the Lord Jesus for whom he has a special kindness above others. Among the twelve there was one whom Jesus loved.

(2.) It is no new thing for those whom Christ loves to be sick: all things come alike to all. Bodily distempers correct the corruption, and try the graces, of God's people.

(3.) It is a great comfort to us, when we are sick, to have those about us that will pray for us.

(4.) We have great encouragement in our prayers for those who are sick, if we have ground to hope that they are such as Christ loves; and we have reason to love and pray for those whom we have reason to think Christ loves and cares for.

III. An account how Christ entertained the tidings brought him of the illness of his friend.

1. He prognosticated the event and issue of the sickness, and probably sent it as a message to the sisters of Lazarus by the express, to support them while he delayed to come to them. Two things he prognosticates: —

(1.) *This sickness is not unto death.* It was mortal, proved *fatal*, and no doubt but Lazarus was truly dead for four days. But,

[1.] That was not the errand upon which this sickness was sent; it came not, as in a common case, to be a summons to the grave, but there was a further intention in it. Had it been sent on that errand, his *rising from the dead would have defeated it.*

[2.] That was not the final effect of this sickness. He *died*, and yet it might be said he did not *die*, for *factum non dicitur quod non perseverat* — *That is not said to be done which is not done for a perpetuity.* Death is an everlasting farewell to this world; it is the way whence we shall not return; and in this sense it was *not unto death.* The grave was his *long home*, his *house of eternity.* Thus Christ said of the maid whom he proposed to restore to life, *She is not dead.* The sickness of good people, how threatening soever, is *nor unto death*, for it is not unto *eternal* death. The body's death to this world is the soul's birth into another world; when we or our friends are sick, we make it our principal support that there is hope of a recovery, but in that we may be disappointed; therefore it is our wisdom to build upon that in which we cannot be disappointed; if they belong to Christ, let the worst come to the worst, they cannot be *hurt of the second death*, and then not much hurt of the first.

(2.) *But it is for the glory of God*, that an opportunity may be given for the manifesting of God's glorious power. The afflictions of the saints are designed for the glory of God, that he may have opportunity of showing them favour; for the sweetest mercies, and the most effecting, are those which are occasioned by trouble. Let this reconcile us to the darkest dispensations of Providence, they are all for the glory of God, this sickness, this loss, or this disappointment, is so; and, if God be glorified, we ought to be satisfied, ^{<100>}Leviticus 10:3. It was for the glory of God, for it was *that the Son of God might be glorified thereby*, as it gave him occasion to work that glorious miracle, the *raising of him from the dead.* As, before, the man was *born blind* that Christ might have the honour of curing him (^{<100>}John 9:3), so Lazarus must be sick and die, that Christ may be glorified as the Lord of life. Let this comfort those whom Christ loves under all their grievances that the design of them all is that *the Son of God may be glorified thereby*, his wisdom, power, and goodness, glorified in supporting and relieving them; see ^{<110>}2 Corinthians 12:9, 10.

2. He deferred visiting his patient, v. 5, 6. They had pleaded, *Lord, it is he whom thou lovest*, and the plea is allowed (v. 5): *Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus*. Thus the claims of faith are ratified in the court of heaven. Now one would think it should follow, *When he heard therefore that he was sick* he made all the haste that he could to him; if he loved them, now was a time to show it by hastening to them, for he knew they impatiently expected him. But he took the contrary way to show his love: it is not said, He loved them and *yet* he lingered; but he loved them and *therefore* he lingered; when he heard that his friend was sick, instead of coming post to him, he abode *two days still in the same place where he was*.

(1.) He *loved them*, that is, had a great opinion of Martha and Mary, of their wisdom and grace, of their faith and patience, above others of his disciples, and therefore he deferred coming to them, that he might try them, that their trial might at last *be found to praise and honour*.

(2.) He *loved them*, that is, he designed to do something great and extraordinary for them, to work such a miracle for their relief as he had not wrought for any of his friends; and therefore he delayed coming to them, that Lazarus might be *dead and buried* before he came. If Christ had come presently, and cured the sickness of Lazarus, he had done no more than he did for *many*; if he had raised him to life when newly dead, no more than he had done for *some*: but, deferring his relief so long, he had an opportunity of doing more for him than for *any*. Note, God hath gracious intentions even in seeming delays, ²⁵⁰Isaiah 54:7, 8; 49:14, etc. Christ's friends at Bethany were not out of his thoughts, though, when he heard of their distress, he made no haste to them. When the work of deliverance, temporal or spiritual, public or personal, stands at a stay, it does but stay the time, and *every thing is beautiful in its season*.

IV. The discourse he had with his disciples when he was about to visit his friends at Bethany, v. 7-16. The conference is so very free and familiar as to make out what Christ saith, *I have called you friends*. Two things he discourses about — his own *danger* and Lazarus's *death*.

1. His own danger in going into Judea, v. 7-10.

(1.) Here is the notice which Christ gave his disciples of his purpose to go into Judea towards Jerusalem. His disciples were the men of his counsel, and to them he saith (v. 7), "*Let us go into Judea again*, though those of

Judea are unworthy of such a favour.” Thus Christ repeats the tenders of his mercy to those who have often rejected them. Now this may be considered,

[1.] As a purpose of his kindness to his friends at Bethany, whose affliction, and all the aggravating circumstances of it, he knew very well, though no more expresses were sent to him; for he was present in spirit, though absent in body. When he knew they were brought to the last extremity, when the brother and sisters had given and taken a final farewell, “Now,” saith he, “let us go to Judea.” Christ will arise in favour of his people when *the time to favour them, yea, the set time, is come*; and the worst time is commonly the set time — when *our hope is lost, and we are cut off for our parts*; then they shall know that *I am the Lord* when *I have opened the graves*, ^{37:11}Ezekiel 37:11, 13. In the depths of affliction, let this therefore keep us out of the depths of despair, that man's extremity is God's opportunity, *Jehovah-jireh*. Or,

[2.] As a trial of the courage of the disciples, whether they would venture to follow him thither, where they had so lately been frightened by an attempt upon their Master's life, which they looked upon as an attempt upon theirs too. To go to Judea, which was so lately made *too hot* for them, was a saying that *proved them*. But Christ did not say, “*Go you into Judea, and I will stay and take shelter here*,” no, *Let us go*. Note, Christ never brings his people into any peril but he accompanies them in it, and is with them even when they *walk through the valley of the shadow of death*.

(2.) Their objection against this journey (v. 8): *Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?* Here,

[1.] They remind him of the danger he had been in there not long since. Christ's disciples are apt to make a greater matter of sufferings than their Master does, and to remember injuries longer. He had put up with the affront, it was over and gone, and forgotten, but his disciples could not forget it; *of late, nyn — now*, as if it were this very day, they *sought to stone thee*. Though it was at least two months ago, the remembrance of the fright was fresh in their minds.

[2.] They marvel that he will *go thither again*. “Wilt thou favour those with thy presence that have expelled thee out of their coasts?” Christ's ways in passing by offences are *above our ways*. “Wilt thou expose thyself among a people that are so desperately enraged against thee? *Goest thou*

thither again, where thou hast been so ill used?" Here they showed great care for their Master's safety, as Peter did, when he said, *Master, spare thyself*; had Christ been inclined to shift off suffering, he did not want friends to persuade him to it, but he had *opened his mouth to the Lord*, and he would not, he could not, go back. Yet, while the disciples show a concern for his safety, they discover at the same time, *First*, A distrust of his power; as if he could not secure both himself and them now in Judea as well as he had done formerly. Is his arm shortened? When we are solicitous for the interests of Christ's church and kingdom in the world, we must yet rest satisfied in the wisdom and power of the Lord Jesus, who knows how to secure a flock of sheep in the midst of a herd of wolves. *Secondly*, A secret fear of suffering themselves; for they count upon this if he suffer. When our own private interests happen to run in the same channel with those of the public, we are apt to think ourselves zealous for the Lord of hosts, when really we are only zealous for our own wealth, credit, ease, and safety, and *seek our own things*, under colour of seeking the things of Christ; we have therefore need to distinguish upon our principles.

(3.) Christ's answer to this objection (v. 9, 10): *Are there not twelve hours in the day?* The Jews divided every day into twelve hours, and made their hours longer or shorter according as the days were, so that an hour with them was the twelfth part of the time between sun and sun; so some. Or, lying much more south than we, their days were nearer twelve hours long than ours. The divine Providence has given us day-light to work by, and lengthens it out to a competent time; and, reckoning the year round, *every country* has just as much *daylight as night*, and so much more as the *twilights* amount to. Man's life is a *day*; this day is divided into divers ages, states, and opportunities, as into hours shorter or longer, as God has appointed; the consideration of this should make us not only *very busy*, as to the *work* of life (if there were *twelve hours in the day*, each of them ought to be filled up with duty, and none of *them* trifled away), but also *very easy* as to the perils of life; our day shall be lengthened out till our work be done, and our testimony finished. This Christ applies to his case, and shows why he must go to Judea, because he had a *clear call to go*. For the opening of this,

[1.] He shows the comfort and satisfaction which a man has in his own mind while he keeps in the way of his duty, as it is in general prescribed by the word of God, and particularly determined by the providence of

God: *If any man walk in the day, he stumbles not*; that is, If a man keep close to his duty, and mind that, and set the will of God before him as his rule, with an impartial respect to all God's commandments, he does not *hesitate* in his own mind, but, *walking uprightly, walks surely*, and with a holy confidence. As he that walks in the day stumbles not, but goes on steadily and cheerfully in his way, *because he sees the light of this world*, and by it sees his way before him; so a good man, without any collateral security or sinister aims, relies upon the word of God as his rule, and regards the glory of God as his end, *because he sees* those two great lights, and keeps his eye upon them; thus he is furnished with a faithful guide in all his doubts, and a powerful guard in all his dangers, ^{<400>}Galatians 6:4; ^{<400>}Psalm 119:6. Christ, wherever he went, walked *in the day*, and so shall we, if we follow his steps.

[2.] He shows the pain and peril a man is in who walks not according to this rule (v. 10): *If a man walk in the night, he stumbles*; that is, If a man walk in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, and according to the course of this world, — if he consult his own carnal reasonings more than the will and glory of God, — he falls into temptations and snares, is liable to great uneasiness and frightful apprehensions, trembles at the *shaking of a leaf*, and *flees* when none *pursues*; while an upright man *laughs at the shaking of the spear*, and stands undaunted when ten thousand invade. See ^{<400>}Isaiah 33:14-16, he stumbles, *because there is no light in him*, for light in us is that to our moral actions which light about us is to our natural actions. He has not a good principle within; he is not sincere; his eye is evil. Thus Christ not only justifies his purpose of going into Judea, but encourages his disciples to go along with him, and fear no evil.

2. The death of Lazarus is here discoursed of between Christ and his disciples, v. 11-16, where we have,

(1.) The notice Christ gave his disciples of death of Lazarus, and an intimation that his business into Judea was to look after him, v. 11. After he had prepared his disciples for this dangerous march into an enemy's country, he then gives them,

[1.] Plain intelligence of the death of Lazarus, though he had received no advice of it: *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth*. See here how Christ calls a believer and a believer's death.

First, He calls a believer his friend: *Our friend Lazarus*. Note,

1. There is a covenant of friendship between Christ and believers, and a friendly affection and communion pursuant to it, which our Lord Jesus will own and not be ashamed of. *His secret is with the righteous.*
2. Those whom Christ is pleased to own as his friends all his disciples should take for *theirs*. Christ speaks of Lazarus as their common friend: *Our friend.*
3. Death itself does not break the bond of friendship between Christ and a believer. Lazarus is dead, and yet he is still *our friend*.

Secondly, He calls the death of a believer a *sleep*: *he sleepeth*. It is good to call death by such names and titles as will help to make it more *familiar* and less *formidable* to us. The death of Lazarus was in a peculiar sense a sleep, as that of Jairus's daughter, because he was to be raised again speedily; and, since we are sure to *rise again at last*, why should that make any great difference? And why should not the believing hope of that resurrection to eternal life make it as easy to us to put off the body and die as it is to put off our clothes and go to sleep? A good Christian, when he dies, does but sleep: he rests from the labours of the day past, and is refreshing himself for the next morning. Nay, herein death has the advantage of sleep, that sleep is only the *parenthesis*, but death is the *period*, of our cares and toils. The soul does not sleep, but becomes more active; but the body sleeps without any toss, without any terror; not distempered nor disturbed. The grave to the wicked is a prison, and its grave-clothes as the shackles of a criminal reserved for execution; but to the godly it is a bed, and all its bands as the soft and downy fetters of an easy quiet sleep. Though the body *corrupt*, it will rise in the morning as if it had never seen corruption; it is but putting off our clothes to be mended and trimmed up for the marriage day, the coronation day, to which we must rise. See ^{<250>}Isaiah 57:2; ^{<344>}1 Thessalonians 4:14. The Greeks called their burying-places *dormitories* — *koimeteria*.

[2.] Particular intimations of his favourable intentions concerning Lazarus: *but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep*. He could have done it, and yet have staid where he was: he that restored at a distance one that was *dying* (^{<408>}John 4:50) could have raised at a distance one that was *dead*; but he would put this honour upon the miracle, to work it by the grave side: *I go, to awake him*. As sleep is a resemblance of death, so a man's awaking out of sleep when he is called, especially when he is called by his own name, is an emblem of the resurrection (^{<1845>}Job 14:15): *Then shalt thou call*.

Christ had no sooner said, *Our friend sleeps*, but presently he adds, *I go, that I may awake him*. When Christ tells his people at any time how bad the case is he lets them know in the same breath how easily, how quickly, he can mend it. Christ's telling his disciples that this was his business to Judea might help to take off their fear of going with him thither; he did not go upon a public errand to the temple, but a private visit, which would not so much expose him and them; and, besides, it was to do a kindness to a family to which they were all obliged.

(2.) Their mistake of the meaning of this notice, and the blunder they made about it (v. 12, 13): They said, *Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well*. This intimates,

[1.] *Some concern* they had for their friend Lazarus; they hoped he would recover; *sothesetai* — *he shall be saved* from dying at this time. Probably they had understood, by the messenger who brought news of his illness, that one of the most threatening symptoms he was under was that he was restless, and could get no sleep; and now that they heard he slept they concluded the fever was going off, and the worst was past. Sleep is often nature's physic, and reviving to its weak and weary powers. This is true of the sleep of death; if a good Christian so *sleep*, he shall do well, better than he did here.

[2.] A *greater concern* for themselves; for hereby they insinuate that it was now needless for Christ to go to him, and expose himself and them. "If he sleep, he will be quickly well, and we may stay where we are." Thus we are willing to hope that the good work which we are called to do will do itself, or will be done by some other hand, if there be peril in the doing of it.

(3.) This mistake of theirs rectified (v. 13): *Jesus spoke of his death*. See here,

[1.] How dull of understanding Christ's disciples as yet were. Let us not therefore condemn all those as heretics who mistake the sense of some of Christ's sayings. It is not good to aggravate our brethren's mistakes; yet this was a *gross* one, for it had easily been prevented if they had remembered how frequently death is called a sleep in the Old Testament. They should have understood Christ when he spoke scripture language. Besides, it would sound oddly for their Master to undertake a journey of two or three days only to awake a friend out of a natural sleep, which any

one else might do. What Christ undertakes to do, we may be sure, is something great and uncommon, and a work *worthy of himself*.

[2.] How carefully the evangelist corrects this error: *Jesus spoke of his death*. Those that speak in an unknown tongue, or use similitudes, should learn hence to *explain themselves*, and pray that they may interpret, to prevent mistakes.

(4.) The plain and express declaration which Jesus made to them of the death of Lazarus, and his resolution to go to Bethany, v. 14, 15.

[1.] He gives them notice of the death of Lazarus; what he had before said darkly he now says plainly, and without a figure: *Lazarus is dead*, v. 14. Christ takes cognizance of the death of his saints, for it is precious in his sight (⁴⁸⁵Psalm 116:15), and he is not pleased if we do not consider it, and lay it to heart. See what a compassionate teacher Christ is, and how he condescends to those that are out of the way, and by his subsequent sayings and doings explains the difficulties of what went before.

[2.] He gives them the reason why he had delayed so long to go and see him: *I am glad for your sakes that I was not there*. If he had been there time enough, he would have healed his disease and prevented his death, which would have been much for the comfort of Lazarus's friends, but then his disciples would have seen no further proof of his power than what they had often seen, and, consequently, their faith had received no improvement; but now that he went and raised him from the dead, as there were many brought to *believe on him* who before did no (v. 45), so there was much done towards the perfecting of what was lacking in the faith of those that did, which Christ aimed at: *To the intent that you may believe*.

[3.] He resolves now to go to Bethany, and take his disciples along with him: *Let us go unto him*. Not, "Let us go to his sisters, to comfort them" (which is the utmost we can do), but, *Let us go to him*; for Christ can *show wonders to the dead*. Death, which will separate us from all our other friends, and cut us off from correspondence with them, cannot separate us from the love of Christ, nor put us out of the reach of his calls; as he will maintain his *covenant with the dust*, so he can make visits to the dust. *Lazarus is dead*, but *let us go to him*; though perhaps those who said, If he sleep there is *no need* to go, were ready to say, If he be dead it is to *no purpose* to go.

(5.) Thomas exciting his fellow-disciples cheerfully to attend their Master's motions (v. 16): *Thomas, who is called Didymus*. Thomas in Hebrew and Didymus in Greek signify a *twin*; it is said of Rebekah (⁴⁰²⁴Genesis 25:24) that there were *twins in her womb*; the word is *Thomim*. Probably Thomas was a *twin*. He said *to his fellow-disciples* (who probably looked with fear and concern upon one another when Christ had said so positively, *Let us go to him*), very courageously, *Let us also go that we may die with him; with him*, that is,

[1.] With Lazarus, who was now dead; so some take it. Lazarus was a dear and loving friend both to Christ and his disciples, and perhaps Thomas had a particular intimacy with him. Now if he be dead, saith he, *let us even go and die with him*. For, *First*, “If we *survive*, we know not how to *live without him*.” Probably Lazarus had done them many good offices, sheltered them, and provided for them, and been to them *instead of eyes*; and now that he was gone they had *no man like-minded*, and “Therefore,” saith he, “we had as good die with him.” Thus we are sometimes ready to think our lives bound up in the lives of some that were dear to us: but God will teach us to live, and to live comfortably, upon himself, when those are gone without whom we thought we could not live. But this is not all. *Secondly*, “If we die, we hope to be *happy with him*.” Such a firm belief he has of a happiness on the other side death, and such good hope through grace of their own and Lazarus's interest in it, that he is willing they should all go and *die with him*. It is better to die, and go along with our Christian friends to that world which is enriched by their removal to it, than stay behind in a world that is impoverished by their departure out of it. The more of our friends are translated hence, the fewer cords we have to bind us to this earth, and the more to draw our hearts heavenwards. How pleasantly does the good man speak of dying, as if it were but undressing and going to bed!

[2.] “Let us go and die *with our Master*, who is now exposing himself to death by venturing into Judea;” and so I rather think it is meant. “If he will go into danger, let us also go and take our lot with him, according to the command we received, *Follow me*.” Thomas knew so much of the malice of the Jews against Christ, and the counsels of God concerning him, which he had often told them of, that it was no foreign supposition that he was now going to die. And now Thomas manifests, *First*, A gracious readiness to die with Christ himself, flowing from strong affections to him, though his faith was weak, as appeared afterwards, ⁴¹⁴⁵John 14:5; 20:25. *Where*

thou diest I will die, ^{<CHR>}Ruth 1:17. Secondly, A zealous desire to help his fellow-disciples into the same frame: “*Let us go, one and all, and die with him; if they stone him, let them stone us; who would desire to survive such a Master?*” Thus, in difficult times, Christians should animate one another. We may each of us say, *Let us die with him.* Note, The consideration of the dying of the Lord Jesus should make us willing to die whenever God calls for us.

<BIB> JOHN 11:17-32

CHRIST AT BETHANY

The matter being determined, that Christ will go to Judea, and his disciples with him, they address themselves to their journey; in this journey some circumstances happened which the other evangelists record, as the healing of the blind man at Jericho, and the conversion of Zaccheus. We must not reckon ourselves out of our way, while we are in the way of doing good; nor be so intent upon one good office as to neglect another.

At length, he comes near to Bethany, which is said to be about *fifteen furlongs* from Jerusalem, about two measured miles, v. 18. Notice is taken of this, that this miracle was in effect wrought *in Jerusalem*, and so was put to her score. Christ's miracles in Galilee were more *numerous*, but those in or near Jerusalem were more *illustrious*; there he healed one that had been diseased *thirty-eight years*, another that had been blind *from his birth*, and raised one that had been dead *four days*. To Bethany Christ came, and observe,

I. What posture he found his friends there in. When he had been last with them it is probable that he left them well, in health and joy; but when we part from our friends (though Christ knew) we know not what changes may affect us or them before we meet again.

1. He found his friend Lazarus *in the grave*, v. 17. When he came near the town, probably by the burying-place belonging to the town, he was told by the neighbours, or some persons whom he met, that Lazarus had been *four days buried*. Some think that Lazarus died the same day that the messenger came to Jesus with the tidings of his sickness, and so reckon two days for his abode in the same place and two days for his journey. I

rather think that Lazarus died at the very instant that Jesus, “*Our friend sleepeth, he is now newly fallen asleep;*” and that the time between his death and burial (which among the Jews was but short), with the four days of his lying in the grave, was taken up in this journey; for Christ travelled publicly, as appears by his passing through Jericho, and his abode at Zaccheus's house took up some time. Promised salvations, though they always come surely, yet often come slowly.

2. He found his friends that survived *in grief*. Martha and Mary were almost swallowed up with sorrow for the death of their brother, which is intimated where it is said that *many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them*. Note,

(1.) Ordinarily, where death is there are *mourners*, especially when those that were agreeable and amiable to their relations, and serviceable to their generation, are taken away. The house where death is called *the house of mourning*, ⁽²⁰⁰⁾Ecclesiastes 7:2. When man goes to his long home the *mourners go about the streets* (⁽²⁰⁵⁾Ecclesiastes 12:5), or rather sit alone, and *keep silence*. Here was Martha's house, a house where the fear of God was, and on which his blessing rested, yet made a *house of mourning*. Grace will keep sorrow from the heart (⁽²¹⁰⁾John 14:1), not from the house.

(2.) Where there are mourners there ought to be comforters. It is a duty we owe to those that are in sorrow to mourn with them, and to comfort them; and our mourning with them will be some comfort to them. When we are under the present impressions of grief, we are apt to forget those things which would minister comfort to us, and therefore have need of remembrancers. It is a mercy to have remembrancers when we are in sorrow, and our duty to be remembrancers to those who are in sorrow. The Jewish doctors laid great stress upon this, obliging their disciples to make conscience of comforting the mourners after the burial of the dead. They comforted them *concerning their brother*, that is, by speaking to them of him, not only of the good name he left behind, but of the happy state he was gone to. When godly relations and friends are taken from us, whatever occasion we have to be afflicted concerning ourselves, who are left behind and miss them, we have reason to be comforted concerning those who are gone before us to a happiness where they have no need of us. This visit which the Jews made to Martha and Mary is an evidence that they were persons of distinction, and made a figure; as also that they behaved obligingly to all; so that though they were followers of Christ, yet those

who had no respect for him were civil to them. There was also a providence in it, that so many Jews, Jewish ladies it is probable, should come together, just at this time, to comfort the mourners, that they might be unexceptionable witnesses of the miracle, and see what miserable comforters they were, in comparison with Christ. Christ did not usually send for witnesses to his miracles, and yet had none been by but relations this would have been excepted against; therefore God's counsel so ordered it that these should come together accidentally, to bear their testimony to it, that infidelity might stop her mouth.

II. What passed between him and his surviving friends at this interview. When Christ defers his visits for a time they are thereby made the more acceptable, much the more welcome; so it was here. His departures endear his returns, and his absence teaches us how to value his presence. We have here,

1. The interview between Christ and Martha.

(1.) We are told that she *went and met him*, v. 20.

[1.] It should seem that Martha was earnestly expecting Christ's arrival, and enquiring for it. Either she had sent out messengers, to bring her tidings of his first approach, or she had often asked, *Saw you him whom my soul loveth?* so that the first who discovered him ran to her with the welcome news. However it was, she heard of his coming before he arrived. She had waited long, and often asked, *Is he come?* and could hear no tidings of him; but long-looked-for came at last. *At the end the vision will speak, and not lie.*

[2.] Martha, when the good news was brought that Jesus was coming, threw all aside, and *went and met him*, in token of a most affectionate welcome. She waived all ceremony and compliment to the Jews who came to visit her, and hastened to go and meet Jesus. Note, When God by his grace or providence is coming towards us in ways of mercy and comfort, we should go forth by faith, hope, and prayer to meet him. Some suggest that Martha went out of the town to meet Jesus, to let him know that there were several Jews in the house, who were no friends to him, that if he pleased he might keep out of the way of them.

[3.] When Martha went to meet Jesus, Mary *sat still in the house*. Some think she did *not* hear the tidings, being in her drawing-room, receiving

visits of condolence, while Martha who was busied in the household-affairs had early notice of it. Perhaps Martha would not tell her sister that Christ was coming, being ambitious of the honour of receiving him first. *Sancta est prudentia clam fratribus clam parentibus ad Christum esse conferre* — *Holy prudence conducts us to Christ, while brethren and parents know not what we are doing.* — Maldonat. in locum. Others think she *did* hear that Christ was come, but was so overwhelmed with sorrow that she did not care to stir, choosing rather to indulge her sorrow, and to sit poring upon her affliction, and saying, *I do well to mourn.* Comparing this story with that in ~~CHR~~Luke 10:38, etc., we may observe the different tempers of these two sisters, and the temptations and advantages of each. Martha's natural temper was active and busy; she loved to be here and there, and at the end of every thing; and this had been a snare to her when by it she was not only careful and cumbered about many things, but hindered from the exercises of devotion: but now in a day of affliction this active temper did her a kindness, kept the grief from her heart, and made her forward to meet Christ, and so she received comfort from him the sooner. On the other hand, Mary's natural temper was contemplative and reserved. This had been formerly an advantage to her, when it placed her Christ's feet, to hear his word, and enabled her there to attend upon him without those distractions with which Martha was cumbered; but now in the day of affliction that same temper proved a snare to her, made her less able to grapple with her grief, and disposed her to melancholy: *But Mary sat still in the house.* See here how much it will be our wisdom carefully to watch against the temptations, and improve the advantages, of our natural temper.

(2.) Here is fully related the discourse between Christ and Martha.

[1.] Martha's address to Christ, v. 21, 22.

First, She complains of Christ's long absence and delay. She said it, not only with grief for the death of her brother, but with some resentment of the seeming unkindness of the Master: *Lord if you hadst been here, my brother had not died.* Here is,

1. Some evidence of faith. She believed Christ's *power*, that, though her brother's sickness was very grievous, yet he could have cured it, and so have prevented his death. She believed his *pity*, that if he had but seen Lazarus in his extreme illness, and his dear relations all in

tears about him, he would have had compassion, and have prevented so sad a breach, for his compassions fail not. But,

2. Here are sad instances of unbelief. Her faith was true, but weak as a bruised reed, for she limits the power of Christ, in saying, *If thou hadst been here*; whereas she ought to have known that Christ could cure at a distance, and that his gracious operations were not limited to his bodily presence. She reflects likewise upon the wisdom and kindness of Christ, that he did not hasten to them when they sent for him, as if he had not *timed his business* well, and now might as well have staid away, and not have come at all, as to come too late; and, as for any help now, she can scarcely entertain the thought of it.

Secondly, Yet she corrects and comforts herself with the thoughts of the prevailing interest Christ had in heaven; at least, she blames herself for blaming her Master, and for suggesting that he comes too late: *for I know that even now*, desperate as the case is, *whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee*. Observe,

1. How *willing* her hope was. Though she had not courage to ask of Jesus that he should raise him to life again, there having been no precedent as yet of any one raised to life that had been so long dead, yet, like a modest petitioner, she humbly recommends the case to the wise and compassionate consideration of the Lord Jesus. When we know not what in particular to ask or expect, let us in general refer ourselves to God, let him do as seemeth him good. *Judicii tui est, non praesumptionis meae* — *I leave it to thy judgment, not to my presumption*. — Aug. in locum. When we know not what to pray for, it is our comfort that the great Intercessor knows what to ask for us, and is always heard.

2. How *weak* her faith was. She should have said, “Lord, thou canst do whatsoever thou wilt;” but she only says, “Thou canst obtain whatsoever thou prayest for.” She had forgotten that the Son had *life in himself*, that he wrought miracles by his own power. Yet both these considerations must be taken in for the encouragement of our faith and hope, and neither excluded: the dominion Christ has on earth and his interest and intercession in heaven. He has in the one hand the golden sceptre, and in the other the golden censer; his power is always predominant, his intercession always prevalent.

[2.] The comfortable word which Christ gave to Martha, in an answer to her pathetic address (v. 23): *Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.* Martha, in her complaint, looked back, reflecting with regret *that Christ was not there*, for then, thinks she, my brother had been now alive. We are apt, in such cases, to add to our own trouble, by fancying what *might have been*. “If such a method had been taken, such a physician employed, my friend had not died;” which is more than we know: but what good does this do? When God’s will is done, our business is to submit to him. Christ directs Martha, and us in her, to look forward, and to think what *shall be*, for that is a certainty, and yields sure comfort: *Thy brother shall rise again.* *First*, This was true of Lazarus in a sense peculiar to him: he was now presently to be raised; but Christ speaks of it in general as a thing to be done, not which he himself would do, so humbly did our Lord Jesus speak of what he did. He also expresses it *ambiguously*, leaving her uncertain at first whether he would raise him presently or not till the last day, that he might try her faith and patience. *Secondly*, It is applicable to all the saints, and their resurrection at the last day. Note, It is a matter of comfort to us, when we have buried our godly friends and relations, to think that they shall *rise again*. As the soul at death is not lost, but gone before, so the body is not lost, but laid up. Think you hear Christ saying, “Thy parent, thy child, thy yoke-fellow, shall rise again; *these dry bones shall live.*”

[3.] The faith which Martha mixed with this word, and the unbelief mixed with this faith, v. 24.

First, She accounts it a *faithful saying* that *he shall rise again at the last day*. Though the doctrine of the resurrection was to have its full proof from Christ’s resurrection, yet, as it was already revealed, she firmly believed it, ⁴⁰¹⁵Acts 24:15.

1. That there shall be a *last day*, with which all the days of time shall be numbered and finished.
2. That there shall be a *general* resurrection at that day, when the earth and sea shall give up their dead.
3. That there shall be a *particular* resurrection of each one: “I know that I shall rise again, and this and the other relation that was dear to me.” As bone shall return to his bone in that day, so friend to his friend.

Secondly, Yet she seems to think this saying not so well worthy of all acceptance as really it was: “*I know he shall rise again at the last day; but what are we the better for that now?*” As if the comforts of the resurrection to eternal life were not worth speaking of, or yielded not satisfaction sufficient to balance her affliction. See our weakness and folly, that we suffer present sensible things to make a deeper impression upon us, both of grief and joy, than those things which are the objects of faith. *I know that he shall rise again at the last day; and is not this enough?* She seems to think it is not. Thus, by our discontent under present crosses, we greatly undervalue our future hopes, and put a slight upon them, as if not worth regarding.

[4.] The further instruction and encouragement which Jesus Christ gave her; for he will not quench the smoking flax nor break the bruised reed. He said to her, *I am the resurrection and the life*, v. 25, 26. Two things Christ possesses her with the belief of, in reference to the present distress; and they are the things which our faith should fasten upon in the like cases.

First, The power of Christ, his sovereign power: *I am the resurrection and the life*, the fountain of life, and the head and author of the resurrection. Martha believed that at his prayer God would give any thing, but he would have her know that by his word he could work anything. Martha believed a resurrection at the *last day*; Christ tells her that he had that power lodged in his own hand, that the dead were to *hear his voice* (~~RES~~ John 5:25), whence it was easy to infer, He that could raise a world of men that had been dead many ages could doubtless raise one man that had been dead but *four days*. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to all good Christians that Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life, and will be so to them. *Resurrection* is a return to life; Christ is the author of that return, and of that life to which it is a return. We look for the *resurrection of the dead* and the *life of the world to come*, and Christ is both; the author and principle of both, and the ground of our hope of both.

Secondly, The promises of the new covenant, which give us further ground of hope that *we shall live*. Observe,

a. To whom these promises are made — to those that believe in Jesus Christ, to those that consent to, and confide in, Jesus Christ as the only Mediator of reconciliation and communion between God and man, that receive the record God has given in his word concerning his Son, sincerely comply with it, and answer all the great intentions of it. The condition of

the latter promise is thus expressed: *Whosoever liveth and believeth in me*, which may be understood, either,

(a.) Of *natural* life: *Whosoever lives in this world*, whether he be Jew or Gentile, wherever he lives, if he believe in Christ, he shall live by him. Yet it limits the time: Whoever during *life*, while he is here in this state of probation, *believes in me*, shall be happy in me, but after death it will be too late. Whoever *lives* and *believes*, that is, lives by faith (~~402~~ Galatians 2:20), has a faith that influences his conversation. Or,

(b.) Of *spiritual* life: He that *lives* and *believes* is he that by faith is born again to a heavenly and divine life, to whom *to live is Christ* — that makes Christ the life of his soul.

b. What the promises are (v. 25): *Though he die, yet shall he live, nay, he shall never die*, v. 26. Man consists of body and soul, and provision is made for the happiness of both.

(a.) For the *body*; here is the promise of a *blessed resurrection*. Though the body be dead because of sin (there is no remedy but it will die), yet it *shall live again*. All the difficulties that attend the state of the dead are here overlooked, and made nothing of. Though the sentence of death was just, though the effects of death be dismal, though the bands of death be strong, though he be dead and buried, dead and putrefied, though the scattered dust be so mixed with common dust that no art of man can distinguish, much less separate them, put the case as strongly as you will on that side, yet we are sure that *he shall live again*: the body shall be raised a glorious body.

(b.) For the *soul*; here is the promise of a *blessed immortality*. He that *liveth and believeth*, who, being united to Christ by faith, lives spiritually by virtue of that union, he shall *never die*. That spiritual life shall never be extinguished, but perfected in eternal life. As the soul, being in its nature spiritual, is therefore immortal; so if by faith it live a spiritual life, consonant to its nature, its felicity shall be immortal too. It *shall never die*, shall never be otherwise than easy and happy, and there is not any intermission or interruption of its life, as there is of the life of the body. The *mortality* of the body shall at length be *swallowed up of life*; but the life of the soul, the believing soul, shall be immediately at death swallowed up of immortality. *He shall not die, eis ton aiona, for ever* — *Non morietur in aeternum*; so Cyprian

quotes it. The body shall not be *for ever* dead in the grave; it dies (like the two witnesses) but for a *time, times, and the dividing of time*; and when time shall be no more, and all the divisions of it shall be numbered and finished, a *spirit of life from God shall enter into it*. But this is not all; the souls shall not die that death which is *for ever*, shall *not die eternally, Blessed and holy*, that is, blessed and happy, is he that by faith *has part in the first resurrection*, has part in Christ, who is that resurrection; for on such the *second death*, which is a death for ever, *shall have no power*; see ^{<B6>}John 6:40. Christ asks her, “*Believest thou this? Canst thou assent to it with application? Canst thou take my word for it?*” Note, When we have read or heard the word of Christ, concerning the great things of the other world, we should seriously put it to ourselves, “*Do we believe this, this truth in particular, this which is attended with so many difficulties, this which is suited to my case? Does my belief of it realize it to me, and give my soul an assurance of it, so that I can say not only this I believe, but thus I believe it?*” Martha was doting upon her brother's being raised in this world; before Christ gave her hopes of this, he directed her thoughts to another life, another world: “*No matter for that, but believest thou this that I tell thee concerning the future state?*” The crosses and comforts of this present time would not make such an impression upon us as they do if we did but believe the things of eternity as we ought.

[5.] Martha's unfeigned assent yielded to what Christ said, v. 27. We have here Martha's creed, the good confession she witnessed, the same with that for which Peter was commended (^{<B6>}Matthew 16:16, 17), and it is the *conclusion of the whole matter*.

First, Here is the *guide of her faith*, and that is the word of Christ; without any alteration, exception, or proviso, she takes it entire as Christ had said it: *Yea, Lord*, whereby she subscribes to the truth of all and every part of that which Christ had promised, in his own sense: *Even so*. Faith is an echo to divine revelation, returns the same words, and resolves to abide by them: *Yea, Lord, As the word did make it so I believe and take it*, said queen Elizabeth.

Secondly, The *ground of her faith*, and that is the authority of Christ; she believes *this* because she believes that he who saith it is Christ. She has recourse to the foundation for the support of the superstructure. *I believe*,

pepisteuka, “I have believed that thou art Christ, and therefore I do believe this.” Observe here,

a. What she believed and confessed concerning Jesus; three things, all to the same effect: —

(**a.**) That he was the Christ, or Messiah, promised and expected under this name and notion, the *anointed one*.

(**b.**) That he was the *Son of God*; so the Messiah was called (~~MT~~ Psalm 2:7), not by office only, but by nature.

(**c.**) That it was *he who should come* into the world, the *ho archomenos*. That blessing of blessings which the church had for so many ages waited for as *future*, she embraced as *present*.

b. What she inferred hence, and what she alleged this for. If she admits this, that Jesus is the Christ, there is no difficulty in believing that he is the resurrection and the life; for if he be the Christ, then,

(**a.**) He is the fountain of light and truth, and we may take all his sayings for faithful and divine, upon his own word. If he be the Christ, he is that prophet whom we are to hear *in all things*.

(**b.**) He is the fountain of life and blessedness, and we may therefore depend upon his ability as well as upon his veracity. How shall bodies, turned to dust, *live again*? How shall souls, clogged and clouded as ours are, *live for ever*? We could not believe this, but that we believe him that undertakes it to be *the Son of God*, who has life *in himself*, and has it for us.

2. The interview between Christ and Mary the other sister. And here observe,

(**1.**) The notice which Martha gave her of Christ's coming (v. 28): *When she had so said*, as one that needed to say no more, *she went her way*, easy in her mind, and *called Mary her sister*.

[**1.**] Martha, having received instruction and comfort from Christ herself, called her sister to share with her. Time was when Martha would have drawn Mary from Christ, to come and help her in *much serving* (~~MT~~ Luke 10:40); but, to make her amends for this, here she is industrious to draw her to Christ.

[2.] She called her *secretly*, and whispered it in her ear, because there was company by, Jews, who were no friends to Christ. The saints are called *into the fellowship of Jesus Christ* by an invitation that is secret and distinguishing, given to them and not to others; they have meat to eat that the world knows not of, joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with.

[3.] She called her by order from Christ; he bade her *go call her sister*. This call that is *effectual*, whoever brings it, is sent by Christ. *The Master is come, and calleth for thee*. *First*, She calls Christ *the Master*, *didaskalos*, a *teaching master*; by that title he was commonly called and known among them. Mr. George Herbert took pleasure in calling Christ, *my Master*. *Secondly*, She triumphs in his arrival: *The Master is come*. He whom we have long wished and waited for, *he is come, he is come*; this was the best cordial in the present distress. "Lazarus is gone, and our comfort in him is gone; but the *Master is come*, who is better than the dearest friend, and has that in him which will abundantly make up all our losses. He is come who is our *teacher*, who will teach us how to get good by our sorrow (³⁹¹²Psalm 94:12), who will *teach*, and so comfort." *Thirdly*, She invites her sister to go and meet him: "*He calls for thee*, enquires what is become of thee, and would have thee sent for." Note, When Christ our Master comes, he *calls for us*. He comes in his word and ordinances, calls us to them, calls us by them, calls us to himself. He calls for thee in particular, for thee *by name* (⁴²⁷⁸Psalm 27:8); and, if he call thee, he will cure thee, he will comfort thee.

(2.) The haste which Mary made to Christ upon this notice given her (v. 29): *As soon as she heard* this good news, that the *Master was come*, she *arose quickly*, and came to him. She little thought how near he was to her, for he is often nearer to them that mourn in Zion than they are aware of; but, when she knew how near he was, she started up, and in a transport of joy ran to meet him. The least intimation of Christ's gracious approaches is enough to a lively faith, which stands ready to take the hint, and answer the first call. When Christ was come,

[1.] She did not consult the decorum of her mourning, but, forgetting ceremony, and the common usage in such cases, she ran through the town, to meet Christ. Let no nice punctilios of decency and honour deprive us at any time of opportunities of conversing with Christ.

[2.] She did not consult her neighbours, the Jews that were *with her*, *comforting her*; she left them all, to come to him, and did not only not ask

their advice, but not so much as ask their leave, or beg their pardon for her rudeness.

(3.) We are told (v. 30) where she found the Master; he was not yet come into Bethany, but was at the town's end, *in that place where Martha met him*. See here,

[1.] Christ's love to his work. He staid near the place where the grave was, that he might be ready to go to it. He would not go into the town, to *refresh himself* after the fatigue of his journey, till he had done the work he came to do; nor would he go into the town, lest it should look like ostentation, and a design to levy a crowd to be spectators of the miracle.

[2.] Mary's love to Christ; still she *loved much*. Though Christ had seemed unkind in his delays, yet she could take nothing amiss from him. Let us go thus to Christ *without the camp*, ~~883~~ Hebrews 13:13.

(4.) The misconstruction which the Jews that were with Mary made of her going away so hastily (v. 31): They said, *She goes to the grave, to weep there*. Martha bore up better under this affliction than Mary did, who was a woman of a tender and sorrowful spirit; such was her natural temper. Those that are so have need to watch against melancholy, and ought to be pitied and helped. These comforters found that their formalities did her no service, but that she hardened herself in sorrow: and therefore concluded when she went out, and turned that way, it was to go *to the grave and weep there*. See,

[1.] What often is the folly and fault of mourners; they contrive how to aggravate their own grief, and to make bad worse. We are apt in such cases to take a strange pleasure in our own pain, and to say, *We do well* to be passionate in our grief, even unto death; we are apt to fasten upon those things that aggravate the affliction, and what good does this do us, when it is our duty to reconcile ourselves to the will of God in it? Why should mourners go to the grave to weep there, when they sorrow not as those that have no hope? Affliction of itself is grievous; why should we make it more so?

[2.] What is the wisdom and duty of comforters; and that is, to prevent as much as may be, in those who grieve inordinately, the revival of the sorrow, and to divert it. Those Jews that followed Mary were thereby led to Christ, and became the witnesses of one of his most glorious miracles.

It is good cleaving to Christ's friends in their sorrows, for thereby we may come to know him better.

(5.) Mary's address to our Lord Jesus (v. 32): She came, attended with her train of comforters, and *fell down at his feet*, as one overwhelmed with a passionate sorrow, and said with many tears (as appears v. 33), *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*, as Martha said before, for they had often said it to one another. Now here,

[1.] Her posture is very humble and submissive: *She fell down at his feet*, which was more than Martha did, who had a greater command of her passions. She fell down not as a sinking mourner, but fell down at his feet as a humble petitioner. This Mary had sat *at Christ's feet to hear his word* (~~2019~~ Luke 10:39), and here we find her there on another errand. Note, Those that in a day of peace place themselves at Christ's feet, to receive instructions from him, may with comfort and confidence in a day of trouble cast themselves at his feet with hope to find favour with him. She *fell at his feet*, as one submitting to his will in what was done, and referring herself to his good-will in what was now to be done. When we are in affliction we must cast ourselves at Christ's feet in a penitent sorrow and self-abasement for sin, and a patient resignation of ourselves to the divine disposal. Mary's casting herself at Christ's feet was in token of the profound respect and veneration she had for him. Thus subjects were wont to give honour to their kings and princes; but, our Lord Jesus not appearing in secular glory as an earthly prince, those who by this posture of adoration gave honour to him certainly looked upon him as more than man, and intended hereby to give him divine honour. Mary hereby made profession of the Christian faith as truly as Martha did, and in effect said, *I believe that thou art the Christ; bowing the knee to Christ, and confessing him with the tongue*, are put together as equivalent, ~~541~~ Romans 14:11; ~~120~~ Philippians 2:10, 11. This she did in presence of *the Jews* that attended her, who, though friends to her and her family, yet were bitter enemies to Christ; yet in their sight she fell at Christ's feet, as one that was neither ashamed to own the veneration she had for Christ nor afraid of disobliging her friends and neighbours by it. Let them resent it as they pleased, she falls at his feet; and, if this be to be vile, she will be yet more vile; see ~~281~~ Song of Solomon 8:1. We serve a Master of whom we have no reason to be ashamed, and whose acceptance of our services is sufficient to balance the reproach of men and all their revilings.

[2.] Her address is very pathetic: *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* Christ's delay was designed for the best, and proved so; yet both the sisters very indecently *cast the same in his teeth*, and in effect charge him with the death of their brother. This repeated challenge he might justly have resented, might have told them he had something else to do than to be at their beck and to attend them; he must come when his business would permit him: but not a word of this; he considered the circumstances of their affliction, and that losers think they may have leave to speak, and therefore overlooked the rudeness of this welcome, and gave us an example of mildness and meekness in such cases. Mary added no more, as Martha did; but it appears, by what follows, that what she fell short in words she made up in tears; she said less than Martha, but wept more; and tears of devout affection have a voice, a loud prevailing voice, in the ears of Christ; no rhetoric like this.

JOHN 11:33-44

CHRIST AT THE GRAVE OF LAZARUS

Here we have,

I. Christ's tender *sympathy* with his afflicted friends, and the share he took to himself in their sorrows, which appeared three ways: —

1. By the inward groans and troubles of his spirit (v. 33): *Jesus saw Mary weeping* for the loss of a loving brother, and the *Jews that came with her weeping* for the loss of a good neighbour and friend; when he saw what a *place of weepers*, a *bochim*, this was, *he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.* See here,

(1.) The griefs of the sons of men represented in the tears of Mary and her friends. What an emblem was here of this world, this vale of tears! Nature itself teaches us to weep over our dear relations, when they are removed by death; Providence thereby calls to *weeping and mourning.* It is probable that Lazarus's estate devolved upon his sisters, and was a considerable addition to their fortunes; and in such a case people say, now-a-days, though they cannot wish their relations dead (that is, they do not say they do), yet, if they were dead, they would not wish them alive again; but these sisters, whatever they got by their brother's death, heartily wished him

alive again. Religion teaches us likewise to *weep with them that weep*, as these Jews wept with Mary, considering that we ourselves also *are in the body*. Those that truly love their friends will share with them in their joys and griefs; for what is friendship but a communication of affections? ^{<1816>}Job 16:5.

(2.) The grace of the Son of God and his compassion towards those that are in misery. *In all their afflictions he is afflicted*, ^{<2630>}Isaiah 63:9; ^{<0116>}Judges 10:16. When Christ saw them all in tears,

[1.] He *groaned in the spirit*. He suffered himself to be tempted (as we are when we are disturbed by some great affliction), *yet without sin*. This was an expression, either, *First*, Of his displeasure at the inordinate grief of those about him, as ^{<4159>}Mark 5:39: “*Why make ye this ado and weep? What a hurry is here! does this become those that believe in a God, a heaven, and another world?*” Or, *Secondly*, Of his feeling sense of the calamitous state of human lie, and the power of death, to which fallen man is subject. Having now to make a vigorous attack upon death and the grave, he thus stirred up himself to the encounter, *put on the garments of vengeance, and his fury it upheld him*; and that he might the more resolutely undertake the redress of our grievances, and the cure of our griefs, he was pleased to make himself sensible of the weight of them, and under the burden of them he now *groaned in spirit*. Or, *Thirdly*, It was an expression of his kind sympathy with his friends that were in sorrow. Here was the sounding of the bowels, the mercies which the afflicted church so earnestly solicits, ^{<2635>}Isaiah 63:15. Christ not only seemed concerned, but he *groaned in the spirit*; he was inwardly and sincerely affected with the case. David's pretended friends counterfeited sympathy, to disguise their enmity (^{<3916>}Psalm 41:6); but we must learn of Christ to have our love and sympathy *without dissimulation*. Christ's was a deep and hearty sigh.

[2.] He was *troubled*. He *troubled himself*; so the phrase is, very significantly. He had all the passions and affections of the human nature, for in all things he must *be like to his brethren*; but he had a perfect command of them, so that they were never *up*, but *when* and *as* they were called; he was never troubled, but when he *troubled himself*, as he saw cause. He often *composed* himself to trouble, but was never discomposed or disordered by it. He was voluntary both in his passion and in his compassion. He had power to lay down his grief, and power to take it again.

2. His concern for them appeared by his *kind enquiry* after the poor remains of his deceased friend (v. 34): Where *have you laid him?* He knew where he was laid, and yet asks, because,

(1.) He would thus express himself as *a man*, even when he was going to exert the power of a God. Being found in fashion as a man, he accommodates himself to the way and manner of the sons of men: *Non nescit, sed quasi nescit* — *He is not ignorant, but he makes as if he were*, saith Austin here.

(2.) He enquired where the grave was, lest, if he had gone straight to it of his own knowledge, the unbelieving Jews should have thence taken occasion to suspect a collusion between him and Lazarus, and a trick in the case. Many expositors observe this from Chrysostom.

(3.) He would thus divert the grief of his mourning friends, by raising their expectations of something great; as if he had said, “I did not come hither with an address of condolence, to mingle a few fruitless insignificant tears with yours; no, I have other work to do; come, let us adjourn to the grave, and go about our business there.” Note, A serious address to our work is the best remedy against inordinate grief.

(4.) He would hereby intimate to us the special care he takes of the bodies of the saints while they lie in the grave; he takes notice *where they are laid*, and will look after them. There is not only a covenant with the dust, but a guard upon it.

3. It appeared by *his tears*. Those about him did not tell him where the body was buried, but desired him to *come and see*, and led him directly to the grave, that his eye might yet more affect his heart with the calamity.

(1.) As he was going to the grave, as if he had been following the corpse thither, *Jesus wept*, v. 35. A very short verse, but it affords many useful instructions.

[1.] That Jesus Christ was really and truly man, and partook with the children, not only of flesh and blood, but of a human soul, susceptible of the impressions of joy, and grief, and other affections. Christ gave this proof of his humanity, in both senses of the word; that, as a man, he could weep, and, as a merciful man, he *would weep*, before he gave this proof of his divinity.

[2.] That he was *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*, as was foretold, ^{<25B>}Isaiah 53:3. We never read that he laughed, but more than once we have him in tears. Thus he shows not only that a mournful state will consist with the love of God, but that those who sow to the Spirit must sow in tears.

[3.] Tears of compassion well become Christians, and make them most to resemble Christ. It is a relief to those who are in sorrow to have their friends sympathize with them, especially such a friend as their Lord Jesus.

(2.) Different constructions were put upon Christ's weeping.

[1.] Some made a kind and candid interpretation of it, and what was very natural (v. 36): *Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!* They seem to wonder that he should have so strong an affection for one to whom he was not related, and with whom he had not had any long acquaintance, for Christ spent most of his time in Galilee, a great way from Bethany. It becomes us, according to this example of Christ, to show our love to our friends, both living and dying. We must sorrow for our brethren that sleep in Jesus as those that are full of love, though not void of hope; as the *devout men* that buried Stephen, ^{<44B>}Acts 8:2. Though our tears profit not the dead, they embalm their memory. These tears were indications of his particular love to Lazarus, but he has given proofs no less evident of his love to all the saints, in that he died for them. When he only dropped a tear over Lazarus, they said, *See how he loved him!* Much more reason have we to say so, for whom he hath laid down his life: *See how he loved us! Greater love has no man than this*

[2.] Others made a peevish unfair reflection upon it, as if these tears bespoke his inability to help his friend (v. 37): *Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have prevented the death of Lazarus?* Here it is slyly insinuated, *First*, That the death of Lazarus being (as it seemed by his tears) a great grief to him, if he could have prevented it he would, and therefore because he *did not* they incline to think that he *could not*; as, when he was dying, they concluded that he could not, because he did not, save himself, and *come down from the cross*; not considering that divine power is always directed in its operations by divine wisdom, not merely according to his will, but according to the counsel of his will, wherein it becomes us to acquiesce. If Christ's friends, whom he loves, die, — if his church, whom he loves, be persecuted and afflicted, — we must not impute it to any defect either in his power or love, but conclude that it is

because he sees it for the best. *Secondly*, That therefore it might justly be questioned whether he did indeed *open the eyes of the blind*, that is, whether it was not a sham. His not working this miracle they thought enough to invalidate the former; at least, it should seem that he had limited power, and therefore not a divine one. Christ soon convinced these *whisperers*, by raising Lazarus from the dead, which was the greater work, that he could have prevented his death, but therefore did not because he would glorify himself the more.

II. Christ's approach to the grave, and the preparation that was made for working this miracle.

1. Christ repeats his groans upon his coming near the grave (v. 38): *Again groaning in himself, he comes to the grave*: he groaned,

(1.) Being displeased at the unbelief of those who spoke doubtfully of his power, and blamed him for not preventing the death of Lazarus; he was *grieved for the hardness of their hearts*. He never groaned so much for his own pains and sufferings as for the sins and follies of men, particularly Jerusalem's, ^{<REF>}Matthew 23:37.

(2.) Being affected with the fresh lamentations which, it is likely, the mourning sisters made when they came near the grave, more passionately and pathetically than before, his tender spirit was sensibly touched with their wailings.

(3.) Some think that he *groaned in spirit* because, to gratify the desire of his friends, he was to bring Lazarus again into this sinful troublesome world, from that rest into which he was newly entered; it would be a kindness to Martha and Mary, but it would be to him like thrusting one out to a stormy sea again who was newly got into a safe and quiet harbour. If Lazarus had been let alone, Christ would quickly have gone to him into the other world; but, being restored to life, Christ quickly left him behind in this world.

(4.) Christ groaned as one that would affect himself with the calamitous state of the human nature, as subject to death, from which he was now about to redeem Lazarus. Thus he stirred up himself to take hold on God in the prayer he was to make, that he might *offer it up with strong crying*, ^{<REF>}Hebrews 5:7. Ministers, when they are sent by the preaching of the gospel to raise dead souls, should be much affected with the deplorable

condition of those they preach to and pray for, and groan in themselves to think of it.

2. The grave wherein Lazarus lay is here described: *It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.* The graves of the common people, probably, were dug as ours are; but persons of distinction were, as with us, interred in vaults, so Lazarus was, and such was the sepulchre in which Christ was buried. Probably this fashion was kept up among the Jews, in imitation of the patriarchs, who buried their dead in the cave of Machpelah, ^(GEN)Genesis 23:19. This care taken of the dead bodies of their friends intimates their expectation of their resurrection; they reckoned the solemnity of the funeral ended when the stone was rolled to the grave, or, as here, *laid upon it*, like that on the mouth of the den into which Daniel was cast (^(DAN)Daniel 6:17), that the *purpose might not be changed*; intimating that the dead are separated from the living, and gone the *way whence they shall not return*. This stone was probably a *gravestone*, with an inscription upon it, which the Greeks called *mnemeion* — a memorandum, because it is both a *memorial* of the dead and a *memento* to the living, putting them in remembrance of that which we are all concerned to remember. It is called by the Latins, *Monumentum*, ... *monendo*, because it gives *warning*.

3. Orders are given to remove the stone (v. 39): *Take away the stone.* He would have this stone removed that all the standersby might see the body lie dead in the sepulchre, and that way might be made for its coming out, and it might appear to be a true body, and not a *ghost* or *spectre*. He would have some of the servants to remove it, that they might be witnesses, by the smell of the putrefaction of the body, and that therefore it was truly dead. It is a good step towards the raising of a soul to spiritual life when the stone is taken away, when prejudices are removed and got over, and way made for the word to the heart, that it may do its work there, and say what it has to say.

4. An objection made by Martha against the opening of the grave: *Lord, by this time he stinketh, or is become noisome, for he has been dead four days, tetartaios gar esti quadriduanus est; he is four days old* in the other world; a citizen and inhabitant of the grave of four days' standing. Probably Martha perceived the body to smell, as they were removing the stone, and therefore cried out thus.

(1.) It is easy to observe hence the nature of human bodies: four days are but a little while, yet what a great change will this time make with the

body of man, if it be but so long *without food*, much more if so long *without life!* Dead bodies (saith Dr. Hammond) after a revolution of the humours, which is completed in seventy-two hours, naturally tend to putrefaction; and the Jews say that by the fourth day after death the body is so altered that one cannot be sure it is such a person; so Maimonides in Lightfoot. Christ rose the third day because he was not to *see corruption*.

(2.) It is not so easy to say what was Martha's design in saying this.

[1.] Some think she said it in a due tenderness, and such as decency teaches to the dead body; now that it began to putrefy, she did not care it should be thus publicly shown and made a spectacle of.

[2.] Others think she said it out of a concern for Christ, lest the smell of the dead body should be *offensive* to him. That which is very noisome is compared to an open sepulchre, ^{<H89>}Psalm 5:9. If there were any thing noisome she would not have her Master near it; but he was none of those tender and delicate ones that cannot bear as ill smell; if he had, he would not have visited the world of mankind, which sin had made a perfect dunghill, altogether noisome, ^{<H43>}Psalm 14:3.

[3.] It should seem, by Christ's answer, that it was the language of her unbelief and distrust: "Lord, it is too late now to attempt any kindness to him; his body begins to rot, and it is impossible that this putrid carcase should *live*." She gives up his case as helpless and hopeless, there having been no instances, either of late or formerly, of any raised to life after they had begun to see corruption. When *our bones are dried*, we are ready to say, *Our hope is lost*. Yet this distrustful word of hers served to make the miracle both the more evident and the more illustrious; by this it appeared that he was truly dead, and not in a trance; for, though the posture of a dead body might be counterfeited, the smell could not. Her suggesting that *it could not be done* puts the more honour upon him that *did it*.

5. The gentle reproof Christ gave to Martha for the weakness of her faith (v. 40): *Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?* This word of his to her was not before recorded; it is probable that he said it to her when she had said (v. 27), *Lord, I believe:* and it is enough that it is recorded here, where it is repeated. Note,

(1.) Our Lord Jesus has given us all the assurances imaginable that a sincere faith shall at length be crowned with a blessed vision: "If thou

believe, thou shalt see God's glorious appearances for thee in this world, and to thee in the other world." If we will take Christ's word, and rely on his power and faithfulness, we shall see the glory of God, and be happy in the sight.

(2.) We have need to be often reminded of these *sure mercies* with which our Lord Jesus hath encouraged us. Christ does not give a direct answer to what Martha had said, nor any particular promise of what he would do, but orders her to keep hold of the general assurances he had already given: *Only believe*. We are apt to forget what Christ has spoken, and need him to put us in mind of it by his Spirit: "*Said I not unto thee so and so? And dost thou think that he will ever unsay it?*"

6. The opening of the grave, in obedience to Christ's order, notwithstanding Martha's objection (v. 41): *Then they took away the stone*. When Martha was satisfied, and had waived her objection, *then they proceeded*. If we will see the glory of God, we must let Christ take his own way, and not *prescribe* but *subscribe* to him. *They took away the stone*, and this was all they could do; Christ only could *give life*. What man can do is but to *prepare the way of the Lord*, to fill the valleys, and level the hills, and, as here, to *take away the stone*.

III. The miracle itself wrought. The spectators, invited by the rolling away of the stone, gathered about the grave, not to commit *dust to dust, earth to earth*, but to receive dust from the dust, and earth from the earth again; and, their expectations being raised, our Lord Jesus addresses himself to his work.

1. He applies himself to his *living Father in heaven*, so he had called him (~~ANT~~ John 6:17), and so eyes him here.

(1.) The gesture he used was very significant: *He lifted up his eyes*, an outward expression of the elevation of his mind, and to show those who stood by whence he derived his power; also to set us an example; this outward sign is hereby recommended to our practice; see ~~ANT~~ John 17:1. Look how those will answer it who profanely ridicule it; but that which is especially charged upon us hereby is to *lift up our hearts* to God in the heavens; what is prayer, but the ascent of the soul to God, and the directing of its affections and motions heavenward? He *lifted up* his eyes, as looking above, looking beyond the grave where Lazarus lay, and overlooking all the difficulties that arose thence, that he might have his

eyes fixed upon the divine omnipotence; to teach us to do as Abraham, who considered not *his own body now dead, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb*, never took these into his thoughts, and so gained such a degree of faith as not to *stagger at the promise*, ^{<600>}Romans 4:20.

(2.) His address to God was with great assurance, and such a confidence as became him: *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

[1.] He has here taught us, by his own example, *First*, In prayer to call God Father, and to draw nigh to him as children to a father, with a humble reverence, and yet with a holy boldness. *Secondly*, In our *prayers to praise him*, and, when we come to beg for further mercy, thankfully to acknowledge former favours. Thanksgivings, which bespeak *God's glory* (not *our own*, like the Pharisee's God, *I thank thee*), are decent forms into which to put our supplications.

[2.] But our Saviour's thanksgiving here was intended to express the unshaken assurance he had of the effecting of this miracle, which he had in his own power to do in concurrence with his Father: "*Father, I thank thee that my will and thine are in this matter, as always, the same.*" Elijah and Elisha raised the dead, as servants, by *entreaty*; but Christ, as a Son, by *authority*, having life in himself, and power to quicken whom he would; and he speaks of this as his own act (v. 11): *I go, that I may awake him*; yet he speaks of it as what he had obtained by prayer, for his Father *heard him*: probably he put up the prayer for it when he *groaned in spirit* once and again (v. 33, 38), in a *mental* prayer, with groanings which could not be *uttered*.

First, Christ speaks of this miracle as an answer to prayer,

1. Because he would thus *humble himself*; though he was a Son, yet *learned he this obedience*, to ask and receive. His mediatorial crown was granted him upon request, though it is *of right*, ^{<608>}Psalms 2:8, and ^{<615>}John 17:5. He prays for the glory he had before the world was, though, having never forfeited it, he might have demanded it.

2. Because he was pleased thus to *honour prayer*, making it the key wherewith even he unlocked the treasures of divine power and grace. Thus he would teach us in prayer, by the lively exercise of faith, to *enter into the holiest*.

Secondly, Christ, being assured that his prayer was answered, professes,

a. His thankful acceptance of this answer: *I thank thee that thou hast heard me*. Though the miracle was not yet wrought, yet the prayer was answered, and he triumphs before the victory. No other can pretend to such an assurance as Christ had; yet we may by faith in the promise have a prospect of mercy before it be actually given in, and may rejoice in that prospect, and give God thanks for it. In David's devotions, the same psalm which begins with prayer for a mercy closes with thanksgivings for it. Note,

(a.) Mercies in answer to prayer ought in a special manner to be acknowledged with thankfulness. Besides the grant of the mercy itself, we are to value it as a great favour to have our poor prayers taken notice of.

(b.) We ought to *meet* the first appearances of the return of prayer with early thanksgivings. As God *answers* us with mercy, even *before we call*, and *hears while we are yet speaking*, so we should answer him with praise even before he grants, and give him thanks while he is yet speaking good words and comfortable words.

b. His cheerful assurance of a ready answer at any time (v. 42): *And I know that thou hearest me always*. Let none think that this was some uncommon favour granted him now, such as he never had before, nor should ever have again; no, he had the same divine power going along with him in his whole undertaking, and undertook nothing but what he knew to be agreeable to the counsel of God's will. "I gave thanks" (saith he) "for being heard in this, because I am sure to be heard in every thing." See here,

(a.) The interest our Lord Jesus had in heaven; the Father *heard him always*, he had access to the Father upon every occasion, and success with him in every errand. And we may be sure that his interest is not the less for his going to heaven, which may encourage us to depend upon his intercession, and put all our petitions into his hand, for we are sure that him the Father *hears always*.

(b.) The confidence he had of that interest: *I knew it*. He did not in the least hesitate or doubt concerning it, but had an entire satisfaction in his own mind of the Father's complacency in him and concurrence with him in every thing. We cannot have such a particular assurance as

he had; but this we know, that *whatsoever we ask according to his will he heareth us*, ^{<6784>}1 John 5:14, 15.

Thirdly, But why should Christ give this public intimation of his obtaining this miracle by prayer? He adds, It is *because of the people who stand by, that they may believe that thou hast sent me; for prayer may preach*.

1. It was to obviate the objections of his enemies, and their reflections. It was blasphemously suggested by the Pharisees, and their creatures, that he wrought his miracles by compact with the devil; now, to evidence the contrary, he openly made his address to God, using *prayers*, and not *charms*, not *peeping and muttering* as those did that used *familiar spirits* (^{<2189>}Isaiah 8:19), but, with elevated eyes and voice professing his communication with Heaven, and dependence on Heaven.

2. It was to corroborate the faith of those that were well inclined to him: *That they may believe that thou hast sent me*, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Moses, to show that God sent him, made the earth open and swallow men up (^{<0466>}Numbers 16:31); Elijah, to show that God sent him, made fire come from heaven and devour men; for the law was a dispensation of terror and death but Christ proves his mission by raising to life one that was dead. Some give this sense: had Christ declared his doing it freely by his own power, some of his weak disciples, who as yet understood not his divine nature, would have thought he took too much upon him, and have been stumbled at it. These *babes* could not bear that *strong meat*, therefore he chooses to speak of his power as received and derived he speaks self-denyingly of himself, that he might speak the more plainly to us. *Non ita respexit ad swam dignitatem atque ad nostram salutem — In what he said, he consulted not so much his dignity as our salvation.* — Jansenius.

2. He now applies himself to his *dead friend in the earth*. He *cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth*.

(1.) He could have raised Lazarus by a silent exertion of his power and will, and the indiscernible operations of the Spirit of life; but he did it by a call, a loud call,

[1.] To be significant of the power then put forth for the raising of Lazarus, how he *created this new thing; he spoke, and it was done*. He

cried aloud, to signify the greatness of the work, and of the power employed in it, and to excite himself as it were to this attack upon the gates of death, as soldiers engage with a shout. Speaking to Lazarus, it was proper to *cry with a loud voice*; for, *First*, The soul of Lazarus, which was to be called back, was at a distance, not hovering about the grave, as the Jews fancied, but removed to Hades, the world of spirits; now it is natural to speak loud when we call to those at a distance. *Secondly*, The body of Lazarus, which was to be called up, was *asleep*, and we usually speak loud when we would awake any out of sleep. He cried with a loud voice that the scripture might be fulfilled (²³⁵⁹Isaiah 45:19), *I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth.*

[2.] To be typical of other works of wonder, and particularly other resurrections, which the power of Christ was to effect. This loud call was a figure, *First*, Of the gospel call, by which dead souls were to be brought out of the grave of sin, which resurrection Christ had formerly spoken of (⁴⁸⁵John 5:25), and of his word as the means of it (⁴⁸⁶John 6:63), and now he gives a specimen of it. By his word, he saith to souls, *Live, yea, he saith to them, Live,* ³³⁶Ezekiel 16:6. *Arise from the dead,* ⁴⁵⁴Ephesians 5:14. The spirit of life from God entered into those that had been dead and dry bones, when Ezekiel prophesied over them, ³⁷⁰Ezekiel 37:10. Those who infer from the commands of the word to *turn and live* that man has a power of his own to convert and regenerate himself might as well infer from this call to Lazarus that he had a power to raise himself to life. *Secondly*, Of the sound of the archangel's trumpet at the last day, with which they that sleep in the dust shall be awakened and summoned before the great tribunal, when Christ shall *descend with a shout, a call, or command*, like this here, *Come forth,* ³⁰¹Psalms 50:4. *He shall call both to the heavens for their souls, and to the earth for their bodies, that he may judge his people.*

(2.) This *loud call* was but *short*, yet *mighty through God* to the battering down of the strongholds of the grave.

[1.] He calls him by name, Lazarus, as we call those by their names whom we would awake out of a fast sleep. God said to Moses, as a mark of his favour, *I know thee by name*. The naming of him intimates that the same individual person that died shall rise again at the last day. He that *calls the stars by their names* can distinguish by name his stars that are in the dust of the earth, and will lose none of them.

[2.] He calls him *out of the grave*, speaking to him as if he were already alive, and had nothing to do but to come out of his grave. He does not say unto him, *Live*; for he himself must give life; but he saith to him, *Move*, for when by the grace of Christ we live spiritually we must stir up ourselves to *move*; the grave of sin and this world is no place for those whom Christ has quickened, and therefore they must *come forth*.

[3.] The event was according to the intention: *He that was dead came forth*, v. 44. Power went along with the word of Christ to reunite the soul and the body of Lazarus, and then he came forth. The miracle is described, not by its invisible springs, to satisfy our curiosity, but by its visible effects, to conform our faith. Do any ask where the soul of Lazarus was during the four days of its separation? We are not told, but have reason to think it was in paradise; *in joy and felicity*; but you will say, “Was it not then really an unkindness to it to cause it to return into the prison of the body?” And if it were, yet, being for the honour of Christ and the serving of the interests of his kingdom, it was no more an injury to him than it was to St. Paul to continue in the flesh when he knew that to depart to Christ was so much better. If any ask whether Lazarus, after he was raised, could give an account or description of his soul's removal out of the body or return to it, or what he saw in the other world, I suppose both those changes were so unaccountable to himself that he must say with Paul, *Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell*; and of what he saw and heard, that it was not lawful nor possible to express it. In a world of sense we cannot frame to ourselves, much less communicate to others, any adequate ideas of the world of spirits and the affairs of that world. Let us not covet to be wise above what is written, and this is all that is written concerning the resurrection of that Lazarus, that *he that was dead came forth*. Some have observed that though we read of many who were raised from the dead, who no doubt conversed familiarly with men afterwards, yet the scripture has not recorded one word spoken by any of them, except by our Lord Jesus only.

(3.) This miracle was wrought,

[1.] *Speedily*. Nothing intervenes between the command, *Come forth*, and the effect, *He came forth*; *dictum factum* — *no sooner said than done*; let there be life, and there was life. Thus the change in the resurrection will be *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, ~~452~~ 1 Corinthians 15:52. The

almighty power that can do it can do it in an instant: *Then shalt thou call and I will answer*; will come at the call, as Lazarus, *Here am I*.

[2.] *Perfectly*. He was so thoroughly revived that he got up out of his grave as strongly as ever he got up out of his bed, and returned not only to life, but health. He was not raised to serve a present turn, but to live as other men.

[3.] With this additional miracle, as some reckon it, that he came out of his grave, though he was fettered with his grave-clothes, with which he was *bound hand and foot*, and *his face bound about with a napkin* (for so the manner of the Jews was to bury); and he came forth in the same dress wherein he was buried, that it might appear that it was he himself and not another, and that he was not only alive, but strong, and able to walk, after a sort, even in his grave-clothes. The *binding of his face with a napkin* proved that he had been really dead, for otherwise, in less than so many days' time, that would have smothered him. And the standers-by, in unbinding him, would *handle him, and see him, that it was he himself*, and so be witnesses of the miracle. Now see here, *First*, How little we carry away with us, when we leave the world — only a winding-sheet and a coffin; there is no change of raiment in the grave, nothing but a single suit of grave-clothes. *Secondly*, What condition we shall be in in the grave. What *wisdom or device* can there be where the eyes are hoodwinked, or what working where the hands and feet are fettered? And so it will be in the grave, whither we are going. Lazarus being *come forth*, hampered and embarrassed with his grave-clothes, we may well imagine that those about the grave were exceedingly surprised and frightened at it; we should be so if we should see a dead body rise; but Christ, to make the thing familiar, sets them to work: "*Loose him*, slacken his grave-clothes, that they may serve for day-clothes till he comes to his house, and then he will go himself, so clad, without guide or supporter to his own house." As, in the Old Testament, the translations of Enoch and Elias were sensible demonstrations of an invisible and future state, the one about the middle of the patriarchal age, the other of the Mosaic economy, so the resurrection of Lazarus, in the New Testament, was designed for the confirmation of the doctrine of the resurrection.

THE CONSULTATION OF THE PHARISEES

We have here an account of the consequences of this glorious miracle, which were as usual; to some it was a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death.

I. Some were invited by it, and induced to believe. Many of the Jews, when they *saw the things that Jesus did, believed on him*, and well they might, for it was an incontestable proof of his divine mission. They had often heard of his miracles, and yet evaded the conviction of them, by calling in question the matter of fact; but now that they had themselves seen this done their unbelief was conquered, and they yielded at last. But *blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*. The more we see of Christ the more cause we shall see to love him and confide in him. These were some of those Jews that came to Mary, to comfort her. When we are doing good offices to others we put ourselves in the way of receiving favours from God, and have opportunities of getting good when we are doing good.

II. Others were irritated by it, and hardened in their unbelief.

1. The *informers* were so (v. 46): *Some of them*, who were eye-witnesses of the miracle, were so far from being convinced that they *went to the Pharisees*, whom they knew to be his implacable enemies, and *told them what things Jesus had done*; not merely as a matter of news worthy their notice, much less as an inducement to them to think more favourably of Christ, but with a spiteful design to excite those who needed no spur the more vigorously to prosecute him. Here is a strange instance,

(1.) Of a most *obstinate infidelity*, refusing to yield to the most powerful means of conviction; and it is hard to imagine how they could evade the force of this evidence, but that the *god of this world had blinded their minds*.

(2.) Of a most *inveterate enmity*. If they would not be satisfied that he was to be believed in as the Christ, yet one would think they should have been mollified, and persuaded not to persecute him; but, if the water be not sufficient to *quench* the fire, it will *inflame* it. They told *what Jesus had*

done, and told no more than what was true; but their malice gave a tincture of diabolism to their information equal to that of *lying*; perverting what is true is as bad as forging what is false. *Doeg* is called a *false, lying, and deceitful tongue* (~~PS~~Psalm 52:2-4; 120:2, 3), though what he said was *true*.

2. The judges, the leaders, the *blind leaders*, of the people were no less exasperated by the report made to them, and here we are told what they did.

(1.) A special council is called and held (v. 47): *Then gathered the chief priests and Pharisees a council*, as was foretold, ~~PS~~Psalm 2:2, *The rulers take counsel together against the Lord*. Consultations of the sanhedrim were intended for the public good; but here, under colour of this, the greatest injury and mischief are done to the people. The things that belong to the nation's peace were hid from the eyes of those that were entrusted with its counsels. This council was called, not only for joint advice, but for mutual irritation; that as iron sharpens iron, and as coals are to burning coals and wood to fire, so they might exasperate and inflame one another with enmity and rage against Christ and his doctrine.

(2.) The case is proposed, and shown to be weighty and of great consequence.

[1.] The matter to be debated was what course they should take with this Jesus, to stop the growth of his interest; they said *What do we? For this man doeth many miracles*. The information given about the raising of Lazarus was produced, and the *men, brethren, and fathers* were called in to help as solicitously as if a formidable enemy had been with an army in the heart of their country. *First*, They own the truth of Christ's miracles, and that he had wrought many of them; they are therefore witnesses against themselves, for they acknowledge his credentials and yet deny his commission. *Secondly*, They consider what is to be done, and chide themselves that they have not done something sooner effectually to crush him. They do not take it at all into their consideration whether they shall not receive him and own him as the Messiah, though they profess to expect him, and Jesus gave pregnant proofs of his being so; but they take it for granted that he is an enemy, and as such is to be run down: "*What do we? Have we no care to support our church? Is it nothing to us that a doctrine so destructive to our interest spreads thus? Shall we tamely yield up the ground we have got in the affections of the people? Shall we see*

our authority brought into contempt, and the craft by which we get our living ruined, and not bestir ourselves? What have we been doing all this while? And what are we now thinking of? Shall we be always talking, and bring nothing to pass?"

[2.] That which made this matter weighty was the peril they apprehended their church and nation to be in from the Romans (v. 48): "If we do not silence him, and take him off, *all men will believe on him*; and, this being the setting up of a new king, the Romans will take umbrage at it, *and will come with an army, and take away our place and nation*, and therefore it is no time to trifle." See what an opinion they have,

First, Of their own power. They speak as if they thought Christ's progress and success in his work depended upon their connivance; as if he could not go on to work miracles, and make disciples, unless they *let him alone*; as if it were in their power to conquer him who had conquered death, or as if they could *fight against God*, and prosper. But he that sits in heaven laughs at the fond conceit which impotent malice has of its own omnipotence.

Secondly, Of their own policy. They fancy themselves to be men of mighty insight and foresight, and great sagacity in their moral prognostications.

a. They take on them to prophecy that, in a little time, if he have liberty to go on, *all men will believe on him*, hereby owning, when it was to serve their purpose, that his doctrine and miracles had a very convincing power in them, such as could not be resisted, but that all men would become his proselytes and votaries. Thus do they now make his interest formidable, though, to serve another turn, these same men strove to make it contemptible, ^{<47B>}John 7:48, *Have any of the rulers believed on him?* This was the thing they were afraid of, that men would *believe on him*, and then all their measures were broken. Note, The success of the gospel is the dread of its adversaries; if souls be saved, they are undone.

b. They foretel that if the generality of the nation be *drawn after him*, the rage of the Romans will be *drawn upon them*. They *will come and take away our place*; the country in general, especially Jerusalem, or the temple, the *holy place*, and *their place*, their darling, their idol; or, their *preferments* in the temple, their *places* of power and trust. Now it was true that the Romans had a very jealous eye upon them, and knew they wanted nothing but power and opportunity to shake off their yoke. It was likewise

true that if the Romans should pour an army in upon them it would be very hard for them to make any head against it; yet here appeared a cowardice which one would not have found in the priests of the Lord if they had not by their wickedness forfeited their interest in God and all good men. Had they kept their integrity, they needed not to have feared the Romans; but they speak like a dispirited people, as the men of Judah when they basely said to Samson, *Knowest thou not that the Philistines rule over us?*

~~(751)~~ Judges 15:11. When men lose their piety they lose their courage. But,

(a.) It was false that there was any danger of the Romans' being irritated against their nation by the progress of Christ's gospel, for it was no way *hurtful to kings nor provinces*, but highly beneficial. The Romans had no jealousy at all of his growing interest; for he taught men to give tribute to Caesar, and not to *resist evil*, but to take up the cross. The Roman governor, at his trial, could *find no fault in him*. There was more danger of the Romans' being incensed against the Jewish nation by the priests than by Christ. Note, Pretended fears are often the colour of malicious designs.

(b.) Had there really been some danger of displeasing the Romans by tolerating Christ's preaching, yet this would not justify their hating and persecuting a good man. Note,

[a.] The enemies of Christ and his gospel have often coloured their enmity with a seeming care for the *public good* and the *common safety*, and, in order to this, have branded his prophets and ministers as troublers of Israel, and men that *turn the world upside down*.

[b.] Carnal policy commonly sets up *reasons of state*, in opposition to *rules of justice*. When men are concerned for their own wealth and safety more than for truth and duty, it is wisdom from beneath, which is *earthly, sensual, and devilish*. But see what was the issue; they pretended to be afraid that their tolerating Christ's gospel would bring desolation upon them by the Romans, and therefore, *right or wrong*, set themselves against it; but it proved that their persecuting the gospel brought upon them that which they feared, filled up the measure of their iniquity, and the Romans came and *took away their place and nation*, and their place *knows them no more*. Note, That calamity, which we seek to escape by sin we take the most effectual course to bring upon our own heads; and those who think by opposing Christ's kingdom to secure or advance their own secular interest will find

Jerusalem a more *burdensome stone* than they think it is, ~~308~~ Zechariah 12:3. The *fear of the wicked it shall come upon them*, ~~309~~ Proverbs 10:24.

(3.) Caiaphas makes a malicious but mystical speech in the council on this occasion.

[1.] The *malice* of it appears evident at first view, v. 49, 50. He, being the high priest, and so president of the council, took upon him to decide the matter before it was debated: “*You know nothing at all*, your hesitating betrays your ignorance, for it is not a thing that will bear a dispute, it is soon determined, if you consider that received maxim, *That it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people.*” Here,

First, The counsellor was Caiaphas, who was *high priest that same year*. The high priesthood was by divine appointment settled upon the heir male of the house of Aaron, for and during the term of his natural life, and then to his heir male; but in those degenerate times it was become, though not an annual office, like a consulship, yet frequently changed, as they could make an interest with the Roman powers. Now it happened that *this year* Caiaphas wore the mitre.

Secondly, The drift of the advice was, in short, this, That some way or other must be found out to put Jesus to death. We have reason to think that they strongly suspected him to be indeed the Messiah; but his doctrine was so contrary to their darling traditions and secular interest, and his design did so thwart their notions of the Messiah's kingdom, that they resolve, be he who he will, he must be put to death. Caiaphas does not say, Let him be silenced, imprisoned, banished, though amply sufficient for the *restraint* of one they thought dangerous; but *die he must*. Note, Those that have set themselves against Christianity have commonly divested themselves of humanity, and been infamous for cruelty.

Thirdly, This is plausibly insinuated, with all the subtlety as well as malice of the old serpent.

1. He suggests his own sagacity, which we must suppose him as high priest to excel in, though the *Urim* and *Thummim* were long since lost. How scornfully does he say, “*You know nothing*, who are but common priests; but you must give me leave to see further into things than you do!” Thus it is common for those in authority to impose their corrupt

dictates by virtue of that; and, because they *should be* the wisest and best, to expect that every body should believe they *are so*.

2. He takes it for granted that the case is plain and past dispute, and that those are very ignorant who do not see it to be so. Note, Reason and justice are often run down with a high hand. *Truth is fallen in the streets*, and, when it is down, down with it; and *equity cannot enter*, and, when it is out, out with it, ²⁵⁹⁴ Isaiah 59:14.

3. He insists upon a maxim in politics, That the welfare of communities is to be preferred before that of particular persons. *It is expedient for us* as priests, whose all lies at stake, that *one man die for the people*. Thus far it holds true, that it is *expedient*, and more than so, it is truly *honourable*, for a man to hazard his life in the service of his country (²⁵⁹⁵ Philippians 2:17; ²⁵⁹⁶ 1 John 3:16); but to put an innocent man to death under colour of consulting the public safety is the devil's policy. Caiaphas craftily insinuates that the greatest and best man, though *major singulis* — *greater than any one individual*, is *minor universis* — *less than the collected mass*, and ought to think his life well spent, nay well lost, to save his country from ruin. But what is this to the murdering of one that was evidently a great blessing under pretence of preventing an imaginary mischief to the country? The case ought to have been put thus: Was it expedient for them to bring upon themselves and upon their nation the guilt of blood, a prophet's blood, for the securing of their civil interests from a danger which they had no just reason to be afraid of? Was it expedient for them to drive God and their glory from them, rather than venture the Romans' displeasure, who could do them no harm if they had God on their side? Note, Carnal policy, which steers only by secular considerations, while it thinks to *save all* by sin, *ruins all* at last.

[2.] The *mystery* that was in this counsel of Caiaphas does not appear at first view, but the evangelist leads us into it (v. 51, 52): *This spoke he not of himself*, it was not only the language of his own enmity and policy, but in these words he prophesied, though he himself was not aware of it, *that Jesus should die for that nation*. Here is a precious comment upon a pernicious text; the counsel of cursed Caiaphas so construed as to fall in with the counsels of the blessed God. Charity teaches us to put the most favourable construction upon men's words and actions that they will fear; but piety teaches us to make a good improvement of them, even contrary

to that for which they were intended. If wicked men, in what they *do* against us, *are God's hand* to humble and reform us, why may they not in what they say against us be God's mouth to instruct and convince us? But in this of Caiaphas there was an extraordinary direction of Heaven prompting him to say that which was capable of a very sublime sense. As the hearts of all men are in God's hand, so are their tongues. Those are deceived who say, "*Our tongues are our own*, so that either we *may* say what we will, and are not accountable to God's judgment, or we *can* say what we will, and are not restrainable by his providence and power." Balaam could not say what he would, when he came to curse Israel, nor Laban when he pursued Jacob.

(4.) The evangelist explains and enlarges upon Caiaphas's words.

[1.] He explains what he said, and shows how it not only was, but was intended to be, accommodated to an excellent purpose. He did not *speak it of himself*. As it was an artifice to stir up the council against Christ, he spoke it of himself, or of the devil rather; but as it was an *oracle*, declaring it the purpose and design of God by the death of Christ to save God's spiritual Israel from sin and wrath, he did not speak it of himself, for he knew nothing of the matter, he *meant not so, neither did his heart think so*, for nothing was in his heart but to destroy and cut off, ^{<230>} Isaiah 10:7.

First, He *prophesied*, and those that prophesied did not, in their prophesying, *speak of themselves*. But is Caiaphas also among the prophets? He is so, *pro hfc vice* — *this once*, though a bad man, and an implacable enemy to Christ and his gospel. Note,

1. God can and often does make wicked men instruments to serve his own purposes, even contrary to their own intentions; for he has them not only *in a chain*, to restrain them from doing the mischief they would, but *in a bridle*, to lead them to do the service they would not.
2. Words of prophecy in the mouth are no infallible evidence of a principle of grace in the heart. *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?* will be rejected as a frivolous plea.

Secondly, He *prophesied, being high priest that year*; not that his being high priest did at all dispose or qualify him to be a prophet; we cannot suppose the pontifical mitre to have first inspired with prophecy the basest head that ever wore it; but,

1. Being high priest, and therefore of note and eminence in the conclave, God was pleased to put this significant word into his mouth rather than into the mouth of any other, that it might be the more observed or the non-observance of it the more aggravated. The apophthegms of great men have been thought worthy of special regard: *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king*; therefore this divine sentence was put into the lips of the high priest, that even out of his mouth this word might be established, That Christ died for *the good of the nation*, and not *for any iniquity in his hands*. He happened to be high priest that year which was fixed to be the *year of the redeemed*, when Messiah the prince *must be cut off, but not for himself* (^{270B}Daniel 9:26), and he must own it.

2. Being high priest *that year*, that famous year, in which there was to be such a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, more than had ever been yet, according to the prophecy (^{270B}Joel 2:28, 29, compared with ^{407B}Acts 2:17), some drops of the blessed shower light upon Caiaphas, as the crumbs (says Dr. Lightfoot) of the children's bread, which fall from the table among the dogs. This year was the year of the expiration of the Levitical priesthood; and out of the mouth of him who was that year high priest was extorted an implicit resignation of it to him who should not (as they had done for many ages) offer beasts for that nation, but offer himself, and so make an end of the *sin-offering*. This resignation he made *inwittingly*, as Isaac gave the blessing to Jacob.

Thirdly, The matter of his prophecy was *that Jesus should die for that nation*, the very thing to which all the prophets bore witness, who *testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ* (^{401B}1 Peter 1:11), that the death of Christ must be the life and salvation of Israel; he meant by *that nation* those in it that obstinately adhered to Judaism, but God meant those in it that would receive the doctrine of Christ, and become followers of him, all believers, the spiritual seed of Abraham. The death of Christ, which Caiaphas was now projecting, proved the ruin of that interest in the nation of which he intended it should be the security and establishment, for it brought wrath upon them to the uttermost; but it proved the advancement of that interest of which he hoped it would have been the ruin, for Christ, being lifted up from the earth, drew all men unto him. It is a great thing that is here prophesied: That Jesus should *die*, die for others, not only *for their good*, but *in their stead, dies for that nation*, for they had the first offer made them of salvation by his death. If the whole nation of the Jews

had unanimously believed in Christ, and received his gospel, they had been not only saved eternally, but saved as a nation from their grievances. The fountain was first *opened to the house of David*, ^{<380>}Zechariah 13:1. He so died for *that nation* as that *the whole nation should not perish*, but that *a remnant should be saved*, ^{<515>}Romans 11:5.

[2.] The evangelist enlarges upon this word of Caiaphas (v. 52), *not for that nation only*, how much soever it thought itself the darling of Heaven, but *that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad*. Observe here,

First, The persons Christ died for: *Not for the nation of the Jews only* (it would have been comparatively but *a light thing* for the Son of God to go through so vast an undertaking only to restore the *preserved of Jacob*, and *the outcasts of Israel*); no, he must be *salvation to the ends of the earth*, ^{<395>}Isaiah 49:6. He must die for *the children of God that were scattered abroad*.

1. Some understand it of the children of God that were then *in being*, scattered abroad in the Gentile world, *devout men* of every nation (^{<405>}Acts 2:5), that *feared God* (^{<400>}Acts 10:2), and worshipped him (^{<404>}Acts 17:4), proselytes of the gate, who served the God of Abraham, but submitted not to the ceremonial law of Moses, persons that had a savour of natural religion, but were *dispersed* in the nations, had no solemn assemblies of their own, nor any peculiar profession to unite in or distinguish themselves by. Now Christ died to incorporate these in one great society, to be denominated from him and governed by him; and this was the setting up of a standard, to which all that had a regard to God and a concern for their souls might have recourse, and under which they might enlist themselves.

2. Others take in with these all that belong to the election of grace, who are called the children of God, though not yet born, because they are *predestinated to the adoption of children*, ^{<405>}Ephesians 1:5. Now these are *scattered abroad* in several *places of the earth*, out of all kindreds and tongues (^{<609>}Revelation 7:9), and in several *ages of the world*, to the end of time; there are those that *fear him throughout all generations*, to all these he had an eye in the atonement he made by his blood; as he prayed, so he died, for *all that should believe on him*.

Secondly, The purpose and intention of his death concerning those persons; he died to *gather in* those who wandered, and to *gather together in one* those who were scattered; to invite those to him who were at a distance from him, and to unite those in him who were at a distance from each other. Christ's dying is,

1. The great *attractive of our hearts*; for this end he is lifted up, to draw men to him. The conversion of souls is the gathering to them in to Christ as their ruler and refuge, as the doves to their windows; and he died to effect this. By dying he purchased them to himself, and the gift of the Holy Ghost for them; his love in dying for us is the great loadstone of our love.

2. The great *centre of our unity*. He gathers them together *in one*, ^{<400>}Ephesians 1:10. They are one with him, one body, one spirit, and one with each other in him. All the saints in all places and ages meet in Christ, as all the members in the head, and all the branches in the root. Christ by the merit of his death recommended all the saints in *one* to the grace and favour of God (^{<301>}Hebrews 2:11-13), and by the motive of his death recommends them all severally to the love and affection one of another, ^{<433>}John 13:34.

(5.) The result of this debate is a resolve of the council to put Jesus to death (v. 53): *From that day they took counsel together, to put him to death*. They now understood one another's minds, and so each was fixed in his own, that Jesus must die; and, it should seem, a committee was appointed to sit, *de die in diem* — *daily*, to consider of it, to consult about it, and to receive proposals for effecting it. Note, The wickedness of the wicked ripens by degrees, ^{<3015>}James 1:15; ^{<3070>}Ezekiel 7:10. Two considerable advances were now made in their accursed design against Christ.

[1.] What before they had thought of *severally* now they *jointly* concurred in, and so strengthened the hands one of another in this wickedness, and proceeded with the greater assurance. Evil men confirm and encourage themselves and one another in evil practices, by comparing notes; men of corrupt minds bless themselves when they find others of *the same mind*: then the wickedness which before seemed impracticable appears not only possible, but easy to be effected, *vis unita fortior* — *energies, when united, become more efficient*.

[2.] What before they wished done, but *wanted a colour for*, now they are furnished with a plausible pretence to justify themselves in, which will serve, if not to take off the guilt (that is the least of their care), yet to take off the odium, and so satisfy, if not the personal, yet the political conscience, as some subtly distinguish. Many will go on very securely in doing an evil thing as long as they have but something to say in excuse for it. Now this resolution of theirs to put him to death, right or wrong, proves that all the formality of a trial, which he afterwards underwent, was but show and pretence; they were before determined what to do.

(6.) Christ hereupon absconded, knowing very well what was the vote of their close cabal, v. 54.

[1.] He suspended his public appearances: *He walked no more openly among the Jews*, among the inhabitants of Judea, who were properly called Jews, especially those at Jerusalem; *ou periepatei* — *he did not walk up and down* among them, did not go from place to place, preaching and working miracles with the freedom and openness that he had done, but while he staid in Judea, he was there *incognito*. Thus the chief priests put the light of Israel *under a bushel*.

[2.] He withdrew into an obscure part of the country, so obscure that the name of the town he retired to is scarcely met with any where else. He went to a country *near the wilderness*, as if he were driven out from among men, or rather wishing, with Jeremiah, that he might have in the wilderness a *lodging place of way-faring men*, ^{<249>}Jeremiah 9:2. He entered into a city called Ephraim, some think Ephratah, that is, Bethlehem, where he was born, and which bordered upon the wilderness of Judah; others think Ephron, or Ephraim, mentioned ^{<1439>}2 Chronicles 13:19. Thither his disciples went with him; neither would they leave him in solitude, nor would he leave them in danger. There he continued, *dietribe*, there he *conversed*, he knew how to improve this time of retirement in private conversation, when he had not an opportunity of preaching publicly. He *conversed with his disciples*, who were his family, when he was forced from the temple, and his *diatribai*, or *discourses* there, no doubt, were very edifying. We must do the good we can, when we cannot do the good we would. But why would Christ abscond now? It was not because he either feared the power of his enemies or distrusted his own power; he had many ways to save himself, and was neither averse to suffering nor unprepared for it; but he retired, *First*, To put a mark of his displeasure

upon Jerusalem and the people of the Jews. They rejected him and his gospel; justly therefore did he remove himself and his gospel from them. The prince of *teachers* was now *removed into a corner* (⁻²³¹⁰ Isaiah 30:20); there was *no open vision* of him; and it was a sad presage of that thick darkness which was shortly to come upon Jerusalem, because she knew not the day of her visitation. *Secondly*, To render the cruelty of his enemies against him the more inexcusable. If that which was grievous to them, and thought dangerous to the public, was his *public appearance*, he would try whether their anger would be turned away by his retirement into privacy; when David had fled to Gath, Saul was satisfied, and sought no more for him, ⁻⁴⁰⁷⁴1 Samuel 27:4. But it was the *life*, the precious life, that these wicked men hunted after. *Thirdly*, His hour was *not yet come*, and therefore he declined danger, and did it in a way common to men, both to warrant and encourage the flight of his servants in time of persecution and to comfort those who are forced from their usefulness, and buried alive in privacy and obscurity; *the disciple is not better than his Lord*. *Fourthly*, His retirement, for awhile, was to make his return into Jerusalem, when his hour was come, the more remarkable and illustrious. This swelled the acclamations of joy with which his well-wishers welcomed him at his next public appearance, when he rode triumphantly into the city.

(7.) The strict enquiry made for him during his recess, v. 55-57.

[1.] The occasion of it was the approach of the passover, at which they expected his presence, according to custom (v. 55): *The Jews' passover was nigh at hand*; a festival which shone bright in their calendar, and which there was great expectation of for some time before. This was Christ's fourth and last passover, since he entered upon his public ministry, and it might truly be said (as, ⁻⁴⁴⁵⁸2 Chronicles 35:18), *There never was such a passover in Israel*, for in it *Christ our passover was sacrificed for us*. Now the passover being at hand, *many went out* of all parts of the country to Jerusalem, to purify themselves. This was either, *First*, A *necessary purification* of those who had contracted any ceremonial pollution; they came to be sprinkled with the *water of purification*, and to perform the other rites of cleansing according to the law, for they might not eat the passover in their uncleanness, ⁻⁴⁰⁹⁶Numbers 9:6. Thus before our gospel passover we must renew our repentance, and by faith wash in the blood of Christ, and so *compass God's altar*. Or, *Secondly*, A *voluntary purification*, or self-sequestration, by fasting and prayer, and other religious exercises, which many that were more devout than their

neighbours spent some time in before the passover, and chose to do it at Jerusalem, because of the advantage of the temple-service. Thus must we by solemn preparation set bounds about the mount on which we expect to meet with God.

[2.] The enquiry was very solicitous: *They said, What think you, that he will not come to the feast?* v. 56.

First, Some think this was said by those who wished well to him, and expected his coming, that they might hear his doctrine and see his miracles. Those who came early out of the country, that they might purify themselves, were very desirous to meet with Christ, and perhaps came up the sooner with that expectation, and therefore *as they stood in the temple*, the place of their purification, they enquired what news of Christ? Could any body give them hopes of seeing him? If there were those, and those of the most devout people, and best affected to religion, who showed this respect to Christ, it was a check to the enmity of the chief priests, and a witness against them.

Secondly, It should rather seem that they were his enemies who made this enquiry after him, who wished for an opportunity to lay hands on him. They, seeing the town begin to fill with devout people out of the country, wondered they did not find him among them. When they should have been assisting those that came to purify themselves, according to the duty of their place, they were plotting against Christ. How miserably degenerate was the Jewish church, when the priests of the Lord were become like the priests of the calves, a *snare upon Mizpeh, and a net spread upon Tabor*, and were *profound to make slaughter* (~~xxx~~Hosea 5:1, 2), — when, instead of keeping the feast with unleavened bread, they were themselves soured with the leaven of the worst malice! Their asking, *What think you? Will he not come up to the feast?* implies,

1. An invidious reflection upon Christ, as if he would omit his attendance on the feast of the Lord for fear of exposing himself. If others, through irreligion, be absent, they are not animadverted upon; but if Christ be absent, for his own preservation (for God will have mercy, and not sacrifice), it is turned to his reproach, as it was to David's that his seat was empty at the feast, though Saul wanted him only that he might have an opportunity of nailing him to the wall with his javelin, ~~xxxv~~1 Samuel 20:25-27, etc. It is sad to see holy ordinances prostituted to such unholy purposes.

2. A fearful apprehension that they had of missing their game: “*Will he not come up to the feast?* If he do not, our measures are broken, and we are all undone; for there is no sending a pursuivant into the country, to fetch him up.”

[3.] The orders issued out by the government for the apprehending of him were very strict, v. 57. The great sanhedrim issued out a proclamation, strictly charging and requiring that if any person in city or country *knew where he was* (pretending that he was a criminal, and had fled from justice) they should show it, that he might be taken, probably promising a reward to any that would discover him, and imposing a penalty on such as harboured him; so that hereby he was represented to the people as an obnoxious dangerous man, an outlaw, whom any one might have a blow at. Saul issued out such a proclamation for the apprehending of David, and Ahab of Elijah. See, *First*, How intent they were upon this prosecution, and how indefatigably they laboured in it, now at a time when, if they had had any sense of religion and the duty of their function, they would have found something else to do. *Secondly*, How willing they were to involve others in the guilt with them; if any man were capable of betraying Christ, they would have him think himself bound to do it. Thus was the interest they had in the people abused to the worst purposes. Note, It is an aggravation of the sins of wicked rulers that they commonly make those that are under them instruments of their unrighteousness. But notwithstanding this proclamation, though doubtless many knew where he was, yet such was his interest in the affections of some, and such God's hold of the consciences of others, that he continued undiscovered, for the *Lord hid him*.