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COMMENTARY

**DARBY'S SYNOPSIS OF THE
BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
PART 2: NEW TESTAMENT**

by John Nelson Darby

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John Nelson Darby, 1800-1882

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THE NEW TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS

The Gospels, in general, develop these characters of Christ, not in a dogmatic manner (that of John alone having to a certain degree that form), but by so relating the history of the Lord as to present Him in these different characters, in a much more living way than if it were only set before us in doctrine. The Lord speaks according to such or such a character; He acts in the one or in the other; so that we see Him Himself accomplishing that which belonged to the different positions that we know to be His according to scripture.

Thus, not only is the character much better known in its moral details, according to its true scriptural import, as well as the meaning and purpose of God therein revealed, but Christ Himself becomes in these characters more personally the object of faith and of the heart's affections. It is a Person whom we know, and not merely a doctrine. By this precious means which God had deigned to use, truths with respect to Jesus are much more connected with all that went before, with the Old Testament history. The change in God's dealings is linked with the glory of the Person of Christ, in connection with which this transition from God's relations with Israel and the world to the heavenly and christian order took place. This heavenly system, while possessing a character more entirely distinct from Judaism than would have been the case if the Lord had not come, is not a doctrine that nullifies, by contradicting, that which preceded it. When Christ came, He presented Himself to the Jews as on the one hand subject to the law, and on the other as the Seed in whom the promises were to be fulfilled. He was rejected; so that this people, not only had broken the law, which they had done from Sinai on,* but forfeited all right to the promises, and promises without condition always distinguished (see Romans 10). God could then bring in the fullness of His grace. At the same time the types the figures, had their accomplishment; the curse of the law was executed; the prophecies that related to the humiliation of Christ were fulfilled; and the relations of all souls with God — always necessarily attached to His Person, when once He had appeared — were connected with the position taken by the Redeemer in heaven. Thence the door was opened to the Gentiles, and the purpose of God with respect to the assembly, the body

of the ascended Christ, fully revealed. Son of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power by resurrection from the dead, He was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. He was the firstborn from the dead, the head of His body the assembly, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.

[* It is solemn but instructive to remark that in everything God has set up, the first thing man has done has been to ruin it. Man himself first of all. Then Noah, the new head of the world, he got drunk. Then the golden calf when the law was given, the priesthood offering strange fire the first day. Solomon turning to idolatry and ruining the kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar making the golden image and persecuting the servants of the true God. God went on in grace, but the system was fallen. So I doubt not with the church. All will be made good more gloriously in the second Adam.]

The glory of the new order of things was so much the more excellent, so much the more exalted above all the earthly order that had preceded it, that it was attached to the Person of the Lord Himself, and to Him as man glorified in the presence of God His Father. And at the same time, that which took place puts its seal upon all that had preceded it, as having had its true place, and having been ordained of God; for the Lord presented Himself on earth in connection with the system that existed before He came.

The first three Gospels give to us the presentation of Christ to responsible man, and especially to Israel. John presents to us the divine and eternal character of the Lord Himself, Israel from chapter I being viewed as having rejected Him, and themselves hardened and rejected, and the world as insensible to the presence of its Creator; hence effectual and sovereign grace, and being born again, and the cross as the foundation of heavenly things, come fully out in this Gospel.

MATTHEW

Let us now consider the Gospel by Matthew. This Gospel sets Christ before us in the character of the Son of David and of Abraham, that is to say, in connection with the promises made to Israel, but presents Him withal as Emmanuel, Jehovah the Savior, for such the Christ was. It is He who, being received, should have accomplished the promises (and hereafter He will do so) in favor of this beloved people. This Gospel is in fact the history of His rejection by the people, and consequently that of the condemnation of the people themselves, so far as their responsibility was concerned (for the counsels of God cannot fail), and the substitution of that which God was going to bring in according to His purpose.

In proportion as the character of the King and of the kingdom develops itself, and arouses the attention of the leaders of the people, they oppose it, and deprive themselves, as well as the people who follow them, of all the blessings connected with the presence of the Messiah. The Lord declares to them the consequences of this, and shows His disciples the position of the kingdom which should be set up on the earth after His rejection, and also the glories which should result from it to Himself and to His people with Him. And in His Person, and as regards His work, the foundation of the assembly also is revealed the church as built by Himself. In a word, consequent on His rejection by Israel, first the kingdom as it exists now is revealed (chap. 13), then the church (chap. 16), and then the kingdom in the glory (chap. 17).

At length, after His resurrection, a new commission, addressed to all nations, is given to the apostles sent out by Jesus as risen.*

[* This was from resurrection in Galilee; not from heaven and glory, that was near Damascus.]

The object of the Spirit of God, in this Gospel, being to present Jehovah as fulfilling the promises made to Israel, and the prophecies that relate to the Messiah (and no one can fail to be struck with the number of references to their fulfillment), He commences with the genealogy of the Lord, starting from David and Abraham, the two stocks from which the

Messianic genealogy sprang, and to which the promises had been made. The genealogy is divided into three periods, conformably to three great divisions of the history of the people: from Abraham to the establishment of royalty, in the person of David; from the establishment of royalty to the captivity; and from the captivity to Jesus.

We may observe that the Holy Ghost mentions, in this genealogy, the grievous sins committed by the persons whose names are given, magnifying the sovereign grace of God who could bestow a Savior in connection with such sins as those of Judah, with a poor Moabitess brought in amidst His people, and with crimes like those of David.

It is the legal genealogy which is given here, that is to say, the genealogy of Joseph, of whom Christ was the rightful heir according to Jewish law. The evangelist has omitted three kings of the parentage of Ahab, in order to have the fourteen generations in each period. Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim are also omitted. The object of the genealogy is not at all affected by this circumstance. The point was to give it as recognized by the Jews, and all the kings were well known to all.

The evangelist briefly relates the facts concerning the birth of Jesus, facts which are of infinite and eternal importance, not only to the Jews, who were immediately interested in them, but to ourselves facts in which God has deigned to link His own glory with our interests, with man.

Mary was betrothed to Joseph. Her posterity was consequently legally that of Joseph, as to the rights of inheritance; but the child she carried in her womb was of divine origin, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. The angel of Jehovah is sent, as the instrument of providence, to satisfy the tender conscience and upright heart of Joseph, by communicating to him that that which Mary had conceived was of the Holy Ghost.

We may remark here, that the angel on this occasion addresses Joseph as "son of David." The Holy Ghost thus draws our attention to the relationship of Joseph (the reputed father of Jesus) to David, Mary being called his wife. The angel gives at the same time the name of Jesus (that is, Jehovah the Savior) to the child that should be born. He applies this name to the deliverance of Israel from the condition into which sin had plunged

them.* All these circumstances happened, in order to fulfill that which Jehovah had said by the mouth of His prophet, “Behold a the] virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

[* It is written, “For he shall save his people,” thus plainly showing the title of Jehovah contained in the word Jesus or Jehoshua. For Israel was the people of the Lord, that is, of Jehovah.]

Here then is that which the Spirit of God sets before us in these few verses: Jesus, the Son of David, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost; Jehovah, the Savior, who delivers Israel from their sins; God with them; He who accomplished those marvelous prophecies which, more or less plainly, drew the outline that the Lord Jesus alone could fill up.

Joseph, a just man, simple in heart and obedient, discerns without difficulty the revelation of the Lord, and obeys it.

These titles stamp the character of this Gospel, that is, of the way Christ is presented in it. And how wonderful this revelation of Him by whom the words and promises of Jehovah were to be fulfilled! What a groundwork of truth for the understanding of what this glorious and mysterious Person was, of whom the Old Testament had said enough to awaken the desires and to confound the minds of the people to whom He was given!

Born of a woman, born under the law, heir to all the rights of David according to the flesh, also the Son of God, Jehovah the Savior, God with His people: who could comprehend or fathom the mystery of His nature in whom all these things were combined? His life in fact, as we shall see, displays the obedience of the perfect man, the perfections and the power of God.

The titles which we have just named, and which we read in chapter 1:20-23, are connected with His glory in the midst of Israel — that is to say, the heir of David, Jesus the Savior of His people, and Emmanuel. His birth of the Holy Ghost accomplished Psalm 2:7 with regard to Him as a man born on the earth. The name of Jesus, and His conception by the power of the Holy Ghost, no doubt go beyond this relationship, but are linked also in an especial manner with His position in Israel.*

[* The wider relationship is more distinctively given in the Gospel of Luke, where His genealogy is traced up to Adam; but here the title of Son of man is specially appropriate.]

CHAPTER 2. Thus born, thus characterised by the angel and fulfilling the prophecies that announced the presence of Emmanuel, He is formally acknowledged King of the Jews by the Gentiles, who are guided by the will of God acting on the hearts of their wise men.* That is to say, we find the Lord, Emmanuel, the Son of David, Jehovah the Savior, the Son of God, born King of the Jews, recognised by the heads of the Gentiles. This is the testimony of God in Matthew's Gospel, and the character in which Jesus is there presented. Afterwards, in the presence of Jesus thus revealed, we see the leaders of the Jews in connection with a foreign king, knowing however as a system the revelations of God in His word, but wholly indifferent to Him who was their object; and this king, the fierce enemy of the Lord, the true King and Messiah, seeking to put Him to death.

[* The star does not lead the wise men from their own country to Judea. It pleased God to present this testimony to Herod and to the leaders of the people. Having been directed by the word (the meaning of which was declared by the chief priests and scribes themselves, and according to which Herod sent them to Bethlehem), they again see the star which they had seen in their own country, which conducts them to the house. Their visit also took place some time after the birth of Jesus. No doubt they first saw the star at the time of His birth. Herod makes his calculations according to the moment of the star's appearance, which he had carefully ascertained from the lips of the wise men. Their journey must have occupied some time. The birth of Jesus is related in chapter 1. The first verse of chapter 2 should be read, Now Jesus having been born"; it speaks of a time already past. I would also remark here that the Old Testament prophecies are quoted in three ways, which must not be confounded: "that it might be fulfilled", "so that it was fulfilled"; and, "then was fulfilled." In the first case it is the object of the prophecy; Matthew 1:22, 23 is an instance. In the second it is an accomplishment contained in the scope of the prophecy, but not the sole and complete thought of the Holy Ghost; Matthew 2:23 may serve as an example. In the third it is simply a fact which corresponds with the quotation, which in its spirit applies to it, without being its positive object — chapter 2:17, for instance I am not aware that the first two are distinguished in our English translation. Where the sense may require it, I shall hope to point out the difference.]

The providence of God watches over the child born unto Israel, employing means that leave the responsibility of the nation its full place; and that accomplish at the same time all the intentions of God with regard to this

only true remnant of Israel, this only true source of hope for the people. For, out of Him, all would fall and suffer the consequences of being connected with the people.

Gone down into Egypt to avoid the cruel design of Herod to take away His life, He becomes the true Branch; He recommences (that is, morally) the history of Israel in His own Person, as well as (in a wider sense) the history of man as the second Adam in relation with God: only that for this His death must come in — for all, no doubt, for blessing. But He was Son of God and Messiah, Son of David then. But to take His own place as Son of man He must die (see John 12). It is not only the prophecy of Hosea, “out of Egypt have I called my Son, which thus applies to this true beginning of Israel in grace (as the beloved of God), and according to His counsels (the people having entirely failed, so that without this, God must have cut them off). We have seen, in Isaiah, Israel the servant giving place to Christ the Servant, who gathers a faithful remnant (the children whom God has given Him while He hides His face from the house of Jacob), that become the nucleus of the new nation of Israel according to God. Chapter 49 of that prophet gives this transition from Israel to Christ in a striking manner. Moreover this is the basis of all the history of Israel, looked at as having failed under the law, and being re-established in grace. Christ is morally the new stock from which they spring (compare Isaiah 49:3, 5).*

[* In verse 5 Christ assumes this title of Servant. The same substitution of Christ for Israel is found in John 15. Israel had been the vine brought out of Egypt. Christ is the true Vine.]

Herod being dead, God makes it known to Joseph, in a dream, commanding him to return, with the young child and its mother, into the land of Israel. We should remark, that the land is here mentioned by the name that recalls the privileges bestowed by God. It is neither Judea nor Galilee; it is “the land of Israel.” But can the Son of David, in entering it, approach the throne of His fathers? No: He must take the place of a stranger among the despised of His people. Directed by God in a dream, Joseph carries Him into Galilee, whose inhabitants were objects of sovereign contempt to the Jews, as not being in habitual connection with Jerusalem and Judea, the land of David, of the kings acknowledged by God, and of the temple, and where even the dialect of the language common to both betrayed their

practical separation from that part of the nation which, by the favor of God, had returned to Judea from Babylon.

Even in Galilee Joseph establishes himself in a place, the very name of which was a reproach to one who dwelt there, and a blot on his reputation.

Such was the position of the Son of God when He came into this world, and such the relationship of the Son of David with His people, when, by grace and according to the counsels of God, He stood amongst them. On the one hand, Emmanuel, Jehovah their Savior, on the other, the Son of David; but, while taking His place among His people, associated with the poorest and most despised of the flock, sheltered in Galilee from the iniquity of a false king, who, by help of the Gentiles of the fourth monarchy, was reigning over Judea, and with whom the priests and rulers of the people were in connection; the latter, unfaithful to God and dissatisfied with men, proudly detesting a yoke which their sins had brought upon them, and which they dared not shake off, although they were not sufficiently sensible of their sins to submit to it as the just infliction of God. Thus is it that the Messiah is presented to us by this evangelist, or rather by the Holy Ghost, in connection with Israel.

We now begin (chap. 3) His actual history. John the Baptist comes to prepare the way of Jehovah before Him, according to the prophecy of Isaiah; proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and calling on the people to repent. It is by these three things that John's ministry to Israel is characterised in this Gospel. First the Lord Jehovah Himself was coming. The Holy Ghost leaves out the words "for our God," at the end of the verse, because Jesus comes as man in humiliation, although acknowledged at the same time to be Jehovah, and Israel could not be thus owned as entitled to say "our." In the second place the kingdom of heaven* was at hand — that new dispensation which was to take the place of the one which, properly speaking, belonged to Sinai, where the Lord had spoken on the earth. In this new dispensation "the heavens should reign." They should be the source of, and characterise, God's authority in His Christ. Thirdly, the people, instead of being blessed in their present condition, were called to repentance in view of the approach of this kingdom. John therefore takes his place in the wilderness, departing from the Jews, with whom he could not associate himself because he came in the

way of righteousness (chap. 21:32). His food is that which he finds in the wilderness (even his prophetic garments bearing witness to the position which he had taken on the part of God), himself filled with the Holy Ghost.

[* This expression is found only in Matthew, as specially occupied with dispensations, and the dealings of God with the Jews. "The kingdom of God" is the generic term. "The kingdom of heaven" is the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of God as specially taking this character of heavenly government; we shall find it (farther on) separated into the kingdom of our Father, and the kingdom of the Son of man.]

Thus was he a prophet, for he came from God, and addressed himself to the people of God to call them to repentance, and he proclaimed the blessing of God according to the promises of Jehovah their God; but he was more than a prophet, for he declared as an immediate thing the introduction of a new dispensation, long expected, and the advent of the Lord in Person. At the same time, although coming to Israel, he did not own the people, for they were to be judged; the threshing-floor of Jehovah was to be cleansed, the trees that did not bear good fruit to be cut down. It would be a remnant only that Jehovah would place in the new position in the kingdom that he announced, without its being yet revealed in what manner it was to be established. He proclaimed the judgment of the people.

What a fact of immeasurable greatness was the presence of the Lord God in the midst of His people, in the Person of Him who, although He was doubtless to be the fulfillment of all the promises, was necessarily, though rejected, the Judge of all the evil existing among His people!

And the more we give these passages their true application, that is to say, the more we apply them to Israel, the more we apprehend their real force.*

[* And we must remember that, besides the special promises to, and calling, of Israel as God's earthly people, that people were just man viewed in his responsibility to God under the fullest culture that God could give him. Up to the flood there was testimony but no dispensational dealings, or institutions of God. After it, in the new world, human government, calling and promise in Abraham, law, Messiah, God come in grace, everything God could do, and that in perfect patience, was done, and in vain as to good in flesh; and now Israel was being set aside as in the flesh, and the flesh judged, the fig-tree cursed as fruitless, and God's man, the second Adam, He in whom blessing was by redemption, introduced into the world. In the first three Gospels, as we have seen, we have Christ presented to man to be

received; in John, man is set aside and Israel, and God's sovereign ways in grace and resurrection brought in.]

No doubt repentance is an eternal necessity to every soul that approaches God; but what a light is thrown upon this truth, when we see the intervention of the Lord Himself who calls His people to this repentance, setting aside — on their refusal — the whole system of their relationships with Him, and establishing a new dispensation — a kingdom which only belongs to those who hear Him — and causing at length His judgment to break forth against His people and the city which He had so long cherished! “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.” This truth gives room for the exhibition of another and most highly important one, announced here in connection with the sovereign rights of God rather than in its consequences, but which already contained in itself all those consequences. The people from all parts, and as we learn elsewhere especially the ungodly and despised, went out to be baptised, confessing their sins. But those who, in their own eyes, held the chief place among the people, were in the eyes of the prophet who loved the people according to God, the objects of the judgment he announced. Wrath was impending. Who had warned these scornful men to flee from it? Let them humble themselves like the rest; let them take their true place, and prove their change of heart. To boast in the privileges of their nation, or of their fathers, availed nothing before God. He required that which His very nature, His truth, demanded. Moreover He was sovereign; He was able of those stones to raise up children to Abraham. This is what His sovereign grace has done, through Christ, with regard to the Gentiles. There was reality needed. The axe was at the root of the trees, and those that did not bring forth good fruit should be cut down. This is the great moral principle which the judgment was going to put in force. The blow was not yet struck, but the axe was already at the root of the trees. John was come to bring those who received his testimony into a new position, or at least into a new state in which they were prepared for it. On their repentance he would distinguish them from the rest by baptism. But He who was coming after John — He whose shoes John was not worthy to bear — would thoroughly purge His floor, would separate those that were truly His, morally His, from among His people Israel (that was His floor), and would

execute judgment on the rest. John on his part opened the door to repentance beforehand; afterwards should come the judgment.

Judgment was not the only work that belonged to Jesus. Two things are however attributed to Him in John's testimony He baptises with fire — this is the judgment proclaimed in verse 12, which consumes all that is evil. But He baptises also with the Holy Ghost — that Spirit which, given to, and acting in divine energy in man, quickened, redeemed, cleansed in the blood of Christ, brings him out from the influence of all that acts on the flesh, and sets him in connection and in communion with all that is revealed of God, with the glory into which He brings His creatures in the life which He imparts, destroying morally in us the power of all that is contrary to the enjoyment of these privileges.

Observe here, that the only good fruit recognised by John, as the way of escape, is the sincere confession, through grace, of sin. Those only who make this confession escape the axe. There were really no good trees excepting those which confessed that they were bad.

But what a solemn moment was this for the people beloved of God! What an event was the presence of Jehovah in the midst of the nation with whom He stood in relationship!

Observe that John the Baptist does not here present the Messiah as the Savior come in grace, but as the Head of the kingdom, as Jehovah, who would execute judgment if the people did not repent. We shall see afterwards the position which He took in grace.

In verse 13 Jesus Himself, who until now has been presented as the Messiah and even as Jehovah, comes to John to be baptised with the baptism of repentance. We must remember that to come to this baptism was the only good fruit which a Jew, in his then condition, could produce. The act proved itself to be the fruit of a work of God — of the effectual work of the Holy Ghost. He who repents confesses that he has previously walked afar from God; so that it is a new movement, the fruit of God's word and work in him, the sign of a new life, of the life of the Spirit in his soul. By the very fact of John's mission, there was no other fruit, no other admissible proof, of life from God, in a Jew. We are not to infer from this, that there were none in whom the Spirit already acted vitally; but, in this

condition of the people and according to the call of God by His servant, that was the proof of this life — of the turning of the heart to God. These were the true remnant of the people, those whom God acknowledged as such; and it was thus they were separated from the mass who were ripening for judgment. These were the true saints — the excellent of the earth; although the self-abasement of repentance could be their only true place. It was there they must begin. When God brings in mercy and justice, they avail themselves thankfully of the former, confessing it to be their only resource, and they bow their heart before the latter, as the just consequence of the condition of God's people, but as applying it to themselves.

Now Jesus presents Himself in the midst of those who do this. Although truly the Lord, Jehovah, the righteous Judge of His people, He who was to purge His floor, He nevertheless takes His place among the faithful remnant who humble themselves before this judgment. He takes the place of the lowest of His people before God; as in Psalm 16 He calls Jehovah His Lord, saying unto Him, "My goodness extendeth not to Thee"; and says to the saints, and the excellent in the earth, "all my delight is in them." Perfect testimony of grace — the Savior identifying Himself, according to this grace, with the first movement of the Spirit in the hearts of His own people, humbling Himself not only in the condescension of grace towards them, but in taking His place as one of them in their true position before God; not merely to comfort their hearts by such kindness, but in order to sympathise with all their sorrows and their difficulties; in order to be the pattern, the source, and the perfect expression of every sentiment suitable to their position.

With wicked unrepentant Israel He could not associate Himself, but with the first living effect of the word and Spirit of God in the poor of the flock, He could and did in grace. He does so now. With the first right step, one really of God, Christ is found.

But there was yet more. He comes to bring those who received Him into relation with God, according to the favor which rested on perfectness like His, and on the love which, by taking up His people's cause, satisfied the heart of the Lord, and, having perfectly glorified God in all that He is, made it possible for Him to satisfy Himself with goodness. We know

indeed that in order to do this, the Savior had to lay down His life, because the condition of the Jew, as that of every man, required this sacrifice before either the one or the other could stand in relation with the God of truth. But even for this the love of Jesus did not fail. Here however He is leading them on to the enjoyment of the blessing expressed in His Person, which should be securely founded on that sacrifice — blessing which they must reach by the path of repentance, into which they entered by John's baptism; which Jesus received with them, that they might go on together towards the possession of all the good things which God has prepared for them that loved Him.

John, feeling the dignity and excellency of the Person of Him who came unto him, opposes the Lord's intention. The Holy Ghost by this brings out the true character of the Lord's action. As to Himself, it was righteousness which brought Him there, and not sin — righteousness which He accomplished in love. He, as well as John the Baptist, fulfilled that which belonged to the place assigned Him by God. With what condescension He links Himself at the same time with John — "It becometh us." He is the lowly and obedient Servant. It was thus He ever behaved Himself on earth. Moreover, as to His position, grace brought Jesus there, where sin brought us, who came in by the door the Lord had opened for His sheep. In confessing sin as it is, in coming before God in the confession of (the opposite of sin morally) our sin, we find ourselves in company with Jesus.* Indeed it is in us the fruit of His Spirit. This was the case with the poor sinners who came out to John. Thus it was that Jesus took His place in righteousness and obedience among men, and more exactly among the repentant Jews. It is in this position of a manrighteous, obedient, and fulfilling on earth, in perfect humility, the work for which He had offered Himself in grace, according to Psalm 40, giving Himself up to the accomplishment of all the will of God in complete renunciation — that God His Father fully acknowledged Him, and sealed Him, declaring Him on earth to be His well-beloved Son.

[* It is the same thing as to the sense of our nothingness. He made Himself nothing, and in the consciousness of our nothingness we find ourselves with Him, and at the same time are filled with His fullness. Even when we fall, it is not until we are brought to know ourselves as we really are that we find Jesus raising us up again.]

Being baptised — the most striking token of the place He had taken with His people — the heavens are opened unto Him, and He sees the Holy Ghost descending on Him like a dove; and, lo! a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

But these circumstances demand attention.

Never were the heavens opened to the earth, nor to a man on the earth, before the beloved Son was there.* God had doubtless, in His longsuffering and in the way of providence, blessed all His creatures; He had also blessed His own people, according to the rules of His government on earth. Besides this, there were the elect, whom He had preserved in faithfulness. Nevertheless until now the heavens had not been opened. A testimony had been sent by God in connection with His government of the earth; but there was no object on the earth upon which the eye of God could rest with complacency, until Jesus, sinless and obedient, His beloved Son, stood there. But what is so precious to us is, that it is as soon as in grace He takes publicly this place of humiliation with Israel — that is, with the faithful remnant, presenting Himself thus before God, fulfilling His will — the heavens open upon an object worthy of their attention. Ever doubtless was He worthy of their adoration, even before the world was. But now He has just taken this place in the dealings of God as a man, and the heavens opened unto Jesus, the object of God’s entire affection on the earth. The Holy Ghost descends upon Him visibly. And He, a man on earth, a man taking His place with the meek of the people who repented, is acknowledged as the Son of God. He is not only anointed of God, but, as man, He is conscious of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him — the seal of the Father set upon Him. Here it is evidently not His divine nature, in the character of the Eternal Son of the Father. The seal would not even be in conformity with that character; and as to His Person it is manifested, and His consciousness of it, at twelve years old in Luke’s Gospel. But while He is such, He is also a man, the Son of God on the earth, and is sealed as a man. As a man He has the consciousness of the immediate presence of the Holy Ghost with Him. This presence is in connection with the character of lowliness, meekness, and obedience, in which the Lord appeared down here. It is “like a dove” that the Holy Ghost descends upon Him; just as it was in the form of tongues of fire, that He came down upon the heads of the disciples, for their testimony in power in this world,

according to the grace which addressed each and every one in his own language.

[* In the beginning of Ezekiel, it is said indeed that the heavens were opened; but this was only in vision, as the prophet himself explains. In that instance it was the manifestation of God in judgment.]

Jesus thus creates in His own position as man the place into which He introduces us by redemption (John 20:17). But the glory of His Person is always carefully guarded. There is no object presented to Jesus, as to Saul for instance, and, in a still more analogous case, to Stephen, who, being full of the Spirit, sees also the heavens opened, and looks up into them, and sees Jesus, the Son of man, and is transformed into His image. Jesus has come; He is Himself the object over whom the heavens open; He has no transforming object, as Stephen, or as we ourselves in the Spirit; heaven looks down at Him, the perfect object of delight. It is His relationship with His Father, already existing, which is sealed.* Neither does the Holy Ghost create His character (except so far as, with respect to His human nature, He was conceived in the virgin Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Ghost); He had connected Himself with the poor, in the perfection of that character, before He was sealed, and then acts according to the energy and the power of that which He received without measure in His human life here below (compare Acts 10:38, Matthew 12:28, John 3:34).

[* This is true also of us when we are in that relationship by grace.]

We find in the word four memorable occasions on which the heavens open. Christ is the object of each of these revelations; each has its especial character. Here the Holy Ghost descends upon Him, and He is acknowledged the Son of God (compare John 1:33, 34). At the end of the same chapter of John, He declares Himself to be the Son of man. There it is the angels of God who ascend and descend upon Him. He is, as Son of man, the object of their ministry.* At the end of Acts 7 an entirely new scene is opened. The Jews reject the last testimony that God sends them. Stephen, by whom this testimony is rendered, is filled with the Holy Ghost, and the heavens are opened to him. The earthly system was definitely closed by the rejection of the Holy Ghost's testimony to the glory of the ascended Christ. But this is not merely a testimony. The Christian is filled with the Spirit, heaven is opened to him, the glory of God is manifested to him, and the Son of man appears to him, standing at

the right hand of God. This is a different thing from the heavens open over Jesus, the object of God's delight on earth. It is heaven open to the Christian himself, his object being there when rejected on earth. He sees there by the Holy Ghost the heavenly glory of God, and Jesus, the Son of man, the special object of the testimony he renders, in the glory of God. The difference is as remarkable as it is interesting to us; and it exhibits, in a most striking manner, the true position of the Christian as on earth, and the change which the rejection of Jesus by His earthly people has produced. Only, the church, the union of believers in one body with the Lord in heaven, was not yet revealed. Afterwards (Revelation 19) heaven opens, and the Lord Himself comes forth, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Thus we see: 31 Jesus, the Son of God on earth, the object of heaven's delight, sealed with the Holy Ghost; Jesus, the Son of man, the object of the ministry of heaven, angels being His servants; Jesus, on high at the right hand of God, and the believer, full of the Spirit, and suffering here for His sake, beholding the glory on high, and the Son of man in the glory; and Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, coming forth to judge and make war against the scornful men who dispute His authority and oppress the earth.

[* It is all a mistake to make Christ the ladder. He, as Jacob was, is the object of their service and ministry.]

To return: the Father Himself acknowledges Jesus, the obedient man on earth, who enters as the true Shepherd by the door, as His beloved Son in whom is all His delight. Heaven is opened to Him; He sees the Holy Ghost come down to seal Him, the infallible strength and support of the perfection of His human life; and He has the Father's own testimony to the relationship between them. No object on which His faith was to rest is presented to Him as it is to us. It is His own relation to heaven and to His Father which is sealed. His soul enjoys it through the descent of the Holy Ghost and the voice of His Father.

But this passage in Matthew requires some further notice. The blessed Lord, or rather what occurred as to Him, gives the place or model in which He sets believers, be they Jew or Gentile: only of course we are brought there by redemption. "I go to my Father and your Father, my God and your God," is His blessed word after His resurrection. But to us heaven is opened; we are sealed with the Holy Ghost; the Father owns us as sons.

Only the divine dignity of Christ's Person is always carefully guarded here in humiliation, as in the transfiguration in glory. Moses and Elias are in the same glory, but disappear when Peter's haste, permitted to be expressed, would put them on a level. The nearer we are to a divine Person, the more we adore and recognise what He is.

But another very remarkable fact is found here. For the first time, when Christ takes this place among men in lowliness, the Trinity is fully revealed. No doubt the Son and Spirit are mentioned in the Old Testament. But there the unity of the Godhead is the great revealed point. Here the Son is owned in man, the Holy Ghost comes down on Him, and the Father owns Him as His Son. What a wonderful connection with man! what a place for man to be in! Through Christ's connection with Him the Godhead is revealed in its own fullness. His being a man draws it out in its display. But He was really a man, but the Man in whom the counsels of God about man were to be fulfilled.

Hence, as He has realised and displayed the place in which man is set with God in His own Person, and in the counsels of grace as to us our relationship with God, so, as we are in conflict with the enemy, He enters into that side of our position also. We have our relationship with God and our Father, and now we have to say to Satan also. He overcomes for us, and shows us how to overcome. Remark too, the relationship with God is first fully settled and brought out, and then, as in that place, the conflict with Satan begins, and so with us. But the first question was, Would the second Adam stand where the first had failed? only, in the wilderness of this world and Satan's power — instead of the blessings of God — for there we had got.

Another point is to be remarked here, fully to bring out the place the Lord takes. The law and the prophets were till John. Then the new thing is announced, the kingdom of heaven. But judgment closes with God's people. The axe is at the root of the trees, the fan is in the hand of the coming One, the wheat is gathered into God's garner, the chaff burnt up. That is, there is a close of the history of God's people in judgment. We come in on the ground of being lost, anticipating the judgment; but man's history as responsible was closed. Hence it is said, "now once in the end of the world he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

It has happened externally and literally to Israel; but it is morally true for us: only we are gathered for heaven, as in result the remnant then, and shall be in heaven. But, Christ rejected, the history of responsibility is over, and we come in grace as already lost. Consequent on the announcement of this as imminent, Christ comes and, identifying Himself with the remnant who escape on repentance, makes this new place for man on the earth: only we could not be in it till redemption was accomplished. Still He revealed the Father's name to those He had given Him out of it.

Having thus in grace taken up His position as man on earth, He commences (chap. 4) His earthly career, being led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. The righteous and holy man, the Son of God, enjoying the privileges proper to such a one, He must undergo the trial of those devices through which the first Adam fell. It is His spiritual condition which is tested. It is not now an innocent man in the enjoyment of all God's natural blessings, who is put to the proof in the midst of those blessings which should have made him remember God. Christ, nigh to God as His beloved Son, but in the midst of trial, having the knowledge of good and evil, and as to outward circumstances come down into the midst of man's fallen state, must have His faithfulness to this position fully tried with respect to His perfect obedience. To maintain this position, He must have no other will than that of His Father, and fulfill it or suffer it, whatever might be the consequences to Himself. He must fulfill it in the midst of all the difficulties, the privations, the isolation, the desert, where Satan's power was, which might tempt Him to follow an easier path than that which should be only for the glory of His Father. He must renounce all the rights that belonged to His own Person, save as He should receive them from God, yielding them up to Him with a perfect trust.

The enemy did his utmost to induce Him to make use of His privileges, "if thou be the Son of God," for His own relief, apart from the command of God, and in avoidance of the sufferings which might accompany the performance of His will. But it was to lead Him to do His own will, not God's.

Jesus, enjoying in His own Person and relationship with God the full favor of God as Son of God, the light of His countenance, goes into the wilderness for forty days to be in conflict with the enemy. He did not go

away from man, and from all intercourse with man and the things of man, in order (like Moses and Elias) to be with God. Being already fully with God, He is separate from men by the power of the Holy Ghost to be alone in His conflict with the enemy. In the case of Moses, it was man out of his natural condition to be with God. In the case of Jesus, it is so to be with the enemy: to be with God was His natural position.

The enemy tempts Him first by proposing to Him to satisfy His bodily need, and, instead of waiting on God, to employ according to His own will and on His own behalf the power with which He was endowed. But, if Israel was fed in the wilderness with manna from God, the Son of God, however great His power, would act in accordance with what Israel should have learnt by that means, namely, that “man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” The Man, the obedient Jew, the Son of God, waited for this word, and would do nothing without it. He was not come to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him. This is the principle that characterises the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms. No deliverance is accepted but the intervention of Jehovah at His own good time. It is perfect patience, in order to be perfect and complete in all the will of God. There could be no sinful lust in Christ; but to be hungry was no sin, yet it was a human need, and what harm in eating when hungry? There was no will of God to do it, and that will by the word He came to do. Satan’s suggestion was, “if thou be the Son of God, command”; but He had taken the place of a servant, and this was not commanding: he sought to get the Lord out of the place of perfect service and obedience, out of the place of a servant.

And note here the place the written word has, and the character of Christ’s obedience. This character is not simply that the will of God is a rule; it is the one motive for action. We have a will arrested often by the word. Not so Christ. His Father’s will was His motive; He acted not merely according to, but because it was, God’s will. We delight to see a child who would run off to something it delights in, stop and cheerfully do its parents’ will when called to do it. But Christ never obeyed thus, never sought a will of His own, but was stopped by His Father’s. And we are sanctified to the obedience of Christ. Note further that the written word is that by which He lives and by which He overcomes. All depended here on Christ’s victory, as all did on Adam’s fall. But for Christ, one text, rightly used of

course, suffices. He seeks no other: that is obedience. It suffices for Satan; he has no reply. His wiles are thus defeated.

The first principle of conquest is simple and absolute obedience, living by words out of God's mouth. The next is perfect confidence in the path of obedience.

In the second place then, the enemy sets Him on a pinnacle of the temple, to induce Him to apply to Himself the promises made to the Messiah, without abiding in the ways of God. The faithful man may assuredly reckon on the help of God while walking in His ways. The enemy would have the Son of man put God to the test (instead of reckoning on Him while walking in His ways) to see whether He might be trusted in. This would have been a want of confidence in God, not obedience; or pride, presuming on its privileges, instead of counting on God in obedience.* Taking His place with Israel in the condition they were in when without a king in the land, and, quoting the directions given to them in that book to guide them in the godly path there taught, He uses for His guidance that part of the word which contains the divine injunction on this subject, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"; a passage often quoted as if it forbade excess in trusting God; whereas it means not to distrust, and try if He is faithful. They tempted God, saying, Is God indeed among us? And this Satan would have had the Lord do.

[* We need confidence to have courage to obey; but true confidence is found in the path of obedience. Satan could use the word in guile, but not turn Christ the Lord from it. He still uses it as the adequate divine weapon, and Satan still has no reply. To have forbidden obedience would have been to show himself Satan. As regards the place in which the Lord was dispensationally, we may remark the Lord always quotes from Deuteronomy.]

The enemy, failing to deceive that obedient heart, even by hiding himself under the use of the word of God, shows himself in his true character, tempting the Lord, thirdly, to spare Himself all the sufferings that awaited Him, by showing Him the inheritance of the Son of man on earth, that which would be His when He had reached it through all those paths, toilsome yet necessary to the Father's glory, which the Father had marked out for Him. All should now be His, if He would acknowledge Satan by worshipping him, the God of this world. This in fact was what the kings of the earth had done for only a part of these things; how often done for

some trifling vanity! but He should have the whole. But if Jesus was to inherit earthly glory (as well as all other) the object of His heart was God Himself, His Father, to glorify Him. Whatever might be the value of the gift, it was as the gift of the Giver that His heart prized it. Moreover He was in the position of tested man and a faithful Israelite; and whatever might be the trial of patience into which the sin of the people had brought Him, be the trial ever so great, He would serve none but His God alone.

But if the devil carries temptation, sin, to the utmost, and shows himself to be the adversary (Satan), the believer has the right to cast him out. If he comes as a tempter, the believer should answer him by the faithfulness of the word, which is man's perfect guide, according to the will of God. He does not need to see through everything. The word is the word of Him who does, and in following that, we walk according to a wisdom which knows everything, and in a path formed by that wisdom, and which hence involves absolute trust in God. The two first temptations were the wiles of the devil, the third, open hostility to God. If he comes as the open adversary of God, the believer has a right to have nothing to do with him. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." He knows he has met Christ, not flesh. May believers resist if Satan would tempt them by the world, remembering it is Satan's domain in fallen man!

The believer's safeguard, morally (that is, as to the state of his heart) is a single eye. If I seek only the glory of God, that which presents no other motive than my own aggrandisement, or my own gratification, whether of body or mind, will have no hold upon me; and will show itself in the light of the word, which guides the single eye, as contrary to the mind of God. This is not the haughtiness that rejects temptation on the ground of being good; it is obedience, humbly giving God His place, and consequently His word also. "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer," from him that did his own will and made it his guide. If the heart seeks God alone, the most subtle snare is discovered, for the enemy never tempts us to seek God alone. But this supposes a pure heart, and that there is no self-seeking. This was displayed in Jesus.

Our safeguard against temptation is the word, used by the discernment of a perfectly pure heart, which lives in the presence of God, and learns the mind of God in His word,* and therefore knows its application to the

circumstances presented. It is the word that preserves the soul from the wiles of the enemy.

[* There must be no other motive for action than the will of God, which, for man, is always to be found in the word; because, in that case, when Satan tempts us to act, as he always does, by some other motive, this motive is seen to be opposed to the word which is in the heart, and to the motive which governs the heart, and is therefore judged as being opposed to it. It is written, “Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.” This is the reason why it is so often important, when we are in doubt, to ask ourselves by what motive we are influenced.]

Observe also that, consequently, it is in the spirit of simple and humble obedience that power lies; for where it exists, Satan can do nothing. God is there, and accordingly the enemy is conquered.

It appears to me that these three temptations are addressed to the Lord in the three characters, of man, of Messiah, and of Son of man.

He had no sinful desires like fallen man, but He was an hungered. The tempter would persuade Him to satisfy this need without God.

The promises in the Psalms belonged to Him as being made to the Messiah.

And all the kingdoms of the world were His as the Son of man.

He always replies as a faithful Israelite, personally responsible to God, making use of the Book of Deuteronomy, which treats of this subject (namely, the obedience of Israel, in connection with the possession of the land, and the privileges that belonged to the people in connection with this obedience; and this, apart from the organisation which constituted them a corporate body before God).*

[* A careful examination of the Pentateuch will show that, though needed historical facts are stated, yet the contents of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers are essentially typical. The tabernacle was made according to the pattern shown in the mount — the pattern of heavenly things; and not only the ceremonial ordinances, but the historical facts, as the apostle distinctly states, happened unto them for types, and are written for our instruction. Deuteronomy gives directions for their conduct in the land; but the three books named, even where there are historical facts, are typical in their object. I do not know if one sacrifice was offered after they were instituted, unless perhaps the official ones (see Acts 7:42).]

Satan departs from Him, and the angels come to exercise their ministry towards the Messiah, the Son of man victorious through obedience. What Satan would have Him try God about, He has fully. They are ministering spirits for us also.

But how profoundly interesting is it to see the blessed Lord come down, the Son of God from heaven, and take — the Word made flesh — His place among the poor godly ones on the earth, and, as having taken that place, owned of the Father as His Son, heaven being opened and opened to Him as man, and the Holy Ghost coming down and abiding on Him as man though without measure, and so forming the model of our place, though we were not yet in it; the whole Trinity, as I have said, being first fully revealed when He is thus associated with man; and then, we being slaves to Satan, going in this character and relationship to meet also Satan for us, to bind the strong man, and give man through Him this place also: only for us redemption was needed to bring us where He is.

John being cast into prison, the Lord departs into Galilee. This movement, which determined the scene of His ministry outside Jerusalem and Judea, had great significance with respect to the Jews. The people (so far as centered in Jerusalem, and boasting in the possession of the promises, the sacrifices, and the temple, and in being the royal tribe) lost the presence of the Messiah, the Son of David. He went away for the manifestation of His Person, for the testimony of God's intervention in Israel, to the poor and despised of the flock; for the remnant and poor of the flock are already in chapters 3, 4 clearly distinguished from the heads of the people. He thus really became the true stock, instead of being a branch of that which had been planted elsewhere; although this effect was not yet fully manifested. The moment corresponds with John 4.

We may remark here, that, in John's Gospel, the Jews are always distinguished from the multitude, called the people in the Gospels. The language, or rather the pronunciation, was entirely different. They did not speak Chaldee in Galilee.

At the same time this manifestation of the Son of David in Galilee was the fulfillment of a prophecy in Isaiah. The force of that prophecy is this: although the Roman captivity was far more terrible than the invasion of the Assyrians when they came up against the land of Israel, there was

nevertheless this circumstance which altered everything, namely, the presence of the Messiah, the true Light, in the land.

We observe that the Spirit of God here passes over the whole history of Jesus until the commencement of His ministry after the death of John the Baptist. He gives Jesus His proper position in the midst of Israel — Emmanuel, the Son of David, the Beloved of God, acknowledged as His Son, the faithful One in Israel, though exposed to all Satan's temptations; and then at once, afterwards, His prophetic position announced by Isaiah, and the kingdom proclaimed as at hand.*

[* And we may remark here, that He leaves the Jews and Jerusalem, as already remarked, and His natural place, so to speak, what gave Him His name, Nazareth, and takes His prophetic place. The casting of John into prison was significant of His own rejection. John was His forerunner in it, as in his mission, of the Lord. See chapter 17:12. The testimony of Jesus is the same as that of John the Baptist.]

He then gathers around Him those who were definitively to follow Him in His ministry and His temptations; and, at His call, to link their portion and their lot with His, forsaking all beside.

The strong man was bound, so that Jesus could spoil his goods, and proclaim the kingdom with proofs of that power which were able to establish it.

Two things are then brought forward in the Gospel narrative. First, the power which accompanies the proclamation of the kingdom. In two or three verses,* without other detail, this fact is announced. The proclamation of the kingdom is attended with acts of power that excite the attention of the whole country, the whole extent of the ancient territory of Israel. Jesus appears before them invested with this power. Secondly (chaps. 5-7) the character of the kingdom is announced in the sermon on the Mount, as well as that of the persons who should have part in it (the Father's name withal being revealed). That is, the Lord had announced the coming kingdom, and with the present power of goodness, having overcome the adversary; and then shows what were the true characters according to which it would be set up, and who could enter, and how. Redemption is not spoken of in it; but the character and nature of the kingdom, and who could enter. This clearly shows the moral position which this sermon holds in the Lord's teaching.

[* It is striking that the whole ministry of the Lord is recounted in one verse (23). All the subsequent statements are facts, having a special moral import, showing what was passing amongst the people in grace onward to His rejection, not a proper consecutive history. It stamps the character of Matthew very clearly.]

It is evident that, in all this part of the Gospel, it is the Lord's position which is the subject of the teaching of the Spirit, and not the details of His life. Details come after, in order fully to exhibit what He was in the midst of Israel, His relations with that people, and His path in the power of the Spirit which led to the rupture between the Son of David and the people who ought to have received Him. The attention of the whole country being thus engaged by His mighty acts, the Lord sets before His disciples — but in the hearing of the people — the principles of His kingdom.

This discourse may be divided into the following parts:* 41 The character and the portion of those who should be in the kingdom (v. 112). Their position in the world (v. 13-16). The connection between the principles of the kingdom and the law (v. 17-48).** The spirit in which His disciples should perform good works (chap. 6:118). Separation from the spirit of the world and from its anxieties (v. 1934). The spirit of their relation with others (chap. 7:1-6). The confidence in God which became them (v. 7-12). The energy that should characterise them, in order that they might enter into the kingdom; not however merely enter, many would seek to do that, but according to those principles which made it difficult for man, according to God — the strait gate; and then, the means of discerning those who would seek to deceive them, as well as the watchfulness needed that they might not be deceived (v. 13-23).

[* In the text I have given a division which may assist in a practical application of the sermon on the Mount. With respect to the subjects contained in it, it might perhaps, though the difference is not very great, be still better divided thus: Chapter 5:1-16 contains the complete picture of the character and position of the remnant who received His instructions — their position, as it should be, according to the mind of God. This is complete in itself. Verses 17-48 establish the authority of the law, which should have regulated the conduct of the faithful until the introduction of the kingdom; the law which they ought to have fulfilled, as well as the words of the prophets, in order that they (the remnant) should be placed on this new ground; and the despal of which would exclude whoever was guilty of it from the kingdom; for Christ is speaking, not as in the kingdom, but as announcing it as near to come. But, while thus establishing the authority of the law, He takes up the two great elements of evil, treated of only in outward acts in the law, violence and corruption, and judges the evil in the heart (22, 28), and at all

cost to get rid of it and every occasion of it, thus showing what was to be the conduct of His disciples, and their state of soul — that which was to characterise them as such. The Lord then takes up certain things born with by God in Israel, and ordered according to what they could bear. Thus was now brought into the light of a true moral estimate, divorce — marriage being the divinely given basis of all human relationships — and swearing or vowing, the action of man's will in relationship to God; then patience of evil, and fullness of grace, His own blessed character, and carrying with it the moral title to what was His living place — sons of their Father who was in heaven. Instead of weakening that which God required under the law, He would not only have it observed until its fulfillment, but that His disciples should be perfect even as their Father in heaven was perfect. This adds the revelation of the Father, to the moral walk and state which suited the character of sons as it was revealed in Christ. Chapter 6. We have the motives, the object, which should govern the heart in doing good deeds, in living a religious life. Their eye should be on their Father. This is individual. Chapter 7. This chapter is essentially occupied with the intercourse that would be suitable between His own people and others — not to judge their brethren and to beware of the profane. He then exhorts them to confidence in asking their Father for what they needed, and instructs them to act towards others with the same grace that they would wish shown to themselves. This is founded on the knowledge of the goodness of the Father. Finally, He exhorts them to the energy that will enter in at the strait gate, and choose the way of God, cost what it may (for many would like to enter into the kingdom, but not by that gate); and He warns them with respect to those who would seek to deceive them by pretending to have the word of God. It is not only our own hearts that we have to fear, and positive evil, when we would follow the Lord, but also the devices of the enemy and his agents. But their fruits will betray them.]

[* It is important however to remark that there is no general spiritualisation of the law, as is often stated. The two great principles of immorality amongst men are treated of (violence and corrupt lust), to which are added voluntary oaths. In these the exigencies of the law and what Christ required are contrasted.]

Real and practical obedience to His sayings, the true wisdom of those that hear His words (v. 24-29).

There is another principle that characterises this discourse, and that is the introduction of the Father's name. Jesus puts His disciples in connection with His Father, as their Father. He reveals to them the Father's name, in order that they may be in relation with Him, and that they may act in accordance with that which He is.

This discourse gives the principles of the kingdom, but supposes the rejection of the King, and the position into which this would bring those that were His; who consequently must look for a heavenly reward. They

were to be a divine savor where God was known and was dealing, and would be a spectacle to the whole world. Moreover this was God's object. Their confession was to be so open that the world should refer their works to the Father. They were to act, on the one hand, according to a judgment of evil which reached the heart and motives, but also, on the other, according to the Father's character in grace — to approve themselves to the Father who saw in secret, where the eye of man could not penetrate. They were to have full confidence in Him for all their need. His will was the rule according to which there was entrance into the kingdom.

We may observe that this discourse is connected with the proclamation of the kingdom as being near at hand, and that all these principles of conduct are given as characterising the kingdom, and as the conditions of entrance into it. No doubt it follows that they are suitable to those who have entered in. But the discourse is pronounced in the midst of Israel,* before the kingdom is set up, and as the previous state called for in order to enter, and to set forth the fundamental principles of the kingdom in connection with that people, and in moral contrast with the ideas they had formed respecting it.

[* We must always remember that, while dispensationally Israel has great importance, as the center of God's government of this world, morally Israel was just man where all the ways and dealings of God had been carried out so as to bring to light what he was. The Gentile was man left to himself as regards God's special ways, and so unrevealed. Christ was a light, to reveal the Gentiles, Luke 2:32.]

In examining the beatitudes, we shall find that this portion in general gives the character of Christ Himself. They suppose two things; the coming possession of the land of Israel by the meek; and the persecution of the faithful remnant, really righteous in their ways, and who asserted the rights of the true King (heaven being set before them as their hope to sustain their hearts).*

[* The characters pronounced blessed may be briefly noted. They suppose evil in the world, and amongst God's people. The first is not seeking great things for self, but accepting a despised place in a scene contrary to God. Hence mourning characterises them there, and meekness, a will not lifting up itself against God, or to maintain its position or right. Then positive good in desire, for it is not yet found; hungering hence and thirsting after it, such is the inward state and activity of the mind. Then grace towards others. Then purity of heart, the absence of what would shut out God; and, what is always connected with it, peacefulness and peace-making. I think there is

moral progress in the verses, one leading to the next as an effect of it. The two last are the consequences of maintaining a good conscience and connection with Christ in a world of evil. There are two principles of suffering, as in 1 Peter, for righteousness' and Christ's sake.]

This will be the position of the remnant in the last days before the introduction of the kingdom, the last being exceptional. It was so, morally, in the days of the Lord's disciples, in reference to Israel, the earthly part being delayed. In reference to heaven, the disciples are looked at as witnesses in Israel; but — while the only preservative of the earth — they were a testimony to the world. So that the disciples are seen as in connection with Israel, but, at the same time, as witnesses on God's part to the world (the kingdom being in view, but not yet established). The connection with the last days is evident; nevertheless their testimony then had, morally, this character. Only the establishment of the earthly kingdom has been delayed, and the church, which is heavenly, brought in. Chapter 5:25 evidently alludes to the position of Israel in the days of Christ. And in fact they remain captive, in prison, until they have received their full chastisement, and then they shall come forth.

The Lord ever speaks and acts as the obedient man, moved and guided by the Holy Ghost; but we see in the most striking manner, in this Gospel, who it is that acts thus. And it is this which gives its true moral character to the kingdom of heaven. John the Baptist might announce it as a change of dispensation, but his ministry was earthly. Christ might equally announce this same change (and the change was all-important); but in Him there was more than this. He was from heaven, the Lord who came from heaven. In speaking of the kingdom of heaven, He spoke out of the deep and divine abundance of His heart. No man had been in heaven, excepting Him who had come down from thence, the Son of man who was in heaven. Therefore, when speaking of heaven, He spoke of that which He knew, and testified of that which He had seen This was the case in two ways, as shown forth in Matthew's Gospel. It was no longer an earthly government according to the law; Jehovah, the Savior, Emmanuel, was present Could He be otherwise than heavenly in His character, in the tone, in the essence, of His whole life?

Moreover, when He began His public ministry and was sealed by the Holy Ghost, heaven was opened to Him. He was identified with heaven as a

man sealed with the Holy Ghost on earth. He was thus the continual expression of the spirit, of the reality, of heaven. There was not yet the exercise of the judicial power which would uphold this character in the face of all that opposed it. It was its manifestation in patience, notwithstanding the opposition of all around Him and the inability of His disciples to understand Him. Thus in the sermon on the Mount we find the description of that which was suitable to the kingdom of heaven, and even the assurance of reward in heaven for those who should suffer on earth for His sake. This description, as we have seen, is essentially the character of Christ Himself. It is thus that a heavenly spirit expresses itself on earth. If the Lord taught these things, it is because He loved them, because He was them and delighted in them. Being the God of heaven, filled as man with the Spirit without measure, His heart was perfectly in unison with a heaven that He perfectly knew. Consequently therefore He concludes the character which His disciples were to assume by these words: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." All their conduct was to be in reference to their Father in heaven. The more we understand the divine glory of Jesus, the more we understand the way in which He was as man in connection with heaven, the better shall we apprehend what the kingdom of heaven was to Him with regard to that which was suitable to it. When it shall be established hereafter in power, the world will be governed according to these principles, although they are not, properly speaking, its own.

The remnant in the last days, I doubt not, finding all around them contrary to faithfulness, and seeing all Jewish hope fail before their eyes, will be forced to look upward, and will more and more acquire this character, which, if not heavenly, is at least very much conformed to Christ.*

[* Those who are put to death will go up to heaven, as Matthew 5:12 testifies, and the Apocalypse also. The others, who are thus conformed to Christ, as a suffering Jew, will be with Him on Mount Sion; they will learn the song which is sung in heaven, and will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth (on earth). We may also remark here, that in the beatitudes there is the promise of the earth to the meek, which will be literally fulfilled in the last days. In verse 12 a reward in heaven is promised to those who suffer for Christ, true for us now, and in some sort for those who shall be slain for His sake in the last days, who will have their place in heaven, although they were a part of the Jewish remnant and not the assembly. The same are found in Daniel 7: only, remark, it is the times and laws which are delivered into the beast's hands, not the saints.]

There are two things connected with the presence of the multitude, v. 1. First, the time required that the Lord should give a true idea of the character of His kingdom, since already He drew the multitude after Him. His power making itself felt, it was important to make His character known. On the other hand, this multitude who were following Jesus were a snare to His disciples; and He makes them understand what an entire contrast there was between the effect which this multitude might have upon them, and the right spirit which ought to govern them. Thus, full Himself of what was really good, He immediately brings forward that which filled His own heart. This was the true character of the remnant, who in the main resembled Christ in it. It is often thus in the Psalms.

The salt of the earth is a different thing from the light of the world. The earth, it appears to me, expresses that which already professed to have received light from God — that which was in relationship with Him by virtue of the light — having assumed a definite shape before Him. The disciples of Christ were the preservative principle in the earth. They were the light of the world, which did not possess that light. This was their position, whether they would or no. It was the purpose of God that they should be the light of the world. A candle is not lighted in order to be hidden.

All this supposes the case of the possibility of the kingdom being established in the world, but the opposition of the greater part of men to its establishment. It is not a question of the sinner's redemption, but of the realisation of the character proper to a place in the kingdom of God; that which the sinner ought to seek while he is in the way with his adversary, lest he should be delivered to the judge — which indeed has happened to the Jews.

At the same time the disciples are brought into relationship with the Father individually — the second great principle of the discourse, the consequence of the Son being there — and a yet more excellent thing is set before them than their position of testimony for the kingdom. They were to act in grace, even as their Father acted, and their prayer should be for an order of things in which all would correspond morally to the character and the will of their Father. "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,"* is, that all should answer to the character of the Father, that all should be the

effect of His power. “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” is perfect obedience. Universal subjection to God in heaven and on earth will be, to a certain point, accomplished by the intervention of Christ in the millennium, and absolutely so when God shall be all in all. Meanwhile the prayer expresses daily dependence, the need of pardon, the need of being kept from the power of the enemy, the desire of not being sifted by him, as a dispensation of God, like Job or Peter, and of being preserved from evil.

[* That is, the Father’s. Compare Matthew 13:43.]

This prayer also is adapted to the position of the remnant; it passes over the dispensation of the Spirit, and even that which is proper to the millennium as an earthly kingdom, in order to express the right desires, and speak of the condition and the dangers of the remnant until the Father’s kingdom should come. Many of these principles are always true, for we are in the kingdom, and in spirit we ought to manifest its features; but the special and literal application is that which I have given. They are brought into relationship with the Father in the realisation of His character, which was to be displayed in them by virtue of this relationship, causing them to desire the establishment of His kingdom, to overcome the difficulties of an opposing world, to keep themselves from the snares of the enemy, and to do the Father’s will. It was Jesus who could impart this to them. He thus passes from the law,* recognised as coming from God, to its fulfillment, when it shall be as it were absorbed in the will of Him who gave it, or accomplished in its purposes by Him who alone could do so in any sense whatever.

[* The law is the perfect rule for a child of Adam, the rule or measure of what he ought to be, but not of the manifestation of God in grace as Christ was, who in this is our pattern — a just call to love God and walk in the fulfillment of duty in relationship, but not an imitating of God, walking in love, as Christ has loved us and given Himself for us.]

Then, in chapter 8, the Lord begins in the midst of Israel His patient life of testimony, which closed with His rejection by the people whom God had so long preserved for Him, and for their own blessing.

He had proclaimed the kingdom, displayed His power throughout the land, and declared His character, as well as the spirit of those who should enter the kingdom.

But His miracles,* as well as the whole Gospel, are always characterised by His position among the Jews and God's dealings with them, till He was rejected. Jehovah, yet the man obedient to the law, foreshewing the entrance of the Gentiles into the kingdom (its establishment in mystery in the world), predicting the building of the church or assembly on the recognition of His being Son of the living God, and the kingdom in glory; and, while detecting as the effect of His presence the perversity of the people, yet bearing on His heart with perfect patience the burden of Israel.** It is Jehovah present in goodness, outwardly one of themselves: wondrous truth!

[* The miracles of Christ had a peculiar character. They were not merely acts of power, but all of them of the power of God visiting this world in goodness. The power of God had been often shown specially, from Moses, but often in judgment. But Christ's were all the deliverance of men from the evil consequences sin had brought in. There was one exception, the cursing the fig tree, but this was a judicial sentence on Israel, that is, man under the old covenant when there was great appearance but no fruit.]

[** I subjoin here some notes, made since this was written, as throwing, I think, light on the structure of this Gospel. Matthew 51 gives the character required for entrance into the kingdom, the character which was to mark the accepted remnant, Jehovah being now in the way with the nation to judgment. Chapters 8, 9 give the other side — grace and goodness come in, God manifest, His character and actings, that new thing which could not be put into the old bottles — still goodness in power, but rejected, the Son of man (not Messiah) who had not where to lay His head. Chapter 8 gives present intervention in temporal goodness with power. Hence, as goodness, it goes beyond Israel, as it deals in grace with what was excluded from God's camp in Israel. It includes power over all Satan's power and sickness and the elements, and that in taking the burden on Himself, but in conscious rejection. Chapter 8:1720 leads us to Isaiah 53:3, 4, and the state of things calling for the wholly following Him, giving up all. This leads to the sad testimony that, if divine power expels Satan's, the divine presence manifest in it is insupportable to the world. The swine figure Israel thereupon. Chapter 9 furnishes the religious side of His presence in grace, forgiveness, and the testimony that Jehovah was there according to Psalm 103, but there to call sinners, not the righteous; and this was especially what could not suit the old bottles. Finally, this chapter practically, save the patience of goodness, closes the history. He came to save Israel's life. It was really death when He came: only, wherever there was faith in the midst of the surrounding crowd, there was healing. The Pharisees show the blasphemy of the leaders: only the patience of grace still subsists, carried out towards Israel in chapter 10, but all found to be of no avail in chapter 11. The Son was revealing the Father, and this abides and gives rest. Chapter 12 develops fully the judgment and

rejection of Israel. Chapter 13 brings Christ as a sower, not seeking fruit in His vineyard, and the actual form of the kingdom of heaven.]

First of all, we find the healing of a leper. Jehovah alone, in His sovereign goodness, could heal the leper; here Jesus does so. "If thou wilt," says the leper, "thou canst." "I will," replies the Lord. But at the same time, while He shows forth in His own Person that which repels all possibility of defilement — that which is above sin — He shows the most perfect condescension towards the defiled one. He touches the leper, saying, "I will, be thou clean." We see the grace, the power, the undefilable holiness of Jehovah, come down in the Person of Jesus to the closest proximity to the sinner, touching him so to speak. It was indeed "the Lord that healeth thee."* At the same time He conceals Himself, and commands the man, who had been healed, to go to the priest according to the ordinances of the law and offer his gift. He does not go out of the place of the Jew in subjection to the law; but Jehovah was there in goodness.

[* One who touched a leper became himself unclean, but the blessed One did come thus close to man, but removed the defilement without contracting it. The leper knew His power, but was not sure of His goodness. "I will" declared it, but with a title which God only has to

But in the next case we see a Gentile, who by faith enjoys the full effect of that power which his faith ascribed to Jesus giving the Lord occasion to bring out the solemn truth, that many of these poor Gentiles should come and sit down in the kingdom of heaven with the fathers who were honored by the Jewish nation as the first parents of the heirs of promise, while the children of the kingdom should be in outer darkness. In fact the faith of this centurion acknowledged a divine power in Jesus, which, by the glory of Him that possessed it, would (not forsake Israel, but) open the door to the Gentiles, and graft into the olive-tree of promise branches of the wild olive-tree in the place of those which should be cut off. The manner in which this should take place in the assembly was not now the question.

He does not however yet forsake Israel. He goes into Peter's house, and heals his wife's mother. He does the same to all the sick who crowd around the house at even, when the sabbath was over. They are healed, the devils are cast out, so that the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled: "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." Jesus put Himself in heart under the weight of all the sorrows that oppressed Israel, in order

to relieve and heal them. It is still Emmanuel, who feels for their misery and is afflicted in all their affliction, but who has come in with the power that shows Him capable of delivering them.

These three cases show this character of His ministry in a clear and striking manner. He hides Himself; for, until the moment when He would show judgment to the Gentiles, He does not lift up His voice in the streets. It is the dove that rests upon Him. These manifestations of power attract men to Him; but this does not deceive Him: He never departs in spirit from the place He has taken. He is the despised and the rejected of men; He has nowhere to lay His head. The earth had more room for the foxes and the birds than for Him, whom we have seen appear a moment before as the Lord, acknowledged at least by the necessities which He never refused to relieve. Therefore, if any man would follow Him, he must forsake all to be the companion of the Lord, who would not have come down to the earth if everything had not been in question; nor without an absolute right, although it was at the same time in a love which could only be occupied by its mission, and by the necessity that brought Him there.

The Lord on earth was everything or nothing. This, it is true, was to be felt morally in its effects, in the grace which, acting by faith, attached the believer to Him by an ineffable bond. Without this, the heart would not have been morally put to the test. But this did not make it the less true. accordingly the proofs of this were present: the winds and waves, to which in the eye of man He seemed to be exposed, obeyed His voice at once — a striking reproof to the unbelief that woke Him from His sleep, and had supposed it possible for the waves to engulf Him, and with Him the counsels and the power of Him who had created the winds and waves. It is evident that this storm was permitted in order to try their faith and manifest the dignity of His Person. If the enemy was the instrument who produced it, he only succeeded in making the Lord display His glory. Such indeed is always the case as to Christ, and for us, where faith is.

Now the reality of this power, and the manner of its operation, are forcibly proved by that which follows.

The Lord disembarks in the country of the Gergesenes. There the power of the enemy shows itself in all its horrors. If man, to whom the Lord was come in grace, did not know Him, the devils knew their Judge in the Person

of the Son of God. The man was possessed by them. The fear they had of torment at the judgment of the last day is applied in the man's mind to the immediate presence of the Lord: "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" Wicked spirits act on men by the dread of their power; they have none unless they are feared. But faith only can take this fear from man. I am not speaking of the lusts on which they act, nor of the wiles of the enemy; I speak of the power of the enemy. Resist the devil and he will flee from thee. Here the devils wished to manifest the reality of this power. The Lord permits it in order to make it plain, that in this world it is not merely man that is in question whether good or bad, but that also which is stronger than man. The devils enter into the swine, which perish in the waters. Sorrowful reality plainly demonstrated that it was no question of mere disease or of sinful lusts, but of wicked spirits! However, thanks be to God, it was a question also of One who, although a man on earth, was more powerful than they. They are compelled to acknowledge this power, and they appeal to it. There is no idea of resistance. In the temptation in the wilderness Satan had been overcome. Jesus completely delivers the man whom they had oppressed with their evil power. The power of the devils was nothing before Him. He could have delivered the world from all the power of the enemy, if that only had been in question, and from all the ills of humanity. The strong man was bound, and the Lord spoiled his goods. But the presence of God, of Jehovah, troubles the world even more than the power of the enemy degrades and domineers over mind and body. The control of the enemy over the heart — too peaceful, and alas! too little perceived — is more mighty than his strength. This succumbs before the word of Jesus; but the will of man accepts the world as it is, governed by the influence of Satan. The whole city, who had witnessed the deliverance of the demoniac and the power of Jesus present among them, entreat Him to depart. Sad history of the world! The Lord came down with power to deliver the worldman — from all the power of the enemy; but they would not. Their distance from God was moral, and not merely bondage to the enemy's power. They submitted to his yoke, they had become used to it, and they would not have the presence of God.

I doubt not that that which happened to the swine is a figure of that which happened to the impious and profane Jews who rejected the Lord Jesus.

Nothing can be more striking than the way in which a divine Person, Emmanuel, though a man in grace, is manifested in this chapter.

In the following chapter (9), while acting in the character and according to the power of Jehovah (as we read in Psalm 103), “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases”; it is the actual grace in itself towards and for them, in which He came, which is presented. It gives the character of His ministry, as the previous one gives the dignity of His Person and the bearing of what He was. He presents Himself to Israel as their true Redeemer and Deliverer; and, to prove His title (which unbelief already opposed) to be this blessing to Israel, and to pardon all their iniquities which raised a barrier between them and their God, He accomplishes the second part of the verse, and heals the disease. Beautiful and precious testimony of kindness to Israel, and at the same time, the demonstration of His glory who stood in the midst of His people! In the same spirit, as He had forgiven, and healed, He calls the publican and goes to his house — come not to call the righteous, but sinners.

But now we enter on another portion of the instruction in this Gospel — the development of the opposition of unbelievers, of the learned men and the religionists in particular; and that of the rejection of the work and Person of the Lord.

The idea, the picture of that which took place, has been already set before us in the case of the Gergesene demoniac the power of God present for the entire deliverance of His people, of the world, if they received Him power which the devils confessed to be that which should hereafter judge and cast them out, which displayed itself in blessing to all the people of the place, but which was rejected, because they did not desire such power to dwell among them. They would not have the presence of God.

The narration of the details and the character of this rejection now commences. Observe that chapter 8:1-27 gives the manifestation of the Lord’s power — this power being truly that of Jehovah on the earth. From verse 28 the reception this power met with in the world, and the influence which governed the world, are set forth, whether as power, or morally in the hearts of men.

We come here to the historical development of the rejection of this intervention of God upon the earth.

The multitude glorify God who had given such power to a man. Jesus accepts this place. He was man: the multitude saw Him to be man, and acknowledged the power of God, but did not know how to combine the two ideas in His Person.

The grace which contemns the pretensions of man to righteousness is now set forth.

Matthew, the publican, is called; for God looks at the heart, and grace calls the elect vessels.

The Lord declares the mind of God on this subject, and His own mission. He came to call sinners; He would have mercy. It was God in grace, and not man with his pretended righteousness counting on his merits.

He assigns two reasons which make it impossible to reconcile His course with the demands of the Pharisees. How should the disciples fast when the Bridegroom was there? When the Messiah was gone, they might well do so. Moreover it is impossible to introduce the new principles and the new power of His mission into the old Pharisaic forms.

Thus we have grace to sinners, but (grace rejected) now comes at once a higher proof that Messiah-Jehovah was there, from her bed of death, He obeys the call. As He goes, a poor woman, who had already employed every means of cure without success, is instantaneously healed by touching in faith the hem of His garment.

This history supplies us with the two great divisions of the grace that was manifested in Jesus. Christ came to awaken dead Israel; He will do this hereafter in the full sense of the word. Meanwhile, whosoever laid hold of Him by faith, in the midst of the multitude that accompanied Him, was healed, let the case be ever so hopeless. This, which took place in Israel when Jesus was there, is true in principle of us also. Grace in Jesus is a power which raises from the dead, and which heals. Thus He opened the eyes of those in Israel who owned Him to be the Son of David, and who believed in His power to meet their need. He cast out devils also, and gave speech to the dumb. But having performed these acts of power in Israel, so

that the people, as to the fact, owned them with admiration, the Pharisees, the most religious part of the nation, ascribe this power to the prince of the devils. Such is the effect of the Lord's presence on the leaders of the people, jealous of His glory thus manifested among them over whom they exercised their influence. But this in no way interrupts Jesus in His career of beneficence. He can still bear testimony among the people. In spite of the Pharisees His patient kindness still finds place. He continues to preach and to heal. He has compassion on the people, who were like sheep without a shepherd, given up, morally, to their own guidance. He still sees that the harvest is plenteous and the laborers few. That is to say, He still sees every door open to address the people and He passes over the wickedness of the Pharisees.

Let us sum up what we find in the chapter, the grace developed in Israel. First, grace healing and forgiving as in Psalm 103. Then grace come to call sinners, not the righteous; the bridegroom was there, nor could grace in power be put in Jewish and Pharisaic vessels; it was new even in respect of John Baptist. He comes in reality to give life to the dead, not to heal, but whoever then touched Him by faith — for there were such — were healed in the way. He opens eyes to see, as Son of David, and opens the dumb mouth of him whom the devil possessed. All is rejected with blasphemy by the self-righteous Pharisees. But grace sees the multitude as yet as having no shepherd; and while the porter holds the door open, He ceases not to seek and minister to the sheep.

So long as God gives Him access to the people, He continues His labor of love. Nevertheless, He was conscious of the iniquity that governed the people, although He did not seek His own glory. Having exhorted His disciples to pray that laborers might be sent into the harvest, He begins (chap. 10) to act in accordance with that desire. He calls His twelve disciples, He gives them power to cast out devils and to heal the sick, and He sends them to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. We see, in this mission, how much the ways of God with Israel form the subject of this Gospel. They were to announce to that people, and to them exclusively, the nearness of the kingdom, exercising at the same time the power they had received: a striking testimony to Him who was come, and who could not only work miracles Himself, but confer power on others to do so likewise. He gave them authority over evil spirits for this purpose. It is

this which characterises the kingdom — man healed of all sickness and the devil cast out Accordingly, in Hebrews 6, miracles are called “the powers of the world to come.”*

[* For then Satan will be bound and man delivered by the power of Christ. And there were partial deliverances of the kind.]

They were also, with respect to their need, to depend entirely on Him who sent them. Emmanuel was there. If miracles were a proof to the world of their Master’s power, the fact that they lacked nothing should be so to their own hearts The ordinance was abrogated during that period of their ministry which followed the departure of Jesus from this world (Luke 22:35-37). That which He here (Matthew 10) commands His disciples appertains to His presence as Messiah, as Jehovah Himself, on the earth. Therefore the reception of His messengers, or their rejection, decided the fate of those to whom they were sent. In rejecting them they rejected the Lord Emmanuel, God with His people.* But, in fact, He sent them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. They would need the wisdom of serpents, and were to exhibit the harmlessness of doves (rare union of virtues, found only in those who, by the Spirit of the Lord, are wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil).

[* There is a division of the Lord’s discourse at verse 15. Up to that it is the then present mission. From verse 16 we have more general reflections on their mission, looked at as a whole in the midst of Israel on to the end. Evidently it goes beyond their then present mission and supposes the coming of the Holy Ghost. The mission by which the church is called as such is a distinct thing. This applies only to Israel they were forbidden to go to Gentiles. This necessarily closed with the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, but it is to be renewed at the end, till the Son of man be come. There was a testimony to the Gentiles only, as brought before them as judges, as Paul was, and that part of his history even on to Rome in Acts, was amidst Jews. The latter part, from verse 16, has less to do with the gospel of the kingdom.]

If they did not beware of men (sad testimony as to these), they would but suffer; but when scourged and brought before councils and governors and kings, all this should become a testimony unto them — a divine means of presenting the gospel of the kingdom to kings and princes, without altering its character or accommodating it to the world, or mixing up the Lord’s people with its usages and its false greatness. Moreover circumstances like

these made their testimony much more conspicuous than association with the great ones of the earth would have done.

And, to accomplish this, they should receive such power and guidance from the Spirit of their Father as would cause the words they spoke to be not their own words, but His who inspired them. Here, again, their relation with their Father, which so distinctly characterises the sermon on the Mount, is made the basis of their capacity for the service they had to perform. We must remember that this testimony was addressed to Israel only; only that, Israel being under the yoke of the Gentiles since the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the testimony would reach their rulers.

But this testimony would excite an opposition that should break all family ties, and awaken a hatred that would not spare the life of those who had been the most beloved. He who in spite of all this should endure to the end should be saved. Nevertheless the case was urgent. They were not to resist, but if the opposition took the form of persecution, they were to flee and preach the gospel elsewhere, for before they had gone over the cities of Israel the Son of man should come.* They were to proclaim the kingdom. Jehovah, Emmanuel, was there, in the midst of His people, and the heads of the people had called the master of the house Beelzebub. This had not stopped His testimony, but it very strongly characterised the circumstances in which this testimony was to be rendered. He sent them forth, warning them of this state of things, to maintain this final testimony among His beloved people as long as possible. This took place at that time, and it is possible, if circumstances permit, to carry it on until the Son of man comes to execute judgment. Then the master of the house will have risen up to shut the door. The "today" of Psalm 95 will be over. Israel in possession of their cities being the object of this testimony, it is necessarily suspended when they are no longer in their land. The testimony to the future kingdom given in Israel by the apostles after the Lord's death, is an accomplishment of this mission, so far as this testimony was rendered in the land of Israel; for the kingdom might be proclaimed as to be established while Emmanuel was on the earth; or this might be by Christ's returning from heaven as announced by Peter in Acts 3. And this might take place if Israel were in the land, even until Christ should return. Thus the testimony may be resumed in Israel, whenever

they are again in their land and the requisite spiritual power is sent forth by God.

[* Observe here the expression “Son of man.” This is the character in which (according to Daniel 7) the Lord will come, in a power and glory much greater than that of His manifestation as Messiah, the Son of David, and which will be displayed in a much wider sphere. As the Son of man, He is the heir of all that God destines for man (see Hebrews 2:6-8, and 1 Corinthians 15:27). He must, in consequence, seeing what man’s condition is, suffer in order to possess this inheritance. He was there as the Messiah, but He must be received in His true character, Emmanuel; and the Jews must thus be tested morally. He will not have the kingdom on carnal principles. Rejected as Messiah, as Emmanuel, He postpones the period of those events which will close the ministry of His disciples with respect to Israel, unto His coming as the Son of man. Meantime God has brought out other things that had been hidden from the foundation of the world, the true glory of Jesus the Son of God, His heavenly glory as man and the church united to Him in heaven. The Judgment of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the nation, have suspended the ministry which had begun at the moment of which the evangelist here speaks. That which has filled up the interval since then is not the subject here of the Lord’s discourse, which refers solely to the ministry that had the Jews for its object. The counsels of God with respect to the church, in connection with the glory of Jesus at the right hand of God, we shall find spoken of elsewhere. Luke will give us in more detail that which concerns the Son of man In Matthew the Holy Ghost occupies us with the rejection of Emmanuel.]

Meanwhile, the disciples were to share in Christ’s own position. If they called the master of the house Beelzebub, much more they of His household. But they were not to fear It was the necessary portion of those who were for God in the midst of the people. But there was nothing hid that should not be revealed. They themselves were to hold nothing back, but were to proclaim on the housetops all that they had been taught; for everything should be brought into the light; their faithfulness to God in this respect, as well as all other things. This, while it met the secret plottings of their enemies, was itself to characterise the ways of the disciples. God, who is light, and sees in darkness as in light, would bring all out into the light, but they were to do this morally now. Therefore were they to fear nothing while performing this work, unless it were God Himself, the righteous Judge at the last day. Moreover the hairs of their heads were numbered. They were precious to their Father, who took notice of even a sparrow’s death. This could not happen without Him who was their Father.

Finally, they were to be thoroughly imbued with the conviction that the Lord was not come to send peace on the earth; no, it should be division, even in the bosom of families. But Christ was to be more precious than father or mother, and even than a man's own life. He who would save his life at the expense of his testimony to Christ should lose it; he who would lose it for the sake of Christ should gain it. He also who should receive this testimony, in the person of the disciples, received Christ, and, in Christ, Him that sent Him. God, therefore, being thus acknowledged in the person of His witnesses on earth, would bestow, on whoever received the latter, a reward according to the testimony rendered. In thus acknowledging the testimony of the rejected Lord, were it only by a cup of cold water, he who gave it should not lose his reward. In an opposing world, he who believes the testimony of God, and receives (in spite of the world) the man who bears this testimony, really confesses God, as well as His servant. It is all that we can do. The rejection of Christ made Him a test, a touchstone.

From that hour we find the definitive judgment of the nation, not indeed as yet openly declared (that is in chapter 12), nor by the cessation of Christ's ministry, which wrought, notwithstanding the opposition of the nation, in gathering out the remnant, and in the still more important effect of the manifestation of Emmanuel; but it is unfolded in the character of His discourses, in the positive declarations which describe the condition of the people, and in the Lords conduct amid circumstances which gave rise to the expression of the relations in which He stood towards them.

In **CHAPTER 11**, having sent His disciples away to preach, He continues the exercise of His own ministry. The report of the works of Christ reaches John in prison. He, in whose heart, notwithstanding his prophetic gift, there still remained something of Jewish thoughts and hopes, sends by his disciples to ask Jesus if He is the One who should come, or if they were still to look for another.* God allowed this question in order to put everything in its place. Christ, being the Word of God ought to be His own witness. He ought to bear testimony to Himself as well as to John, and not to receive testimony from the latter; and this He did in the presence of John's disciples He healed all the diseases of men, and preached the gospel to the poor; and John's messengers were to set before him this true testimony of what Jesus was. John was to receive it. It was by these

things men were tested. Blessed was he who should not be offended at the lowly exterior of the King of Israel. God manifest in the flesh did not come to seek the pomp of royalty, although it was His due, but the deliverance of suffering men. His work revealed a character much more profoundly divine, which had a spring of action far more glorious than that which depended on the possession of the throne of David — than a deliverance which would have set John at liberty, and put an end to the tyranny that had imprisoned him.

[* His sending to Jesus shows full confidence in His word as a prophet but ignorance as to His Person; and this is what is brought out here in its full light.]

To undertake this ministry, to go down into the scene of its exercise, to bear the sorrows and the burdens of His people might be an occasion of stumbling to a carnal heart that was looking for the appearance of a glorious kingdom which would satisfy the pride of Israel. But was it not more truly divine more necessary to the condition of the people as seen of God? The heart of each one therefore would be thus tested, to show whether he belonged to that repentant remnant, who discerned the ways of God, or to the proud multitude, who only sought their own glory, possessing neither a conscience exercised before God, nor a sense of their need and misery.

Having set John under the responsibility of receiving this testimony, which put all Israel to the test, and distinguished the remnant from the nation in general, the Lord then bears witness to John himself, addressing the multitude, and reminding them how they had followed the preaching of John. He shows them the exact point to which Israel had come in the ways of God. The introduction, in testimony, of the kingdom made the difference between that which preceded and that which followed. Among all that are born of women there had been none greater than John the Baptist, none who had been so near Jehovah, sent before His face, none who had rendered Him a more exact and complete testimony, who had been so separate from all evil by the power of the Spirit of God — a separation proper to the fulfillment of such a mission among the people of God. Still he had not been in the kingdom: it was not yet established; and to be in the presence of Christ in His kingdom, enjoying the result of the

establishment of His glory,* was a greater thing than all testimony to the coming of the kingdom.

[* This is not God's assembly; but the rights of the King as manifested in glory being established, the foundation being laid, Christians are in the kingdom and the patience of Jesus Christ, who is glorified but hidden in God. They share the destiny of the King, and will share His glory when He reigns.]

Nevertheless from the time of John the Baptist there was a notable change. From that time the kingdom was announced. It was not established, but it was preached. This was a very different thing from the prophecies that spoke of the kingdom for a yet distant period, while recalling the people to the law as given by Moses. The Baptist went before the King, announcing the nearness of the kingdom, and commanding the Jews to repent that they might enter into it; Thus the law and the prophets spake on God's part until John. The law was the rule; the prophets, maintaining the rule, strengthened the hopes and the faith of the remnant. Now, the energy of the Spirit impelled men to force their way through every difficulty and all the opposition of the leaders of the nation and of a blinded people, that they might at all costs attain the kingdom of a King rejected by the blind unbelief of those who should have received Him. It needed — seeing that the King had come in humiliation, and that He had been rejected — it needed this violence to enter the kingdom. The strait gate was the only entrance.

If faith could really penetrate the mind of God therein, John was the Elias who should come. He that had ears to hear, let him hear. It was in fact for those only.

Had the kingdom appeared in the glory and in the power of its Head, violence would not have been necessary; it would have been possessed as the certain effect of that power; but it was the will of God that they should morally be tested. It was thus also that they ought to have received Elias in spirit.

The result is given in the Lord's words which follow, that is, the true character of this generation, and the ways of God in relation to the Person of Jesus, manifested by His rejection itself. As a generation the threatenings of justice, and the attractions of grace were equally lost upon them. The children of wisdom, those whose consciences were taught of

God, acknowledged the truth of John's testimony, as against themselves, and the grace, so necessary to the guilty, of the ways of Jesus.

John, separate from the iniquity of the nation, had, in their eyes, a devil. Jesus, kind to the most wretched, they accused of falling in with evil ways. Yet the evidence was powerful enough to have subdued the heart of a Tyre or Sodom; and the righteous rebuke of the Lord warns the perverse and unbelieving nation of a more terrible judgment than that which awaited the pride of Tyre or the corruption of Sodom.

But this was a test for the most favored of mankind. It might have been said, Why was the message not sent to Tyre, ready to hearken? Why not to Sodom, that that city might have escaped the fire that consumed it? It is that man must be tested in every way; that the perfect counsels of God may be developed. If Tyre or Sodom had abused the advantages which a God of creation and of providence had heaped upon them, the Jews were to manifest what was in the heart of man, when possessing all the promises and made the depositaries of all the oracles of God.

They boasted of the gift, and departed from the Giver. Their blinded heart acknowledged not and even rejected their God.

The Lord felt the contempt of His people whom He loved; but, as the obedient man on earth, He submitted to the will of His Father, who, acting in sovereignty, the Lord of heaven and earth, manifested, in the exercise of this sovereignty, divine wisdom, and the perfection of His character. Jesus accepts the will of His Father in its effects, and, thus subject, sees its perfection.

It was befitting that God should reveal to the lowly all the gifts of His grace in Jesus, this Emmanuel on earth; and that He should hide them from the pride that sought to scrutinise and to judge them. But this opens the door to the glory of God's counsels in it.

The truth was, that His Person was too glorious to be fathomed or understood by man, although His words and His works left the nation without excuse, in their refusal to come unto Him that they might know the Father.

Jesus, subject to His Father's will, although thoroughly sensible of all that was painful to His heart in its effects, sees the whole extent of the glory that should follow His rejection.

All things were delivered unto Him of His Father. It is the Son who is revealed to our faith, the veil that covered His glory being taken away now that He is rejected as Messiah. No one knoweth Him but the Father. Who among the proud could fathom what He was? He who from all eternity was one with the Father, become man, surpassed, in the deep mystery of His being, all knowledge save that of the Father Himself. The impossibility of knowing Him who had emptied Himself to become man, maintained the certainty, the reality, of His divinity, which this self-renunciation might have hidden from the eyes of unbelief. The incomprehensibility of a being in a finite form revealed the infinite which was therein. His divinity was guaranteed to faith, against the effect of His humanity on the mind of man. But if no one knew the Son, except the Father only, the Son, who is truly God, was able to reveal the Father. No man has ever seen God. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has revealed Him. No one knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him. Wretched ignorance that in its pride rejects Him! It was thus according to the good pleasure of the Son that this revelation was made. Distinctive attribute of divine perfection! He came for this purpose; He did it according to His own wisdom. Such was the truth of man's relations with Him, although He submitted to the painful humiliation of being rejected by His own people, as the final test of their, of man's state.

Observe also here, that this principle, this truth, with regard to Christ, opens the door to the Gentiles, to all who should be called. He reveals the Father to whomsoever He will. He always seeks the glory of His Father. He alone can reveal Him — He to whom the Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, has delivered all things; The Gentiles are included in the rights conferred by this title, even every family in heaven and earth. Christ exercises these rights in grace, calling whom He will to the knowledge of the Father.

Thus we find here the perverse and faithless generation; a remnant of the nation justifying the wisdom of God as manifested in John and in Jesus in judgment and in grace; the sentence of judgment on the unbelievers; the

rejection of Jesus in the character in which He had presented Himself to the nation; and His perfect submission, as man, to the will of His Father in this rejection, giving occasion for the manifestation to His soul of the glory proper to Him as Son of God — a glory which no man could know, even as He alone could reveal that of the Father. So that the world who refused Him was in total ignorance, save at the good pleasure of Him who delights in revealing the Father.

We should also remark here, that the mission of the disciples to Israel who rejected Christ continues (if Israel be in the land) until He comes as the Son of man, His title of judgment and of glory as heir of all things (that is to say, until the judgment by which He takes possession of the land of Canaan, in a power that leaves no room for His enemies). This, His title of judgment and glory as heir of all things, is mentioned in John 5, Daniel 7, Psalms 8 and 80.

Observe too, that in chapter 11, the perverseness of the generation that had rejected John's testimony, and that of the Son of man come in grace and associating Himself in grace with the Jews, opens the door to the testimony of the glory of the Son of God, and to the revelation of the Father by Him in sovereign grace — a grace that could make Him known as efficaciously to a poor Gentile as to a Jew. It was no longer a question of responsibility to receive, but of sovereign grace that imparted to whomsoever it would. Jesus knew man, the world, the generation which had enjoyed the greatest advantages of all that were in the world. There was no place for the foot to rest on in the miry slough of that which had departed from God. In the midst of a world of evil Jesus remained the sole revealer of the Father, the source of all good. Whom does He call? What does He bestow on those who come? Only source of blessing and revealer of the Father, He calls all those who are weary and heavy laden. Perhaps they did not know the spring of all misery, namely, separation from God, sin. He knew, and He alone could heal them. If it was the sense of sin which burdened them, so much the better. Every way the world no longer satisfied their hearts; they were miserable, and therefore the objects of the heart of Jesus. Moreover He would give them rest; He does not here explain by what means; He simply announces the fact. The love of the Father, which in grace, in the Person of the Son, sought out the wretched, would bestow rest (not merely alleviation or sympathy, but rest) on every

one that came to Jesus. It was the perfect revelation of the Father's name to the heart of those that needed it; and that by the Son; peace, peace with God. They had but to come to Christ: He undertook all and gave rest. But there is a second element in rest. There is more than peace through the knowledge of the Father in Jesus. And more than that is needed; for, even when the soul is perfectly at peace with God, this world presents many causes of trouble to the heart. In these cases it is a question of submission or of self-will. Christ, in the consciousness of His rejection, in the deep sorrow caused by the unbelief of the cities in which He had wrought so many miracles, had just manifested the most entire submission to His Father, and had found therein perfect rest to His soul. To this He calls all that heard Him, all that felt the need of rest to their own souls. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," that is to say, the yoke of entire submission to His Father's will, learning of Him how to meet the troubles of life; for He was "meek and lowly in heart," content to be in the lowest place at the will of His God. In fact nothing can overthrow one who is there. It is the place of perfect rest to the heart.

CHAPTER 12. At length the rejection of the nation, in consequence of their contempt of the Lord, is plainly shown, as well as the cessation of all His relations with them as such, in order to bring out on God's part an entirely different system, that is to say, the kingdom in a particular form. Thus this last chapter is the great turning-point of the whole history. Christ is a divine witness to Himself, and John Baptist has so to receive Him, as another would. He stood no longer as Messiah witnessed to, but as Son of God, but gives His full testimony to John. But the nation had rejected God manifested in warnings and grace alike: only there was a remnant. Wisdom was justified of her children. Then comes His submission to His rejection, evil as it might be, as the Father's will; but this leads Him out into the consciousness of His personal glory, the real ground of that rejection. All things were delivered to Him of His Father. None could know Him, nor any the Father unless He revealed Him. The whole world, tested by His perfection, was found lying in wickedness (though with a spared remnant), but man was universally away from God. He looked down from heaven to see, as we read, but they were all gone out of the way, none righteous, no, not one. So Jesus, as He walked on the sea, stood alone in a judged world, judged by His rejection, but now in the sovereign grace of the Father, as

the Son revealing Him, and calling to the revelation of this grace in Himself. This is just now the new position. He had tried man. The very thing that He was, hindered their receiving Him. Now he that was weary must come to Him who stood thus alone, and He would give them rest. They must learn of Him who thus had absolutely submitted, and they would have rest as to the world and everything here. So with us: where we wholly bow, we come into the conscious possession of our privileges as disowned, on the heavenly and higher ground.

The first circumstance that brought forward the question of His Person, and of His right to close the dispensation, was the disciples' plucking the ears of corn and crushing them in their hands to satisfy their hunger. For this the Pharisees rebuke them, because it was on a Sabbath day. Jesus sets before them that the king, rejected by the malice of Saul, had partaken of that which was only given to the priests. The Son of David, in a similar case, might well enjoy a similar privilege. Besides God was acting in grace. The priest also profaned the Sabbath in the service of the temple; and One greater than the temple was there. Moreover, if they had really known the mind of God, if they had been imbued with the Spirit which His word declared to be acceptable to Him — "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," they would not have condemned the guiltless. In addition to this, the Son of man was Lord even of the Sabbath. Here He no longer takes the title of Messiah, but that of Son of man — a name which bore witness to a new order of things, and to a more extended power. Now that which He said had great significance; for the Sabbath was the token of the covenant between Jehovah and the nation (Ezekiel 20:12-20); and the Son of man was declaring His power over it. If that was touched, it was all over with the covenant.

The same question arises in the synagogue; and the Lord persists in acting in grace, and in doing good, showing them that they would do the same for one of their sheep. This only excites their hatred, great as was the proof of His beneficent power. They were children of the murderer. Jesus withdraws from them, and great multitudes follow Him. He heals them, charging them not to make Him known. In all this however His doings were but the fulfillment of a prophecy which clearly traces out the Lord's position at this time. The hour would come when He should bring forth judgment unto victory. Meanwhile He retained the position of entire

lowliness, in which grace and truth could commend themselves to those who appreciated and needed them. But in the exercise of this grace, and in His testimony to the truth, He would do nothing to falsify this character, or so to attract the attention of men as to prevent His true work, or which could make it even suspected that He sought His own honor. Nevertheless the Spirit of Jehovah was upon Him as His beloved, in whom His soul delighted; and He should declare judgment to the Gentiles, and they should put their trust in His name. The application of this prophecy to Jesus at that moment is very evident. We see how guarded He was with the Jews, abstaining from the gratification of their carnal desires respecting Himself, and content to be in the background, if God His Father was glorified; and glorifying Him perfectly Himself on the earth by doing good. He was soon to be declared to the Gentiles; whether by the execution of the judgment of God, or by presenting Himself to them as the One in whom they should trust.

This passage is manifestly placed here by the Holy Ghost, in order to give the exact representation of His position, before laying open the new scenes which His rejection prepares for us.

He then casts out a devil from a man who was blind and dumb — a sad condition, truly depicting that of the people with respect to God. The multitude, full of admiration, exclaim, “Is not this the Son of David?” But the religionists, on hearing it, jealous of the Lord, and hostile to the testimony of God, declare that Jesus wrought this miracle by the power of Beelzebub, thus sealing their own condition, and putting themselves under the definitive judgment of God. Jesus demonstrates the absurdity of what they had said. Satan would not destroy his own kingdom. Their own children, who had the pretension to do the same, should judge their iniquity. But if not the power of Satan (and the Pharisees admitted that the devils were really cast out), it was the finger of God, and the kingdom of God was among them.

He who had come into the strong man’s house to spoil his goods had first to bind him.

The truth is that the presence of Jesus put everything to the test; everything on God’s part was centered in Him. It is Emmanuel Himself who was there. He who was not with Him was against Him. He who did

not gather with Him scattered. Everything now depended on Him alone. He would bear with all unbelief as to His own Person. Grace could remove that. He could pardon all sin; but to speak against and blaspheme the Holy Ghost (that is, to acknowledge the exercise of a power, which is that of God, and to attribute it to Satan) could not be pardoned; for the Pharisees admitted that the devil was cast out, and it was only with malice, with open-eyed deliberate hatred to God, that they attributed it to Satan. And what pardon could there be for this? There was none either in the age of the law* or in that of the Messiah. The fate of those who thus acted was decided. This the Lord would have them understand. The fruit proved the nature of the tree. It was essentially bad. They were a generation of vipers. John had told them the same. Their words condemned them. Upon this the scribes and Pharisees asked for a sign. This was nothing but wickedness. They had had signs enough. It was only stirring up the unbelief of the rest.

[* Take notice of this expression. We see the manner in which the Holy Ghost passes on from the time then present to the Jews, which would soon end, to the time when the Messiah would set up His kingdom, their “world age] to come.” We have a position outside all this, during the suspension of the public establishment of the kingdom. The apostles even did but preach or announce it; they did not establish it. Their miracles were “the powers of the age to come” (compare 1 Peter 1:11-13). This, as we shall see by-and-by, is of great importance. Thus also with regard to the new covenant, of which Paul was the minister; and yet he did not establish it with Judah and Israel.]

This request gives the Lord occasion to pronounce the judgment of this generation.

There should be only the sign of Jonah for this evil generation. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so should the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. But then lo! Christ was already rejected.

The Ninevites by their conduct should condemn this generation in the day of judgment, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and a greater than Jonah was here. The queen of the south likewise testified against the wickedness of this perverse generation. Her heart attracted by the report of Solomon’s wisdom, had led her to him from the uttermost parts of the earth; and a greater than Solomon was here. Poor ignorant Gentiles understood the wisdom of God in His word, whether by the prophet or

the king, better than His beloved people, even when the Great King and Prophet was among them.

This was then His judgment: the unclean spirit (of idolatry) which had gone out of the people, finding no rest away from Israel (alas! its true house, whereas they ought to have been the house of God), should return with seven spirits worse than itself. They would find the house empty, swept, and garnished; and the last state should be worse than the first. What a solemn judgment of the people was this — that those among whom Jehovah had walked should become the habitation of an unclean spirit, of a superabundance of unclean spirits; not merely of seven, the complete number, but together with these (who would incite them all to madness against God and those who honored God, thus leading them to their own destruction) that other unclean spirit also, who would draw them back into the wretched idolatry from which they had escaped! Israel's judgment was pronounced.

In conclusion Jesus publicly breaks the bonds that naturally existed between Himself and the people after the flesh, acknowledging those only which were formed by the word of God, and manifested by doing the will of His Father which was in heaven. Those persons only would He acknowledge as His relations, who were formed after the pattern of the sermon on the Mount.

His actions and His words after this bear witness to the new work which He was really doing on the earth. He leaves (chap. 13) the house and sits beside the lake. He takes a new position outside, to proclaim to the multitude that which was His true work. A sower went forth to sow.

The Lord was no longer seeking fruit in His vine. It had been requisite according to God's relations with Israel that He should seek this fruit; but His true service, He well knew, was to bring that which could produce fruit, and not to find any in men.

It is important to remark here, that the Lord speaks of the visible and outward effect of His work as a Sower. The only occasion here on which He expresses His judgment as to the inward cause is, when He says, "They had no root"; and even here it is a matter of fact. The doctrines respecting the divine operation needed for the production of fruit are not

here spoken of. It is the Sower who is displayed, and the result of His sowing, not that which causes the seed to germinate in the earth. In each case, except the first, a certain effect is produced.

The Lord is then here presented as commencing a work which is independent of all former relation between God and men, bearing with Him the seed of the word, which He sows in the heart by His ministry. Where it abides, where it is understood, where it is neither choked nor dried up, it produces fruit to His glory, and to the happiness and profit of the man who bears it.

In verse 11 the Lord shows the reason why He speaks enigmatically to the multitude. A distinction is now definitely made between the remnant and the nation: the latter was under the judgment of blindness pronounced by the prophet Isaiah. Blessed were the eyes of the disciples which saw the Emmanuel, the Messiah, the object of the hopes and desires of so many prophets and righteous men. All this marks judgment, and a called and spared remnant.*

[* Compare Mark 4:33, 34. It was adapted to all if they had ears to hear, but was darkness to the willful.]

I would now make a few remarks on the character of the persons of whom the Lord speaks in the parable.

When the word is sown in a heart that does not understand it, when it produces no relation of intelligence, of feeling, or of conscience between the heart and God, the enemy takes it away: it does not remain in the heart. He who heard it is not the less guilty: that which was sown in his heart was adapted to every need, to the nature and to the condition of man.

The immediate reception of the word with joy, in the next case, tends rather to prove that the heart will not retain it; for it is scarcely probable in such a case that the conscience was reached. A conscience touched by the word makes a man serious; he sees himself in the presence of God, which is always a serious thing whatever may be the attraction of His grace, or the hope inspired by His goodness. If the conscience has not been reached, there is no root. The word was received for the joy it imparted; when it brings tribulation, it is given up. When the conscience has been already exercised, the gospel brings at once joy; but when not, it awakens the

conscience where there is a real work. In the first case it is the answer to and meets the wants already there. In the second it creates those wants.

Every day's history is, alas! the sad and best explanation of the third class. There is no ill-will, there is barrenness.

That the word was understood is only affirmed of those who bear fruit. The true understanding of the word brings a soul into connection with God, because the word reveals God — expresses what He is. If I understand it, I know Him; and the true knowledge of God (that is, of the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ) is eternal life. Now, whatever may be the degree of light, it is always God thus revealed who is made known by the word that Jesus sows. Thus, being begotten of the word, we shall produce, in diverse measures, the fruits of the life of God in this world. For the subject here is the effect, in this world, of the reception of the truth brought by Jesus (not heaven, nor that which God does in the heart to make the seed bear fruit).

This parable does not speak, as a similitude, of the kingdom, though the word sown was the word of the kingdom, but of the great elementary principle of the service of Christ in the universality of its application, and as it was realised in His own Person and service while on the earth, and after He was gone, though fuller subjects of grace might then be brought out.

In the six following parables we find similitudes of the kingdom. We must remember that it is the kingdom established during the rejection of the King,* and which consequently has a peculiar character. That is to say, it is characterised by the absence of the King, adding to this, in the explanation of the first parable, the effect of His return.

[* Remark here, that chapter 12 having brought before us the judgment of the Jewish people, we have now the kingdom as It is in the absence of the king, chapter 13; the assembly as built by Christ, chapter 16; and the kingdom in glory, chapter 17.]

The first three of these six parables present the kingdom in its outward forms in the world. They are addressed to the multitude. The last three present the kingdom according to the estimate of the Holy Ghost, according to the reality of its character as seen by God — the mind and counsel of God in it. They are addressed consequently to the disciples

alone. The public establishment of the kingdom in the righteousness and power of God is also announced to the latter, in the explanation of the parables of the tares.

Let us consider first the exterior of the kingdom publicly announced to the multitude — the outward form which the kingdom would assume.

We must remember that the King, that is, the Lord Jesus, was rejected on earth; that the Jews, in rejecting Him, had condemned themselves; that, the word of God being used to accomplish the work of Him whom the Father had sent, the Lord thus made it known that He established the kingdom, not by His power exercised in righteousness and in judgment, but by bearing testimony to the hearts of men; and that the kingdom now assumed a character connected with man's responsibility, and with the result of the word of light being sown in the earth, addressed to the hearts of men, and left as a system of truth to the faithfulness and the care of men (God, however, still holding good His sovereign right for the preservation of His children and of the truth itself). This latter part is not the subject of these parables. I have introduced it here, because it might otherwise have been supposed that everything depended absolutely on man. Had it been so, alas! all would have been lost.

The parable of the tares is the first. It gives us a general idea of the effect of these sowings as to the kingdom; or rather, the result of having for the moment committed the kingdom here below to the hands of men.

The result was that the kingdom here below no longer presented as a whole the appearance of the Lord's own work. He sows not tares. Through the carelessness and the infirmity of men, the enemy found means to sow these tares. Observe that this does not apply to the heathen or to the Jews, but to the evil done among Christians by Satan through bad doctrines, bad teachers and their adherents. The Lord Jesus sowed. Satan, while men slept, sowed also. There were judaisers, philosophers, heretics who held with both the former on the one hand, or on the other opposed the truth of the Old Testament.

Nevertheless Christ had only sown good seed. Must the tares then be rooted out? Clearly the condition of the kingdom during the absence of Christ depends on the answer to this question; and it throws light also

upon that condition. But there was still less power to bring in a remedy than there had been to prevent the evil. All must remain unremedied until the King's interposition at the time of harvest. The kingdom of heaven on earth, such as it is in the hands of men, must remain a mingled system. Heretics, false brethren, will be there, as well as the fruit of the Lord's word, testifying, in this last dealing of God with him, man's inability to maintain that which is good and pure in its pristine state. So it has ever been.*

[* It is a solemn thought that the first act of man has been to spoil what God has set up good. So with Adam, so with Noah, so with the law, so with the priesthood of Aaron, so with the son of David, so even Nebuchadnezzar, so the church. In Paul's days all sought their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. All is made good, better, and stable in the Messiah.]

At the time of harvest (a phrase that designates a certain space of time during which the events connected with the harvest will take place)" at the time of harvest" the Lord will deal first, in His providence, with the tares. I say, "in His providence," because He employs the angels. The tares shall be bound in bundles ready to be burnt.

We must observe that outward things in the world are the subject here — acts which root out corruption — corruption that has grown up in the midst of Christianity.

The servants are not capable of doing this. The intermingling (caused by their weakness and carelessness) is such, that in gathering out the tares they would root up the wheat also. Not only discernment, but the practical power of separation would be wanting to carry out their purpose. When once the tares are there, the servants have nothing to do with them as to their presence in this world, in Christendom. Their service is with the good. The work of purging Christendom from them was not in their province. It is a work of judgment on that which is not of God, belonging to Him who can execute it according to the perfection of a knowledge that embraces everything, and a power that nothing escapes; which, if two men are in one bed, knows how to take the one and leave the other. The execution of judgment on the wicked in this world does not belong to the servants of Christ.* He will accomplish it by the angels of His power, to whom He commits the execution of this work.

[* I speak here of those who will have been His servants on earth during His absence. For angels are also His servants, as well as the saints of the age to come.]

After the binding of the tares He gathers the wheat into His garner. There is no binding the wheat in bundles; He takes it all to Himself. Such is the end of that which concerns the outward appearance of the kingdom here below. This is not all that the parable can teach us, but it ends the subject of which this part of the chapter speaks. During the absence of Jesus the result of His sowing will be marred, as a whole down here, by the work of the enemy. At the close He will bind all the enemy's work in bundles; that is, He will prepare them in this world for judgment. He will then take away the church. It is evident that this terminates the scene below which goes on during His absence. The judgment is not yet executed. Before speaking of it the Lord gives other pictures of the forms which the kingdom will assume during His absence.

That which had been sown as a grain of mustard-seed becomes a great tree; a symbol that represents a great power in the earth. The Assyrian, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, are set before us in the word as great trees. Such would be the form of the kingdom, which began in littleness through the word sown by the Lord, and afterwards by His disciples. That which this seed produced would gradually assume the form of a great power, making itself prominent on the earth, so that others would shelter themselves under it, as birds under the branches of a tree. This has, indeed, been the case.

We next find that it would not only be a great tree in the earth, but that the kingdom would be characterised as a system of doctrine, which would diffuse itself — a profession, which would enclose all it reached within its sphere of influence. The whole of the three measures would be leavened. I need not dwell here on the fact that the word leaven is always used in a bad sense by the sacred writers; but the Holy Ghost gives us to understand that it is not the regenerative power of the word in the heart of an individual, bringing him back to God; neither is it simply a power acting by outward strength, such as Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and the other great trees of scripture. But it is a system of doctrine that should characterise the mass, pervading it throughout. It is not faith properly so called, nor is it life. It is a religion; it is Christendom. A profession of

doctrine, in hearts which will bear neither the truth nor God, connects itself always with corruption in the doctrine itself.

This parable of the leaven concludes His instructions to the multitude. All was now addressed to them in parables, for they did not receive Him their King, and He spoke of things that supposed His rejection, and an aspect of the kingdom unknown to the revelations of the Old Testament, which have in view either the kingdom in power, or a little remnant receiving, amid sufferings, the word of the Prophet-King who had been rejected.

After this parable Jesus no longer remains by the seaside with the multitude — a place suited to the position in which He stood towards the people after the testimony born at the end of chapter 12, and whither He had repaired on quitting the house. He now re-enters the house with His disciples; and there, in secluded intimacy with them, He reveals the true character — the object — of the kingdom of heaven, the result of that which was done in it, and the means which should be taken to cleanse everything on earth, when the outward history of the kingdom during His absence should have terminated. That is to say, we find here that which characterises the kingdom to the spiritual man, that which he understands as the true mind of God with regard to the kingdom, and the judgment which should purge out from it all that was contrary to Him — the exercise of power which should render it outwardly in accordance with the heart of God.

We have seen its outward history ending with this, the wheat hidden in the garner, and the tares left in bundles on the earth ready to be burnt. The explanation of this parable resumes the history of the kingdom at that period; only it gives us to understand and distinguish the different parts of the intermixture, ascribing each part to its true author. The field is the world;* there the word was sown for the establishment, in this manner, of the kingdom. The good seed were the children of the kingdom; they belonged to it really according to God; they are its heirs. The Jews were no longer so, and it was no longer the privilege of natural birth. The children of the kingdom were born of the word. But among these, in order to spoil the Lord's work, the enemy introduced all sorts of people, the fruit of the doctrines which he had sown among those who were born of the truth. This is the work of Satan in the place where the doctrine of Christ had

been planted. The harvest is the end of the age.** The reapers are the angels. It will be remarked here that the Lord does not explain historically that which took place, but the terms used to bring in the issue when the harvest is come. The fulfillment of that which is historical in the parable is supposed; and He passes on to give the great result outside that which was the kingdom during His absence on high. The wheat (that is, the church) is in the barn, and the tares in bundles on the earth. But He takes all that constitutes these bundles, all that as evil offends God in the kingdom, and casts it into the furnace of fire, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. After this judgment the righteous shall shine forth like Himself, the true Sun of that day of glory — of the age to come, in the kingdom of their Father. Christ will have received the kingdom from the Father whose children they were; and they shall shine forth in it with Him according to that character.

[* Manifestly it was not in the church that the Lord began to sow: it did not then exist. But He distinguishes Israel here from the world, and speaks of the latter. He looked for fruit in Israel; He sows in the world, because Israel after all His culture brought forth no fruit.]

[** Not merely the instant that terminates it, but the acts that accomplish the purpose of God in terminating it.]

Thus we find for the multitude, the results on earth of the divine sowing, and the machinations of the enemy — the kingdom presented under this form; afterwards the confederacies of the wicked among themselves apart from their natural order as growing in the field; and the taking away of the church. For His own disciples, the Lord explains all that was necessary to make them fully understand the language of the parable. We then find the judgment executed by the Son of man upon the wicked, who are cast into the fire; and the manifestation of the righteous in glory (these last events taking place after the Lord had risen up and put an end to the outward form of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, the wicked being gathered in companies, and the saints taken up to heaven).*

[* Remark too here that the kingdom of heaven is parcelled out into two parts, the kingdom of the Son of man, and the kingdom of our Father: the objects of judgment in what is subjected to Christ, and a place like His before the Father for sons.]

And now, having explained the public history and its results in judgment and in glory for the full instruction of His disciples, the Lord

communicates to them the thoughts of God with respect to what was going on upon earth, while the outward and earthly events of the kingdom were being developed — that which the spiritual man should discern in them. To him, to one who understood the purpose of God, the kingdom of heaven was like a treasure hidden in a field. A man finds the treasure, and buys the field in order to possess it. The field was not his object, but the treasure that was in it. Thus Christ has purchased the world. He possesses it by right. His object is the treasure hidden in it, His own people, all the glory of the redemption connected with it; in a word, the church looked at, not in its moral and in a certain sense divine beauty, but as the special object of the desires and of the sacrifice of the Lord — that which His heart had found in this world according to the counsels and the mind of God.

In this parable it is the powerful attraction of this “new thing,” which induces the one who has found it to purchase the whole place, that he may obtain possession of it.

The Jews were nothing new; the world had no attraction; but this new treasure induced the One who had discovered it to sell all He had that He might gain it. In fact Christ forsook everything. He not only emptied Himself to redeem us, but He renounced all that belonged to Him as man, as the Messiah on earth, the promises, His royal rights, His life, to take possession of the world which contained in it this treasure, the people whom He loved.

In the parable of the pearl of great price we have again the same idea, but it is modified by others. A man was seeking goodly pearls. He knew what he was about. He had taste, discernment, knowledge, as to that which he sought. It was the well-known beauty of the thing that caused his research. He knows when he has found one corresponding to his ideas, that it is worth while to sell all that he may acquire it. It is worth this in the eyes of one who can estimate its value. And he buys nothing else along with it. Thus Christ has found in the church by itself a beauty and (because of this beauty) a value, which made Him give up all to obtain it. It is just so with regard to the kingdom. Considering the state of man, of the Jews even, the glory of God required that all should be given up in order to have this new thing; for there was nothing in man that He could take to Himself. Not

only He was content to give up all for the possession of this new thing, but that which His heart seeks for, that which He finds nowhere else, He finds in that which God has given Him in the kingdom. He bought no other pearls. Until He found this pearl, He had no inducement to sell all that He had. As soon as He sees it, His mind is made up; He forsakes all for it. Its value decides Him, for He knows how to judge, and He seeks with discernment.

I do not say that the children of the kingdom are not actuated by the same principle. When we have learnt what it is to be a child of the kingdom, we forsake all that we may enjoy it, that we may be of the pearl of great price. But we do not buy that which is not the treasure, in order to obtain it; and we are very far from seeking goodly pearls before we have found the one of great price. In their full force these parables only apply to Christ. The intention in these parables is to bring out that which was then doing, in contrast with all that had taken place before — with the Lord's relations to the Jews.

There remains yet one of the seven — that of the net cast into the sea. In this parable there is no change in the persons employed, that is to say, in the parable itself. The same persons who cast the net draw it to shore, and make the separation by gathering the good fish into vessels, taking no further notice of the bad. Securing the good fish is the work of those who draw the net to shore. It is only when landed that this is done. The sorting is their work, doubtless; but they have only to do with the good fish. They know them. This is their business, the object of their fishing. Others indeed come, and are found in the net together with the good; but these are not good. No other judgment is needed. The fishermen know the good. These are not such. They leave them. This forms a part of the history of the kingdom of heaven. The judgment of the wicked is not found here. The bad are left on the shore, when the fishermen gather the good into vessels. The final destiny of either good or bad is not given here. It does not take place on the shore with respect to the good; nor as to the bad by simply leaving them there. It is subsequent to the action of the parable; and, with respect to the bad, it does not take place merely by their separation from the good with whom they had been intermingled, but by their destruction. Neither in this parable, nor in that of the tares and wheat, does the

execution of judgment form part of the parable itself. There the tares are bound and left on the field, here they are cast away out of the netful.

Thus the gospel net has been cast into the sea of the nations, and has enclosed of all kinds. After this general gathering, which has filled the net, the agents of the Lord, having to do with the good, gather them together, separating them from the bad. Remark here that this is a similitude of the kingdom. It is the character which the kingdom assumes when the gospel has assembled together a mass of good and bad. At the end, when the net has been drawn so that all kinds are enclosed in it, the good are set apart because they are precious, the others are left. The good are gathered into divers vessels. The saints are gathered, not by the angels, but by the work of those who have labored in the name of the Lord. The distinction is not made by judgment, but by the servants occupied with the good.

The execution of the judgment is another matter. The laborers have nothing to do with that. At the end of the age, the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, not the just from among the rest as the fisherman did, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Here nothing is said of their being occupied about the just. Gathering them into vessels was not the angels' work, but that of the fishermen. The angels are in both parables occupied with the wicked. The public result had been given, whether during the period of the kingdom of heaven, or afterwards, in the parable of the tares. It is not repeated here. The work to be done with regard to the righteous when the net is full is added here. The destiny of the wicked is repeated to distinguish the work done with respect to them from that wrought by means of the fishermen, who gather the good into divers vessels. Still it is presented under another aspect; and the just are left where they were. In the parable of the tares the judgment of the wicked is declared as in this. They are cast out into weeping and gnashing of teeth, but there the general state of the kingdom is revealed, and we have the righteous shining forth as the sun — the higher part of the kingdom. Here it is only what the intelligent understand, what the spiritual mind sees; the just are put into vessels. There is a separation by spiritual power before judgment, which there was not in the general public state of the kingdom, but only what providence did publicly in the field, and the good grain received above. Here the separation is by dealings with the good. This was the main point

for spiritual intelligence. Public display is not the point; only judgment will be executed on the wicked, in fact; then the just will be left there.*

[* In all symbolical prophecies and parables, the explanation goes beyond the parable and adds facts; because the judgment executed publicly testifies of that which in the time of the parable can only be discerned spiritually. This latter may be spiritually understood. The result is, judgment will publicly declare it, so that we are always to go beyond the parable in the explanation. Judgment explains publicly what is only understood spiritually before, and brings in a new order of things (compare Daniel 7).]

In the explanation of the second parable, it is absolute judgment in the case of the tares, destroying and consuming that which remains on the field, already collected together and separated providentially from the wheat. The angels are sent at the end, not to separate the tares from the wheat (that was done) but to cast the tares into the fire, thus cleansing the kingdom. In the explanation of the parable of the fish (v. 49) the sorting itself takes place. There will be just ones on the earth, and the wicked will be separated from among them. The practical instruction of this parable is the separation of the good from the wicked, and the gathering together in companies of many of the former; this is done more than once, many others of the same being gathered elsewhere into one also. The servants of the Lord are the instruments employed in what takes place in the parable itself.

These parables contain things new and old. The doctrine of the kingdom, for instance, was a well-known doctrine. That the kingdom should take the forms described by the Lord, that it should embrace the whole world without distinction, the people of God drawing their existence not from Abraham but from the word — all this was quite new. All was of God. The scribe had knowledge of the kingdom, but was entirely ignorant of the character it would assume, as the kingdom of heaven planted in this world by means of the word, on which all here depends.

The Lord resumes His work among the Jews.* To them He was only “the carpenter’s son.” They knew His family after the flesh. The kingdom of heaven was nothing in their eyes. The revelation of this kingdom was carried on elsewhere, and there the knowledge of divine things was communicated. The former saw nothing beyond those things which the natural heart could perceive. The blessing of the Lord was arrested by their unbelief: He was rejected as prophet, as well as king, by Israel.

[* The chapters which follow are striking in their character. Christ's Person as the Jehovah of Psalm 132 is brought out, but Israel sent away, the disciples left alone, while He prays on high. He returns, rejoins the disciples, and the Gadarene world owns Him. Then we have in chapter 15 the full moral description of the ground on which Israel stood actually, and ought to stand, but carried much farther out into what man's heart is; and then what God is, revealed in grace to faith, even if in a Gentile. Historically He still owns Israel, but in divine perfection, and now in human administrative power; and then (chap. 16) the church is brought in prophetically; and in chapter 17 the kingdom of glory in vision. In chapter 16 they are forbidden to say He is the Christ. This is over.]

CHAPTER 14. Our Gospel resumes the historical course of these revelations, but in such a manner as to exhibit the spirit by which the people were animated. Herod (loving his earthly power and his own glory more than submission to the testimony of God, and more bound by a false human idea than by his conscience, although in many things he appears to have owned the power of the truth) had cut off the head of the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist; whom he had already imprisoned, in order to remove out of the sight of his wife the faithful reprover of the sin in which she lived.

Jesus is sensible of the import of this, which is reported to Him. Accomplishing in lowly service (however personally exalted above him), together with John, the testimony of God in the congregation, He felt Himself united in heart and in His work to him; for faithfulness in the midst of all evil binds hearts very closely together; and Jesus had condescended to take a place in which faithfulness was concerned (see Psalm 40, 9, 10). On hearing therefore of John's death He retires into a desert place. But while departing from the multitude who thus began to act openly in the rejection of the testimony of God, He does not cease to be the supplier of all their wants, and to testify thus that He who could divinely minister to all their need was amongst them. For the multitude, who felt these wants and who, if they had not faith, yet admired the power of Jesus, follow Him into the desert place; and Jesus, moved with compassion, heals all their sick. In the evening His disciples beg Him to send the multitude away that they may procure food. He refuses and bears a remarkable testimony to the presence, in His own Person, of Him who was to satisfy the poor of His people with bread (Psalm 132). Jehovah, the Lord, who established the throne of David, was there in the Person of Him who should inherit that throne. I doubt not the twelve baskets of

fragments refer to the number which, in scripture, always designates the perfection of administrative power in man.

Remark also here, that the Lord expects to find His twelve disciples capable of being the instruments of His acts of blessing and power, administering according to His own power the blessings of the kingdom. "Give ye them," said He, "to eat." This applies to the blessing of the Lord's kingdom, and to the disciples of Jesus, the twelve, as being its ministers; but it is likewise an all-important principle with regard to the effect of faith in every intervention of God in grace. Faith should be able to use the power that acts in such intervention, to produce the works which are proper to that power, according to the order of the dispensation and the intelligence it has respecting it. We shall find this principle again elsewhere more fully developed.

The disciples wished to send the multitude away, not knowing how to use the power of Christ. They should have been able to avail themselves of it in Israel's behalf, according to the glory of Him who was among them.

If now the Lord demonstrated with perfect patience by His actions that He who could thus bless Israel was in the midst of His people, He does not the less bear testimony to His separation from that people in consequence of their unbelief. He makes His disciples get into a ship to cross the sea alone; and, dismissing the multitude Himself, He goes up into a mountain apart to pray; while the ship that contained the disciples was tossing on the waves of the sea with a contrary wind: a living picture of that which has taken place. God has indeed sent forth His people to cross the stormy sea of the world alone, meeting with an opposition against which it is hard to strive. Meanwhile Jesus prays alone on high. He has sent away the Jewish people, who had surrounded Him during the period of His presence here below. The departure of the disciples, besides its general character, sets before us peculiarly the Jewish remnant. Peter individually, in coming out of the ship, goes in figure beyond the position of this remnant. He represents that faith which, forsaking the earthly accommodation of the ship, goes out to meet Jesus who has revealed Himself to it, and walks upon the sea — a bold undertaking, but based on the word of Jesus, "Come." Yet remark here that this walk has no other foundation than, "If it be Thou," that is to say, Jesus Himself. There is no

support, no possibility of walking, if Christ be lost sight of. All depends on Him. There is a known means in the ship; there is nothing but faith, which looks to Jesus, for walking on the water. Man, as mere man, sinks by the very fact of being there. Nothing can sustain itself except that faith which draws from Jesus the strength that is in Him, and which therefore imitates Him. But it is sweet to imitate Him; and one is then nearer to Him, more like Him. This is the true position of the church, in contrast with the remnant in their ordinary character. Jesus walks on the water as on the solid ground. He who created the elements as they are could well dispose of their qualities at His pleasure. He permits storms to arise for the trial of our faith. He walks on the stormy wave as well as on the calm. Moreover the storm makes no difference. He who sinks in the waters does so in the calm as well as in the storm, and he who can walk upon them will do so in the storm as well as in the calm — that is to say, unless circumstances are looked to and so faith fail, and the Lord is forgotten. For often circumstances make us forget Him where faith ought to enable us to overcome circumstances through our walking by faith in Him who is above them all. Nevertheless, blessed be God! He who walks in His own power upon the water is there to sustain the faith and the wavering steps of the poor disciple; and at any rate that faith had brought Peter so near to Jesus that His outstretched hand could sustain him. Peter's fault was that he looked at the waves, at the storm (which, after all, had nothing to do with it), instead of looking at Jesus, who was unchanged, and who was walking on those very waves, as his faith should have observed. Still the cry of his distress brought the power of Jesus into action, as his faith ought to have done; only it was now to his shame, instead of being in the enjoyment of communion and walking like the Lord.

Jesus having entered the ship, the wind ceases. Even so it will be when Jesus returns to the remnant of His people in this world. Then also will He be worshipped as the Son of God by all that are in the ship, with the remnant of Israel. In Gennesaret Jesus again exercises the power which shall here after drive out from the earth all the evil that Satan has brought in. For when He returns, the world will recognise Him. It is a fine picture of the result of Christ's rejection, which this Gospel has already made known to us as taking place in the midst of the Jewish nation.

CHAPTER 15 displays man and God, the moral contrast between the doctrine of Christ and that of the Jews; and thus the Jewish system is rejected morally by God. When I speak of the system, I speak of their whole moral condition, systematised by the hypocrisy that sought to conceal iniquity, while increasing it in the sight of God, before whom they presented themselves. They made use of His name in order to sink lower, under the pretense of piety, than the laws of natural conscience. It is thus that a religious system becomes the great instrument of the power of the enemy, and more especially when that, of which it still bears the name, was instituted by God. But then man is judged, for Judaism was man with God's law and God's culture.

The judgment which the Lord pronounces on this system of hypocrisy, while manifesting the consequent rejection of Israel, gives rise to instruction that goes thus much farther; and which, searching the heart of man, and judging man according to that which proceeds from it, proves the heart to be a spring of all iniquity; and thus makes it evident that all true morality has its basis in the conviction and confession of sin. For, without this, the heart is always false and flatters itself in vain. Thus also Jesus goes to the root of everything, and comes out of the special and temporary relations of the Jewish nation, to enter on the true morality which belongs to all ages. The disciples did not observe the traditions of the elders; about these the Lord did not concern Himself. He avails Himself of the accusation, to lay it upon the conscience of their accusers, that the judgment occasioned by the rejection of the Son of God was authorised also on the ground of those relationships that already existed between God and Israel. They made the commandment of God of none effect through their traditions; and that in a most important point, and one even on which all earthly blessings depended for the children of Israel. By their own ordinances also Jesus exposes the consummate hypocrisy, the selfishness and avarice, of those who pretended to guide the people, and to form their heart to morality and to the worship of Jehovah. Isaiah had already pronounced their judgment.

Afterwards He shows the multitude that it was a question of what man was, of what proceeded from his heart, from within him; and points out the sad streams that flow from that corrupt spring. But it was the simple truth with respect to the heart of man, as known by God, which

scandalised the self-righteous men of the world, which was unintelligible even to the disciples. Nothing so simple as the truth when it is known; nothing so difficult, so obscure, when a judgment is to be formed respecting it by the heart of man, who does not possess the truth; for he judges after his own thoughts, and the truth is not in them. In short, Israel, and specially religious Israel, and true morality are set in contrast: man is set in his proper responsibility, and in his real colors before God.

Jesus searches the heart; but, acting in grace, He acts according to the heart of God, and manifests it by coming out, both for the one and for the other, of the conventional terms of God's relationship with Israel. A divine Person, God, may walk in the covenant He has given, but cannot be confined to it. And the unfaithfulness of His people to it is the occasion of the revelation of Him passing out beyond that place. And note, here, the effect of traditional religion in blinding moral judgment. What clearer or plainer than that what came out of the mouth and heart defiled a man, not what he ate? But the disciples through the vile influence of Pharisaic teaching, putting outside forms for inward purity, could not understand it.

Christ now leaves the borders of Israel, and His disputes with the learned men of Jerusalem, to visit those places which were farthest off from Jewish privileges. He departs into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, the cities which He had Himself used as examples of that which was farthest from repentance; see chapter 11, where He classes them with Sodom and Gomorrah as more hardened than they. A woman comes out of these countries. She was one of the accursed race, according to the principles that distinguished Israel. She was a Canaanite. She comes to beg the interposition of Jesus on behalf of her daughter, who was possessed by a devil.

In begging this favor, she addresses Jesus by the title, which faith knew to be His connection with the Jews — "Son of David." This gives rise to a full development of the Lord's position, and, at the same time, of the conditions under which man might hope to share the effect of His goodness, yea, to the revelation of God Himself.

As the Son of David, He has nothing to do with a Canaanite. He makes her no answer. The disciples desired to get rid of her by granting her request, in order to have done with her importunity. The Lord answers them, that

He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This was indeed the truth. Whatever may have been the counsels of God manifested on occasion of His rejection (see Isaiah 49), He was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to fulfill His promises made to the fathers.

The woman, in more simple and direct language, the more natural expression of her feelings, begs for the merciful interposition of Him in whose power she trusted. The Lord answers her, that it is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to dogs. We see here His true position, as come to Israel; the promises were for the children of the kingdom. The Son of David was the minister of these promises. Could He as such blot out the distinction of the people of God?

But that faith which derives strength from necessity, and which finds no resource but in the Lord Himself, accepts the humiliation of its position, and deems that with Him there is bread for the hunger of those who have no right to it. It perseveres, too, because there is a felt want, and faith in the power of Him who is come in grace.

What had the Lord done by His apparent harshness? He had brought the poor woman to the expression, to the sense, of her real place before God, that is to say, to the truth as to herself. But, then, was it the truth to say that God was less good than she believed, less rich in mercy towards the destitute, whose only hope and trust was in that mercy? This would have been to deny the character and the nature of God, of which He was the expression, the truth, and the witness, on earth; it would have been to deny Himself, and the object of His mission. He could not say, "God has not a crumb for such." He answers, in fullness of heart, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." God comes out of the narrow limits of His covenant with the Jews, to act in His sovereign goodness according to His own nature. He comes out to be God in goodness, and not merely Jehovah in Israel.

But this goodness is exercised towards one who is brought, in the presence of that goodness, to know that she has no right to it. To this point the seeming harshness of the Lord had been leading her. She received all from grace, while in herself unworthy of all. It is thus, and thus only, that every soul obtains blessing. It is not merely the sense of need — the woman had

that from the beginning, it was that which brought her there. It is not sufficient merely to own that the Lord Jesus can meet that need — the woman came with that acknowledgment; we must be in the presence of the only source of blessing, and be brought to feel that, although we are there, we have no right to avail ourselves of it. And this is a terrible position. When it comes to this, all is grace. God can then act according to His own goodness, and He answers every desire which the heart can form for its happiness.

Thus we see Christ here as a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to fulfill the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles also might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written. At the same time this last truth makes manifest the real condition of man, and the full and perfect grace of God. On this He acts, while still faithful to His promises; and the wisdom of God is displayed in a manner that calls forth our admiration.

We see how much the introduction, in this place, of the story of the Syro-Phenician woman develops and illustrates this part of our Gospel. The beginning of the chapter shows forth the moral condition of the Jews, the falseness of Pharisaic and sacerdotal religiousness; brings out the real state of man as man, what the heart of man was the source of; and then reveals the heart of God as manifested in Jesus. His dealings with this woman display the faithfulness of God to His promises; and the blessing finally granted exhibits the full grace of God, in connection with the manifestation of the real condition of man, acknowledged by conscience — grace rising above the curse which lay upon the object of this grace — rising above everything to make itself a way to the need which faith presented to it.

The Lord now departs thence and goes into Galilee, the place where He was in connection with the despised remnant of the Jews. It was neither Zion, nor the temple, nor Jerusalem, but the poor of the flock, where the people were sitting in gross darkness (Isaiah 8, 9). Thither His compassions follow this poor remnant, and are again exercised in their behalf. He renews the evidences, not only of His tender mercies, but of His presence who satisfied the poor of His people with bread. Here however it is not in the administrative power which He could bestow on His disciples, but according to His own perfection and acting from Himself. He

provides for the remnant of His people. Accordingly it is the fullness of seven baskets of fragments that is gathered up. He departs also without anything else taking place.

We have seen eternal morality, and truth in the inward parts, substituted for the hypocrisy of forms, man's use of legal religion and man's heart shown to be a source of evil and nought else, God's heart fully revealed that rises above all dispensation to show full grace in Christ. Thus dispensations are set aside though fully owned, and man and God fully shown out in doing so. It is a wonderful chapter as to what is everlasting in truth as to God, and as to what the revelation of God shows man to be. And this, note, gives occasion to the revelation of the assembly in the next chapter, which is not a dispensation but founded on what Christ is, Son of the living God. In chapter 12 Christ was dispensationally rejected, and the kingdom of heaven substituted in chapter 13. Here man is set aside and what he had made of law, and God acts in His own grace above all dispensations. Then come the assembly and the kingdom in glory.

CHAPTER 16 goes farther than the revelation of the simple grace of God. Jesus reveals what was about to be formed in the counsels of that grace, where He was owned, showing the rejection of the proud among His people, that He abhors them as they abhor Him. (Zechariah 11). Shutting their eyes (through perversity of will) to the marvelous and beneficent signs of His power, which He constantly bestowed on the poor who sought Him, the Pharisees and Sadducees — struck with these manifestations, yet unbelieving in heart and will — demand a sign from heaven. He rebukes them for their unbelief, showing them that they knew how to discern the signs of the weather; yet the signs of the times were far more striking. They were the adulterous and wicked generation, and He leaves them: significant expressions of what was now passing in Israel.

He warns His forgetful disciples against the devices of these subtle adversaries to the truth, and to Him whom God had sent to reveal it. Israel is abandoned, as a nation, in the persons of their leaders. At the same time in patient grace He recalls His disciples to the remembrance of what explained His words to them.

Afterwards He questions His disciples as to what men in general said of Him. It was all matter of opinion, not of faith; that is, the uncertainty that

belongs to moral indifference, to the absence of that conscious need of soul which can rest only in the truth, in the Savior one has found. He then inquires what they themselves said of Him. Peter, to whom the Father had deigned to reveal Him, declares his faith, saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." No uncertainty, no mere opinion is here, but the powerful effect of the revelation, made by the Father Himself, of the Person of Christ, to the disciple whom He had elected for this privilege.

Here the condition of the people displays itself in a remarkable manner, not, as in the preceding chapter, with respect to the law, but with respect to Christ, who had been presented to them. We see it in contrast with the revelation of His glory to those who followed Him. We have thus three classes: first, haughty unbelieving Pharisees; next, persons conscious and owning there was divine power and authority in Christ, but indifferent; lastly, the revelation of God and divinely given faith.

In the fifteenth chapter, grace towards one who had no hope but in it, is put in contrast with disobedience to and hypocritical perversion of the law, by which the scribes and Pharisees sought to cover their disobedience with the pretense of piety.

The sixteenth chapter, judging the unbelief of the Pharisees respecting the Person of Christ, and setting aside these perverse men, brings in the revelation of His Person as the foundation of the assembly, which was to take the place of the Jews as the witness for God in the earth; and announces the counsels of God with respect to its establishment. It shows us, in adjunction to this, the administration of the kingdom, as it was now being established on the earth.

Let us consider, first, the revelation of His Person.

Peter confesses Him to be the Christ, the fulfillment of the promises made by God, and of the prophecies that announced their realisation. He was the One who should come, the Messiah whom God had promised.

Moreover, He was the Son of God. The second Psalm had declared that, in spite of the schemings of the leaders of the people, and the haughty animosity of the kings of the earth, God's King should be anointed on the hill of Zion. He was the Son, begotten of God. The kings and judges of the earth* are called to submit themselves to Him, lest they should be smitten

with the rod of His power, when He takes the heathen for His inheritance. Thus the true believer waited for the Son of God born in due time upon this earth. Peter confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. So had Nathanael also: “Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.” And, still later, Martha did the same.

[* The study of the Psalms will have made us understand that this is the connection with the establishment of the Jewish remnant in blessing in the last days.]

Peter however, especially taught of the Father, adds to his confession a word simple, yet full of power: “Thou art the Son of the living God.” Not only He who fulfills the promises, and answers to the prophecies; it is of the living God that He is the Son, of Him in whom is life and life-giving power.

He inherits that power of life in God which nothing can overcome or destroy. Who can vanquish the power of Him — of this Son — who came forth from “Him that liveth”? Satan has the power of death; it is he who holds man under the dominion of this dreadful consequence of sin; and that, by the just judgment of God which constitutes its power. The expression “The gates of hades,” of the invisible world, refers to this kingdom of Satan. It is then on this power, which leaves the stronghold of the enemy without strength, that the assembly is built. The life of God shall not be destroyed. The Son of the living God shall not be overcome. That; then, which God founds upon this rock of the unchangeable power of life in His Son shall not be overthrown by the kingdom of death. If man has been overcome and has fallen under the power of this kingdom, God, the living God, will not be overcome by it. It is on this that Christ builds His assembly. It is the work of Christ based on Him as Son of the living God, not of the first Adam nor based on him — His work accomplished according to the power which this truth reveals. The Person of Jesus, the Son of the living God, is its strength. It is the resurrection that proved it. There He is declared to be the Son of God with power. Accordingly it is not during His life, but when raised from the dead, that He begins this work. Life was in Himself; but it is after the Father had burst the gates of hades, He Himself in His divine power had done so and was risen — that He begins to build by the Holy Ghost as ascended on high, that which the power of death or of him who wielded it — already overcome — can

never destroy. It is His Person that is here contemplated, and it is on His Person that all is founded. The resurrection is the proof that He is the Son of the living God, and that the gates of hades can do nothing against Him; their power is destroyed by it. Hence we see how the assembly (though formed on earth) is much more than a dispensation, the kingdom is not.

The work of the cross was needed; but it is not the question here of that which the righteous judgment of God required, or of the justification of an individual, but of that which nullified the power of the enemy. It was the Person of Him whom Peter was given to acknowledge, who lived according to the power of the life of God. It was a peculiar and direct revelation from heaven by the Father. Doubtless Christ had given proofs enough of who He was; but proofs had proved nothing to man's heart. The Father's revelation was the way of knowing who He was, and this went far beyond the hopes of a Messiah.

Here, then, the Father had directly revealed the truth of Christ's own Person, a revelation which went beyond all question of relationship with the Jews. On this foundation Christ would build His assembly. Peter, already so named by the Lord, receives a confirmation of that title on this occasion. The Father had revealed to Simon, the son of Jonas, the mystery of the Person of Jesus; and secondly, Jesus also betokens, by the name He gives him,* the steadfastness, the firmness, the durability, the practical strength, of His servant favored by grace. The right of bestowing a name belongs to a superior, who can assign to the one who bears it his place and his name, in the family or the situation he is in. This right, where real, supposes discernment, intelligence, in that which is going on. Adam names the animals. Nebuchadnezzar gives new names to the captive Jews; the king of Egypt to Eliakim, whom he had placed on the throne. Jesus therefore takes this place when He says, The Father hath revealed this unto thee; and I also give you a place and a name connected with this grace. It is on that which the Father hath revealed unto thee that I am going to build My assembly,** against which (founded on the life that comes from God) the gates of the kingdom of death shall never prevail; and I who build, and build on this immovable foundation — I give you the place of a stone (Peter) in connection with this living temple. Through the gift of God thou belongest already by nature to the building — a living stone, having the knowledge of that truth which is the foundation, and which

makes of every stone a part of the edifice. Peter was pre-eminently such by this confession; he was so in anticipation by the election of God. This revelation was made by the Father in sovereignty. The Lord assigns him, withal, his place, as possessing the right of administration and authority in the kingdom He was going to establish.

[* The passage (chap. 16:18) should be read, "And I also say unto thee."

[** It is important here to distinguish the church which Christ builds, not yet finished, but which He Himself builds, and that which is, as a manifested whole in the world, built up in responsibility by man. In Ephesians 2:20, 21 and 1 Peter 2:4, 5, we have this divine building growing and built up. No mention of man's work is found in either passage; it is a divine one. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul is a wise master builder; others may build in wood, hay and stubble. The confusion of these has been the basis of Popery and other corruptions found in what is called the church. His church, looked at in its reality, is a divine work which Christ accomplishes and which abides.]

Thus far with respect to the assembly, now mentioned for the first time, the Jews having been rejected because of their unbelief, and man a convicted sinner.

Another subject presents itself in connection with this of the assembly that the Lord was going to build; namely, the kingdom which was going to be established. It was to have the form of the kingdom of heaven; it was so in the counsels of God; but it was now to be set up in a peculiar manner, the King having been rejected on earth.

But, rejected as He was, the keys of the kingdom were in the Lord's hand; its authority belonged to Him. He would bestow them on Peter, who, when He was gone, should open its doors to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles. He should also exercise authority from the Lord within the kingdom; so that whatsoever he bound on earth in the name of Christ (the true King, although gone up to heaven) should be bound in heaven; and if he loosed anything on earth, his deed should be ratified in heaven. In a word, he had the power of command in the kingdom of God on earth, this kingdom having now the character of kingdom of heaven, because its King was in heaven* and heaven would stamp his acts with its authority. But it is heaven sanctioning his earthly acts, not his binding or loosing for heaven. The assembly connected with the character of Son of the living God and built by Christ, though formed on earth, belongs to heaven; the kingdom,

though governed from heaven, belongs to earth — has its place and ministration there.

[* Remark here what I have spoken of elsewhere — there are no keys of or to the church or assembly. Peter had the keys of administration in the kingdom. But the idea of keys in connection with the church, or the power of the keys in the church, is a pure fallacy. There are none such at all. The church is built; men do not build with keys, and it is Christ (not Peter) who builds it. Further, the acts thus sanctioned were acts of administration down here. Heaven puts its sanction on them, but they did not relate to heaven, but to earthly administration of the kingdom. Further, it is to be remarked that what is conferred here is individual and personal. It was a name and authority conferred on Simon, son of Jonas. Some further remarks here may help us to understand more fully the bearing of these chapters. In the parable of the sower (chap. 13) the Person of the Lord is not brought forward, only that it is sowing, not reaping. In the first similitude of the kingdom He is Son of man, and the field is the world. He is quite out of Judaism. In chapter 14 we have the state of things from John's rejection, to the time the Lord is owned on His return where He had been rejected. In chapter 15 is the moral controversy, and God in grace in Himself as above evil. On this I dwell no further. But in chapter 16 we have the Person of the Son of God, the living God, and hereon the assembly, and Christ the builder; in chapter 17 the kingdom with the Son of man coming in glory. The keys (however heaven sanctioned Simon's use of them) were, as we have seen, of the kingdom of heaven (not of the assembly); and that, the parable of the tares shows, was to be corrupted and spoiled, and this irremediably. Christ builds the church, not Peter. Compare 1 Peter 2:4, 5.]

These four things then are declared by the Lord in this passage: First, the revelation made by the Father to Simon; Second, the name given to this Simon by Jesus, who was going to build His assembly on the foundation revealed in that which the Father had made known to Simon; Third, the assembly built by Christ Himself, not yet complete, on the foundation of the Person of Jesus acknowledged as Son of the living God; Fourth, the keys of the kingdom that should be given to Peter, that is to say, authority in the kingdom as administering it on the part of Christ, ordering in it that which was His will, and which should be ratified in heaven. All this is connected with Simon personally, in virtue of the Father's election (who, in His wisdom, had chosen him to receive this revelation), and of Christ's authority (who had bestowed on him the name that distinguished him as personally enjoying this privilege).

The Lord having thus made known the purposes of God with regard to the future — purposes to be accomplished in the assembly and in the kingdom, there was no longer room for His presentation to the Jews as

Messiah. Not that He gave up the testimony, full of grace and patience towards the people, which He had born throughout His ministry. No; that indeed continued, but His disciples were to understand that it was no longer their work to proclaim Him to the people as the Christ. From this time also He began to teach His disciples that He must suffer and be killed and be raised again.

But, blessed and honored as Peter was by the revelation which the Father had made to him, his heart still clung in a carnal manner to the human glory of his Master (in truth, to his own), and was still far from rising to the height of the thoughts of God. Alas! he is not the only instance of this. To be convinced of the most exalted truths, and even to enjoy them sincerely as truths, is a different thing from having the heart formed to the sentiments, and to the walk here below, which are in accordance with those truths. It is not sincerity in the enjoyment of the truth that is wanting. What is wanting is to have the flesh, self, mortified — to be dead to the world. We may sincerely enjoy the truth as taught of God and yet not have the flesh mortified or the heart in a state which is according to that truth in what it involves down here. Peter (so lately honored by the revelation of the glory of Jesus, and made in a very special manner the depository of administration in the kingdom given to the Son — having a distinguished place in that which was to follow the Lord's rejection by the Jews) is now doing the adversary's work with respect to the perfect submission of Jesus to the suffering and ignominy that were to introduce this glory and characterise the kingdom. Alas! the case was plain; he savored the things of men, and not the things of God. But the Lord, in faithfulness, rejects Peter in this matter, and teaches His disciples that the only path, the appointed and necessary path, is the cross; if any one would follow Him, that is the path He took. Moreover what would it profit a man to save his life and lose all — to gain the world and lose his soul? For this was the question,* and not now the outward glory of the kingdom.

[* In the Epistle of Peter we continually find these same thoughts — the words, “living hope,” “living stone” — applied to Christ, and afterwards to Christians. And again, in accordance with our present subject, salvation through life in Christ, the Son of the living God, we find “receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our] souls.” We may read all the verses by which the apostle introduces his instructions.]

Having examined this chapter, as the expression of the transition from the Messianic system to the establishment of the assembly founded on the revelation of the Person of Christ, I desire also to call attention to the characters of unbelief which are developed in it, both among the Jews and in the hearts of the disciples. It will be profitable to observe the forms of this unbelief.

First of all, it takes the grosser form of asking a sign from heaven. The Pharisees and Sadducees unite to show their insensibility to all that the Lord had done. They require proof to their natural senses, that is, to their unbelief. They will not believe God, either in hearkening to His words or in beholding His works. God must satisfy their willfulness, which would be neither faith nor the work of God. They had understanding for human things that were much less clearly manifested, but none for the things of God. A Savior lost to them, as Jews on earth, should be the only sign granted them. They would have to submit, willing or not, to the judgment of the unbelief they displayed. The kingdom should be taken from them; the Lord leaves them. The sign of Jonah is connected with the subject of the whole chapter.

We next see this same inattention to the power manifested in the works of Jesus; but it is no longer the opposition of the unbelieving will; occupation of heart with present things withdraws such from the influence of the signs already given. This is weakness, not ill-will. Nevertheless they are guilty; but Jesus calls them “men of little faith,” not “hypocrites,” and “a wicked and adulterous generation.”

We then see unbelief manifesting itself in the form of indolent opinion, which proves that the heart and conscience are not interested in a subject that ought to command them — a subject that if the heart would really face its true importance, it would have no rest until it had arrived at certainty with respect to it. The soul here has no sense of need; consequently there is no discernment. When the soul feels this need, there is but one thing that can meet it; there can be no rest till it is found. The revelation of God that created this need, does not leave the soul in peace until it is assured of possessing that which awakened it. Those who are not sensible of this need can rest in probabilities, each according to his natural character, his education, his circumstances. There is enough to awaken curiosity — the

mind is occupied about it, and judges. Faith has wants, and, in principle intelligence as to the object which meets those wants; the soul is exercised till it finds that which it needs. The fact is that God is there.

This is Peter's case. The Father reveals His Son to him Though weak, living faith was found in him, we see the condition of his soul when he says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Happy the man to whom God reveals such truths as these, in whom He awakens these wants! There may be conflict, much to learn, much to mortify; but the counsel of God is there, and the life connected with it. We have seen its effect in the case of Peter. Every Christian has his own place in the temple of which Simon was so eminent a stone. Does it then follow that the heart is, practically, at the height of the revelation made to it? No; there may be, after all, the flesh not yet mortified on that side where the revelation touches our earthly position.

In fact the revelation made to Peter implied the rejection of Christ on earth — necessarily led to His humiliation and death. That was the point. To substitute the revelation of the Son of God, the assembly and the heavenly kingdom, for the manifestation of the Messiah on earth — what could it mean, except that Jesus was to be delivered up to the Gentiles to be crucified, and after that to rise again? But morally Peter had not attained to this. On the contrary, his carnal heart availed itself of the revelation made to him, and of that which Jesus had said to him, for self-exaltation. He saw, therefore, the personal glory without apprehending the practical moral consequences. He begins to rebuke the Lord Himself, and seeks to turn Him aside from the path of obedience and submission. The Lord, ever faithful, treats him as an adversary. Alas! how often have we enjoyed some truth, and that sincerely, and yet have failed in the practical consequences that it led to on earth! A heavenly glorified Savior, who builds the assembly, implies the cross on earth. The flesh does not understand this. It will raise its Messiah to heaven, if you will; but to take its share of the humiliation that necessarily follows is not its idea of a glorified Messiah. The flesh must be mortified to take this place. We must have the strength of Christ by the Holy Ghost. A Christian who is not dead to the world is but a stumbling-stone to every one who seeks to follow Christ.

These are the forms of unbelief that precede a true confession of Christ, and that are found alas! in those who have sincerely confessed and known Him (the flesh not being so mortified that the soul can walk in the height of that which it has learnt of God, and the spiritual understanding being obscured by thinking of consequences which the flesh rejects).

But if the cross was the entrance into the kingdom, the revelation of the glory would not be delayed. The Messiah being rejected by the Jews, a title more glorious and of far deeper import is unfolded: the Son of man should come in the glory of the Father (for He was the Son of God), and reward every man according to his works. There were even some standing there who should not taste of death (for of this they were speaking) till they had seen the manifestation of the glory of the kingdom that belonged to the Son of man.

We may remark here the title of “Son of God” established as the foundation; that of Messiah given up so far as concerned the testimony rendered in that day, and replaced by that of “Son of man,” which He takes at the same time as that of the Son of God, and which had a glory that belonged to Him in His own right. He was to come in the glory of His Father as Son of God, and in His own kingdom as Son of man.

It is interesting to remember here the instruction given us in the beginning of the Book of Psalms. The righteous man, distinguished from the congregation of the wicked, had been presented in the first Psalm. Then, in the second, we have the rebellion of the kings of the earth and the rulers against the Lord and against His Anointed (that is, His Christ). Now upon this the decree of Jehovah is declared. Adonai, the Lord, shall mock at them from heaven. Further, Jehovah’s King shall be established on Mount Zion. This is the decree: “Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son: this day* have I begotten thee.” The kings of the earth and the judges are commanded to kiss the Son.

[* We have seen that Peter went beyond this. Christ is here seen as the Son born on the earth in time, not as the Son from eternity in the bosom of the Father. Peter, without the full revelation of this last truth, sees Him to be the Son according to the power of divine life in His own Person, upon which the assembly consequently could be built. But here we are to consider that which belongs to the kingdom.]

Now in the Psalms that follow, all this glory is darkened. The distress of the remnant, in which Christ has a part, is related. Then, in Psalm 8, He is addressed as Son of man, Heir of all the rights conferred in sovereignty upon man by the counsels of God. The name of Jehovah becomes excellent in all the earth. These Psalms do not go beyond the earthly part of these truths, excepting where it is written, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them"; while in Matthew 16 the connection of the Son of God with this, His coming with His angels (to say nothing of the assembly), are set before us. That is to say, we see that the Son of man will come in the glory of heaven. Not that His dwelling there is the truth declared; but that He is invested with the highest glory of heaven when He comes to set up His kingdom on earth. He comes in His kingdom. The kingdom is established on the earth; but He comes to take it with the glory of heaven. This is displayed in the following chapter, according to the promise here in verse 28.

In each Gospel that speaks of it, the transfiguration immediately follows the promise of not tasting death before seeing the kingdom of the Son of man. And not only so, but Peter (in his second Epistle, 1:16), when speaking of this scene, declares that it was a manifestation of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He says that the word of prophecy was confirmed to them by the view of His majesty; so that they knew that whereof they spoke, in making known to them the power and the coming of Christ, having beheld His majesty. In fact it is precisely in this sense that the Lord speaks of it here, as we have seen. It was a sample of the glory in which He would hereafter come, given to confirm the faith of His disciples in the prospect of His death which He had just announced to them.

In **CHAPTER 17** Jesus leads them up into a high mountain, and there is transfigured before them: "His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." Moses and Elias appeared also, talking with Him. I leave the subject of their discourse, which is deeply interesting, till we come to the Gospel of Luke, who adds a few other circumstances, which, in some respects, give another aspect to this scene.

Here the Lord appears in glory, and Moses and Elias with Him: the one the legislator of the Jews; the other (almost equally distinguished) the

prophet who sought to bring back the ten apostate tribes to the worship of Jehovah, and who, despairing of the people, went back to Horeb, whence the law was given, and afterwards was taken up to heaven without passing through death.

These two persons, pre-eminently illustrious in the dealings of God with Israel, as the founder and the restorer of the people in connection with the law, appear in company with Jesus. Peter (struck with this apparition, rejoicing to see his Master associated with these pillars of the Jewish system, with such eminent servants of God, ignorant of the glory of the Son of man, and forgetting the revelation of the glory of His Person as the Son of God) desires to make three tabernacles, and to place the three on the same level as oracles. But the glory of God manifests itself; that is to say, the sign known in Israel as the abode (shechinah) of that glory;* and the voice of the Father is heard. Grace may put Moses and Elias in the same glory as that of the Son of God, and associate them with Him; but if the folly of man, in his ignorance, would place them together as having in themselves equal authority over the heart of the believer, the Father must at once vindicate the rights of His Son. Not a moment elapses before the Father's voice proclaims the glory of the Person of His Son, His relation to Himself, that He is the object of His entire affection, in whom is all His delight. It is He whom the disciples are to hear. Moses and Elias have disappeared. Christ is there alone, as the One to be glorified, the One to teach those who hear the Father's voice. The Father Himself distinguishes Him, presents Him to the notice of the disciples, not as being worthy of their love, but as the object of His own delight. In Jesus He was Himself well pleased. Thus the Father's affections are presented as ruling ours — setting before us one common object. What a position for poor creatures like us! What grace!**

[* Peter, taught of the Holy Ghost, calls it “the excellent glory.”

[** It was not in connection with the divine validity of their testimony, that Moses and Elias disappear. There could not be a stronger confirmation of it, as indeed Peter says, than this scene. But not only they were not the subjects of God's testimony as Christ was, but their testimony did not refer nor their exhortations reach to the heavenly things which were now to be revealed in association with the Son from heaven. Even John the Baptist makes this difference (John 3:13, 31-34). Hence as there set forth, the Son of man must be lifted up. So here, the Lord charges the disciples not to say He was the Messiah, for the Son of man must suffer. It was the

turning-point of the Lord's life and ministry, and the coming glory of the kingdom shown to the disciples, but then He must suffer (see John 12:27). The Jewish history was closed in chapter 12, indeed in chapter 11, and the ground of the change laid John and He both rejected, perfect submission, then all things delivered unto Him of His Father, and He revealing the Father (compare John 13, 14). But Matthew 13 — apart from Judaism, He begins with what He brought, not looking for fruit in man.]

At the same time the law, and all idea of the restoration of the law under the old covenant, were passed away; and Jesus, glorified as Son of man, and Son of the living God, remains the sole dispenser of the knowledge and the mind of God. The disciples fall on their faces, sore afraid, on hearing the voice of God. Jesus, to whom this glory and this voice were natural, encourages them, as He always did when on earth, saying, "Be not afraid." Being with Him who was the object of the Father's love, why should they fear? Their best Friend was the manifestation of God on the earth; the glory belonged to Him. Moses and Elias had disappeared, and the glory also, which the disciples were not yet able to bear; Jesus — who had been thus manifested to them in the glory given Him, and in the rights of His glorious Person, in His relations with the Father — Jesus remains the same to them as they had ever known Him. But this glory was not to be the subject of their testimony until He, the Son of man, was risen from the dead — the suffering Son of man. The great proof should then be given, that He was the Son of God with power. Testimony thereunto should be rendered, and He would ascend personally into that glory which had just shone forth before their eyes.

But a difficulty arises in the minds of the disciples caused by the doctrine of the scribes with regard to Elias. These had said that Elias must come before the manifestation of the Messiah; and in fact the prophecy of Malachi authorised this expectation. Why then, ask they, say the scribes that Elias must first come? (that is to say, before the manifestation of the Messiah); whereas we have now seen that Thou art He, without the coming of Elias. Jesus confirms the words of the prophecy, adding, that Elias should restore all things. "But," continues the Lord, "I say unto you, that he is come already, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed; likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them." Then understood they that He spoke of John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elias, as the Holy Ghost had declared by Zacharias his father.

Let us say a few words on this passage. First of all, when the Lord says, “Elias truly cometh first, and shall restore all things,” He does but confirm that which the scribes had spoken, according to Malachi’s prophecy, as though He had said, “They are in the right.” He then declares the effect of the coming of Elias: “He shall restore all things.” But the Son of man was yet to come. Jesus had said to His disciples, “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come.” Nevertheless He had come, and was even now speaking with them. But this coming of the Son of man of which He spoke, is His coming in glory, when He shall be manifested as the Son of man in judgment according to Daniel 7. It was thus that all which had been said to the Jews should be accomplished; and in Matthew’s Gospel He speaks to them in connection with this expectation. Nevertheless it was needful that Jesus should be presented to the nation and should suffer. It was needful that the nation should be tested by the presentation of the Messiah according to the promise. This was done, and as God had also foretold by the prophets, “He was rejected of men.” Thus also John went before Him, according to Isaiah 40, as the voice in the wilderness, even in the spirit and power of Elias; he was rejected as the Son of man should also be.*

[* Hence also John Baptist rejects the application of Malachi 4:5, 6, to himself; while Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3:1 are applied to him in Luke 1:76; 7:27.]

The Lord then, by these words, declares to His disciples, in connection with the scene they had just left, and with all this part of our Gospel, that the Son of man, as now presented to the Jews, was to be rejected. This same Son of man was to be manifested in glory, as they had seen for a moment on the Mount. Elias indeed was to come, as the scribes had said; but that John the Baptist had fulfilled that office in power for this presentation of the Son of man; which (the Jews being left, as was fitting, to their own responsibility) would only end in His rejection, and in the setting aside of the nation until the days in which God would begin again to connect Himself with His people, still dear to Him, whatever their condition might be. He would then restore all things (a glorious work, which He would accomplish by bringing again His Firstborn into the world). The expression “restore all things” refers here to the Jews, and is used morally. In Acts 3 it refers to the effect of the Son of man’s own presence.

The temporary presence of the Son of man was the moment in which a work was accomplished on which eternal glory depends, in which God has been fully glorified, above and beyond all dispensation and in which God and so man has been revealed, a work of which even the outward glory of the Son of man is but the fruit, so far as that depends on His work, and not on His divine Person; a work in which morally He was perfectly glorified in perfectly glorifying God. Still, with respect to the promises made to the Jews, it was but the last step in the testing to which they were subjected by grace. God well knew that they would reject His Son; but He would not hold them as definitively guilty until they had really done it. Thus in His divine wisdom (while afterwards fulfilling His unchangeable promises) He presents Jesus to them — His Son, their Messiah. He gives them every necessary proof. He sends them John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elias, as His forerunner. The Son of David is born at Bethlehem with all the signs that should have convinced them; but they were blinded by their pride and self-righteousness, and rejected it all. Nevertheless it became Jesus in grace to adapt Himself, as to His position, to the wretched condition of His people. Thus also, the Antitype of the David rejected in his day, He shared the affliction of His people. If the Gentiles oppressed them, their King must be associated with their distress, while giving every proof of what He was and seeking them in love. He rejected, all becomes pure grace. They have no longer a right to anything according to the promises, and are reduced to receive all from that grace, even as a poor Gentile would do. God will not fail in grace. Thus God has put them on the true footing of sinners, and will nevertheless fulfill His promises. This is the subject of Romans 11.

Now the Son of man who shall return will be this same Jesus who went away. The heavens will receive Him until the times of the restitution of all things of which the prophets have spoken. But he who was to be His forerunner in this temporary presence here could not be the same Elias. Accordingly John was conformed to the then manifestation of the Son of man, saving the difference that necessarily flowed from the Person of the Son of man, who could be but one, while that could not be the case with John the Baptist and Elias. But even as Jesus manifested all the power of the Messiah, all His rights to everything that belonged to that Messiah, without assuming as yet the outward glory, His time not being come John

7), so John fulfilled morally and in power the mission of Elias to prepare the way of the Lord before Him (according to the we character of His coming, as then accomplished), and answered literally to Isaiah 40, and even to Malachi 3, the only passages applied to him. This is the reason that John said he was not Elias, and that the Lord said, “If ye can receive it, this is Elias which was for to come.” Therefore also John never applied Malachi 4:5, 6 to himself; but he announces himself as fulfilling Isaiah 40:3-5, and this in each of the Gospels, whatever may be its particular character.*

[* See previous note.]

But let us go on with our chapter. If the Lord takes up into the glory, He comes down into this world, even now in Spirit and in sympathy, and meets the crowd and Satan’s power with which we have to do. While the Lord was on the Mount, a poor father had brought to the disciples his son who was a lunatic and possessed by a devil. Here is developed another character of man’s unbelief, that even of the believer — inability to make use of the power which is, so to say, at his disposal in the Lord. Christ, Son of God, Messiah, Son of man, had overcome the enemy, had bound the strong man and had a right to cast him out. As man, the obedient One in spite of Satan’s temptations, He had overcome him in the wilderness, and had thus a right as man to dispossess him of his dominion over a man as to this world; and this He did. In casting out devils and healing the sick, He delivered man from the power of the enemy. “God,” said Peter, “anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, and he went about doing good and healing all those that were oppressed by the devil.” Now this power should have been used by the disciples, who ought to have known how to avail themselves by faith of that which Jesus had thus manifested on earth; but they were not able to do it. Yet what availed it to bring this power down here, if the disciples had not faith to use it? The power was there: man might profit by it for complete deliverance from all the oppression of the enemy; but he had not faith to do so — even believers had not. The presence of Christ on earth was useless, when even His own disciples knew not how to profit by it. There was more faith in the man that brought his child than in them, for felt want brought him to its remedy. All therefore come under the Lord’s sentence, “O faithless and

perverse generation!” He must leave them, and that which the glory had revealed above, unbelief shall realise below.

Observe here, that it is not evil in the world which puts an end to a particular intervention of God; on the contrary, it occasions the intervention in grace. It was on account of Satan’s dominion over men that Christ came. He departs, because those who had received Him are incapable of using the power that He brought with Him, or that He bestows for their deliverance; they cannot profit by the very advantages then enjoyed. Faith was wanting. Nevertheless observe also this important and touching truth that, as long as such dispensation from God continues, Jesus does not fail to meet individual faith with blessing, even when His disciples cannot glorify Him by the exercise of faith. The same sentence that judges the unbelief of the disciples calls the distressed father to the enjoyment of the blessing. After all, to be able to avail ourselves of His power, we must be in communion with Him by the practical energy of faith.

He blesses then the poor father according to his need; and, full of patience, He resumes the course of instruction He was giving His disciples on the subject of His rejection and His resurrection as the Son of man. Loving the Lord, and unable to carry their ideas beyond the circumstances of the moment, they are troubled; and yet this was redemption, salvation, the glory of Christ.

Before however going farther, and teaching them that which became the disciples of a Master thus rejected and the position they were to occupy, He sets before them His divine glory, and their association with Him who had it, in the most touching manner, if they could but have understood it; and at the same time with perfect condescension and tenderness He places Himself with them, or rather He places them in the same place with Himself, as Son of the great King of the temple and of all the earth.

Those who collected the tribute-money for the service of the temple come and ask Peter if his Master does not pay it. Ever ready to put himself forward, forgetful of the glory he had seen, and the revelation made to him by the Father, Peter, coming down to the ordinary level of his own thoughts, anxious that his Master should be esteemed a good Jew and without consulting Him, replies that He does. The Lord anticipates Peter

on his coming in, and shows him His divine knowledge of that which took place at a distance from Himself. At the same time, He speaks of Peter and Himself as both children of the King of the temple (Son of God still keeping in patient goodness His lowly place as a Jew), and both therefore free from the tribute. But they should not offend. He then commands creation, (for He can do all things, as He knows all things,) and causes a fish to bring precisely the sum required, coupling anew the name of Peter with His own. He had said, "Lest we offend them"; and now, "Give unto them for me and thee." Marvelous and divine condescension! He who is the searcher of hearts, and who disposes at will of the whole creation, the Son of the sovereign Lord of the temple, puts His poor disciples into this same relationship with His heavenly Father, with the God who was worshipped in that temple. He submits to the demands that would have been rightly made on strangers, but He places His disciples in all His own privileges as Son. We see very plainly the connection between this touching expression of divine grace and the subject of these chapters. It demonstrates all the significance of the change that was taking place.

It is interesting to remark that the first epistle of Peter is founded on Matthew 16, and the second on chapter 17, which we have just been considering.* In chapter 16 Peter taught of the Father, confessed the Lord to be the Son of the living God; and the Lord said that on this rock He would build His church, and that he who had the power of death should not prevail against it. Thus also Peter, in his first epistle, declares that they were born again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Now it is by this resurrection that the power of the life of the living God was manifested. Afterwards he calls Christ the living stone, in coming unto whom we, as living stones, are built up a holy temple to the Lord.

[* Both these epistles, after stating redemption by the precious blood of Christ and being born of the incorruptible seed of the word, treat of the government of God; the first, its application to His own, preserving them, the second, to the wicked and the world, going on thus to the elements melting with fervent heat, and the new heavens and the new earth.]

In his second epistle he recalls, in a peculiar manner, the glory of the transfiguration, as a proof of the coming and the kingdom of the Son of man. Accordingly he speaks in that epistle of the judgment of the Lord.

In **CHAPTER 18** the great principles proper to the new order of things are made known to the disciples. Let us search a little into these sweet and precious instructions of the Lord.

They may be looked at in two ways. They reveal the ways of God with regard to that which was to take the place of the Lord upon earth, as a testimony to grace and truth. Besides this, they depict the character which is in itself the true testimony to be rendered.

This chapter supposes Christ rejected and absent, the glory of chapter 17 not yet come. It passes over chapter 17 to connect itself with chapter 16 (except so far as the last verses of chapter 17 give a practical testimony to His abdication of His true rights until God should vindicate them). The Lord speaks of the two subjects contained in chapter 16, the kingdom and the church.

That which would be proper for the kingdom was the meekness of a little child, which is unable to assert its own rights in the face of a world that passes it by — the spirit of dependence and humility. They must become as little children. In the absence of their rejected Lord this was the spirit that became His followers. He who received a little child in the name of Jesus received Himself. On the other hand, he who put a stumbling-block in the way of one of those little ones who believed in Jesus* should be visited with the most terrible judgment. Alas! the world do this; but woe unto the world on that account. As to the disciples, if that which they most valued became a snare to them, they must pluck it out and cut it off — must exercise the utmost carefulness in grace not to be a snare to a little one believing in Christ, and the most unrelenting severity as to themselves, in whatever might be a snare to them. Loss of what was most precious here was nothing, compared with their eternal condition in another world; for that was in question now, and sin could have no place in God's house. Care for others, even the weakest, severity with self was the rule of the kingdom that no snare or evil might be. As to offense, full grace in forgiveness. They were not to despise these little ones; for if unable to force their own way in this world, they were the objects of the Father's special favor, as those who, in earthly courts, had the peculiar privilege of seeing the king's face. Not that there was no sin in them, but that the Father did not despise those that were far from Him. The Son of man was

come to save the lost.** And it was not the Father's will that one of these little ones should perish. He spoke, I doubt not, of little children like those whom He took in His arms; but He inculcates on His disciples the spirit of humility and dependence on the one hand, and on the other, the spirit of the Father, which they were to imitate in order to be truly the children of the kingdom; and not to walk in the spirit of man, who seeks to maintain his place and his own importance, but to humble themselves and submit to contumely; and at the same time (and this is true glory) to imitate the Father, who considers the lowly and admits them into His presence. The Son of man was come on behalf of the worthless. This is the spirit of grace spoken of at the end of chapter 5. It is the spirit of the kingdom.

[* The Lord here distinguishes a believing little one. In the other verses, He speaks of a little child, making its character, as such, a model of that of the Christian in this world.]

[** As doctrine, the sinful condition of the child, and its need of the sacrifice of Christ, are clearly expressed here. He does not say, "Seek," as to them. The employing the parable of the lost sheep is striking here.]

But the assembly more especially was to occupy the place of Christ on earth. With respect to offenses against oneself, this same spirit of meekness became His disciple; he was to gain his brother. If the latter would hearken, the thing was to be buried in the heart of the one whom he had offended; if not, two or three more were then to be taken with him by the offended person to reach his conscience, or serve as witnesses; but if these appointed means were unavailing, it must be made known to the assembly; and if this did not produce submission, he who had done the wrong should be to him as a stranger, as a heathen and a publican was to Israel. The public discipline of the assembly is not treated of here, but the spirit in which Christians were to walk. If the offender bowed when spoken to, even seventy times seven times a day, he was to be forgiven. But though church discipline be not spoken of, we see that the assembly took the place of Israel on earth. The without and within henceforth applied to it. Heaven would ratify that which the assembly bound on earth, and the Father would grant the prayer of two or three who should agree together in making their request; for Christ would be in the midst wherever two or three should be gathered together in or to His name.* Thus, for decisions, for prayers, they were as Christ on the earth, for Christ Himself was there with them. Solemn truth! immense favor,

bestowed on two or three when really gathered together in His name; but which forms a subject of the deepest grief when this unity is pretended to, while the reality is not there.**

[* It is important to call to mind here, that — while the Holy Ghost is personally fully recognised in Matthew, as in the birth of the Lord, and (chapter 10) as acting and speaking in the disciples in their service, as a divine Person, as it is ever from Him alone we can act rightly — the coming of the Holy Ghost, in the order of divine dispensation, forms no part of the teaching of this gospel, though recognised as a fact in chapter 10. The view of Christ in Matthew closes with His resurrection, and the Jewish body are sent out from Galilee as an accepted body to the world to evangelise the Gentiles, and He declares He will be with them to the end of the age. So here He is in the midst of two or three gathered to His name. The church here is not the body by the baptism of the Holy Ghost; it is not the house where the Holy Ghost dwells on earth; but where the two or three meet to His name, there Christ is. Now I do not doubt that all good from life on, and the word of life, comes from the Spirit, but this is another thing, and the assembly here is not the body, nor the house, through the coming down of the Holy Ghost. This was a subsequent teaching and revelation, and remains blessedly true; but it is Christ in the midst of those assembled to His name Even in chapter 16 it is He builds, but that is another thing. Of course it is spiritually He is present.]

[** It is very striking to find here, that the only succession in the office of binding and loosing which Heaven sanctions is that of two or three assembled in Christ's name.]

Another element of the character proper to the kingdom, which had been manifested in God and in Christ, is pardoning grace. In this also the children of the kingdom are to be imitators of God, and always to forgive. This refers only to wrongs done to oneself, and not to public discipline. We must pardon to the end, or rather, there must be no end; even as God has forgiven us all things. At the same time, I believe that the dispensations of God to the Jews are here described. They had not only broken the law, but they had slain the Son of God. Christ interceded for them, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In answer to this prayer, a provisional pardon was preached by the Holy Ghost, through the mouth of Peter. But this grace too was rejected. When it was a question of showing grace to the Gentiles, who, no doubt, owed them the hundred pence, they would not hear of it, and they are given up to punishment,* until the Lord can say, "They have received double for all their sins."

[* This giving up, and the formal opening into the intermediate heavenly place connected with the Son of man in glory are in Acts 7, where Stephen recites their history from Abraham, the first called as root of promise, to that day.]

In a word, the spirit of the kingdom is not outward power, but lowliness; but in this condition there is nearness to the Father, and then it is easy to be meek and humble in this world. One who has tasted the favor of God will not seek greatness on earth; he is imbued with the spirit of grace, he cherishes the lowly, he pardons those who have wronged him, he is near God, and resembles Him in his ways. The same spirit of grace reigns, whether in the assembly or in its members. It alone represents Christ on the earth; and to it relate those regulations which are founded on the acceptance of a people as belonging unto God. Two or three really gathered together in the name of Jesus act with His authority, and enjoy His privileges with the Father, for Jesus Himself is there in their midst.

CHAPTER 19 carries on the subject of the spirit that is suited to the kingdom of heaven, and goes deep into the principles which govern human nature, and of what was now divinely introduced. A question asked by the Pharisees — for the Lord had drawn nigh to Judea — gives rise to the exposition of His doctrine on marriage; and turning away from the law, given on account of the hardness of their hearts, He goes back* to God's institution, according to which one man and one woman were to unite together, and to be one in the sight of God. He establishes, or rather re-establishes, the true character of the indissoluble bond of marriage. I call it indissoluble, for the exception of the case of unfaithfulness, is not one; the guilty person had already broken the bond. It was no longer man and woman one flesh. At the same time, if God gave spiritual power for it, it was still better to remain unmarried.

[* The connection is here traced between the new thing and nature, as God had originally formed it, passing over the law as something merely come between. It was a new power, because evil had come in, but it recognised God's creation, while proving the state of the heart, not yielding to its weakness. Sin has corrupted what God created good. The power of the Spirit of God, given to us through redemption, raises man and his path wholly out of the whole condition of flesh, introduces a new divine power by which he walks in this world, after the example of Christ. But with this there is the fullest sanction of what God Himself originally established. It is good, though there may be what is better. The way the law is passed over to go back to God's original institution, where spiritual power did not take the heart wholly out of the whole scene, though walking in it, is very striking. In marriage, the child, the character of the young man, what is of God and

lovely in nature is recognised of the Lord. But the state of man's heart is searched out. This does not depend on character but motive, and is fully tested by Christ (there is an entire dispensational change, for riches were promised to a faithful Jew), and a rejected Christ — the path to heaven — everything, and the test of everything, that is of the heart of man. God made man upright with certain family relationships. Sin has wholly corrupted this old or first creation of man. The coming of the Holy Ghost has brought in a power which lifts, in the second Man, out of the old creation into the new, and gives us heavenly things — only not yet as to the vessel, the body; but it cannot disown or condemn what God created in the beginning. That is impossible. In the beginning God made them. When we come to heavenly condition, all this, though not the fruits of its exercises in grace, disappears. If a man in the power of the Holy Ghost has the gift to do it, and be entirely heavenly, so much the better; but it is entirely evil to condemn or speak against the relationships which God originally created, or diminish or detract from the authority which God has connected with them. If a man can live wholly above and out of them all, to serve Christ, it is all well; but it is rare and exceptional.]

He then renews His instruction with respect to children, while testifying His affection for them: here it appears to me rather in connection with the absence of all that binds to the world, to its distractions and its lusts, and owning what is lovely, confiding, and externally undefiled in nature; whereas, in chapter 18, it was the intrinsic character of the kingdom. After this, He shows (with reference to the introduction of the kingdom in His Person) the nature of entire devotedness and sacrifice of all things, in order to follow Him, if truly they only sought to please God. The spirit of the world was opposed at all points, both carnal passions and riches. No doubt the law of Moses restrained these passions; but it supposes them, and, in some respects, bears with them. According to the glory of the world, a child had no value. What power can it have there? It is of value in the Lord's eyes.

The law promised life to the man that kept it. The Lord makes it simple and practical in its requirements, or, rather, recalls them in their true simplicity. Riches were not forbidden by the law; that is to say, although moral obligation between man and man was maintained by the law, that which bound the heart to the world was not judged by it. Rather was prosperity, according to the government of God, connected with obedience to it. For it supposed this world, and man alive in it, and tested him there. Christ recognises this; but the motives of the heart are tested. The law was spiritual, and, the Son of God there; we find again what we found before — man tested and detected, and God revealed. All is intrinsic and eternal in

its nature, for God is revealed already. Christ judges everything that has a bad effect on the heart, and acts upon its selfishness, and thus separates it from God. "Sell that thou hast," says He, "and follow me." Alas! the young man could not renounce his possessions, his ease, himself. "Hardly," says Jesus, "shall a rich man enter into the kingdom." This was manifest: it was the kingdom of God, of heaven; self and the world had no place in it. The disciples, who did not understand that there is no good in man, were astonished that one so favored and well disposed should be still far from salvation. Who then could succeed? The whole truth then comes out. It is impossible to men. They cannot overcome the desires of the flesh. Morally, and as to his will and his affections, these desires are the man. One cannot make a negro white, or take his spots from the leopard: that which they exhibit is in their nature. But to God, blessed be His name! all things are possible.

These instructions with regard to riches give rise to Peter's question, What shall be the portion of those who have renounced everything? This brings us back to the glory in chapter 17. There would be a regeneration; the state of things should be entirely renewed under the dominion of the Son of man. At that time they should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. They should have the first place in the administration of the earthly kingdom. Every one, however, should have his own place; for whatever any one renounced for Jesus' sake, he should receive a hundredfold and everlasting life. Nevertheless these things would not be decided by appearance here; nor by the place men held in the old system, and before men: some that were first should be last, and the last first. In fact, it was to be feared that the carnal heart of man would take this encouragement, given in the shape of reward for all his labor and all his sacrifices, in a mercenary spirit, and seek to make God his debtor; and, therefore, in the parable by which the Lord continues His discourse (chap. 20), He establishes the principle of grace and of God's sovereignty in that which He gives, and towards those whom He calls, in a very distinct manner, and makes His gifts to those whom He brings into His vineyard depend on His grace and on His call.

We may remark that, when the Lord answers Peter, it was the consequence of having left all for Christ upon His call. The motive was Christ Himself: therefore He says, "Ye which have followed me." He speaks also of those

who had done it for His name's sake. This was the motive. The reward is an encouragement, when, for His sake, we are already in the way. This is always the case when reward is spoken of in the New Testament.* He who was called at the eleventh hour was dependent on this call for his entrance into the work; and if, in his kindness, the master chose to give him as much as the others, they should have rejoiced at it. The first adhered to justice; they received that which was agreed upon; the last enjoyed the grace of his master. And it is to be remarked that they accept the principle of grace, of confidence in it. "Whatsoever is right I will give!" The great point in the parable is that — confidence in the grace of the master of the vineyard, and grace as the ground of their action. But who understood it? A Paul might come in late, God having then called him, and be a stronger testimony to grace than the laborers who had wrought from the dawning of the gospel day.

[* Indeed, reward is in scripture always an encouragement to those who are in sorrow and suffering by having from higher motives entered into God's way. So Moses; so even Christ, whose motive in perfect love we know, yet for the joy set before Him endured the cross despising the shame. He was the Leader and Completer in the path of faith.]

The Lord afterwards pursues the subject with His disciples. He goes up to Jerusalem, where the Messiah ought to have been received and crowned, to be rejected and put to death, but after that to rise again; and when the sons of Zebedee come and ask him for the two first places in the kingdom, He answers that He can lead them indeed to suffering; but as to the first places in His kingdom, He could not bestow them, except (according to the Father's counsels) on those for whom the Father had prepared them. Wondrous self-renunciation! It is for the Father, for us, that He works. He disposes of nothing. He can bestow on those who will follow Him a share in His sufferings: everything else shall be given according to the counsels of the Father. But what real glory for Christ and perfection in Him, and what a privilege for us to have this motive only, and to partake in the Lord's sufferings! and what a purification of our carnal hearts is here proposed to us, in making us act only for a suffering Christ, sharing His cross, and committing ourselves to God for recompense!

The Lord then takes occasion to explain the sentiments that become His followers, the perfection of which they had seen in Himself. In the world, authority was sought for; but the spirit of Christ was a spirit of service,

leading to the choice of the lowest place, and to entire devotedness to others. Beautiful and perfect principles, the full bright perfection of which was displayed in Christ. The renunciation of all things, in order to depend confidently on the grace of Him whom we serve, the consequent readiness to take the lowest place, and thus to be the servant of all — this should be the spirit of those who have part in the kingdom as now established by the rejected Lord. It is this that becomes His followers.*

[* Observe the way in which the sons of Zebedee and their mother come to seek the highest place, at the moment when the Lord was preparing unreservedly to take the very lowest. Alas! we see so much of the same spirit. The effect was to bring out how absolutely He had stripped Himself of everything. These are the principles of the heavenly kingdom: perfect self-renunciation, to be contented in thorough devotedness; this is the fruit of love that seeketh not her own — the yieldingness that flows from the absence of self-seeking; submission when despised; meekness and lowliness of heart. The spirit of service to others is that which love produces at the same time as the humility which is satisfied with this place. The Lord fulfilled this even unto death, giving His life as a ransom for many.]

With the end of verse 28 this portion of the Gospel terminates, and the closing scenes of the blessed Savior's life begin. At verse 29* begins His last presentation to Israel as the Son of David, the Lord, the true King of Israel, the Messiah. He begins His career in this respect at Jericho, the place where Joshua entered the land — the place on which the curse had so long rested. He opens the blind eyes of His people who believe in Him and receive Him as the Messiah, for such He truly was, although rejected. They salute Him as Son of David, and He answers their faith by opening their eyes. They follow Him — a figure of the true remnant of His people, who will wait for Him.

[* The case of the blind man at Jericho is, in all the first three Gospels, the commencement of the final circumstances of Christ's life which led on to the cross, the general contents and teachings of each being closed. Hence He is addressed as Son of David, being the last presentation of Himself as such to them, God's testimony being given to Him as such.]

Afterwards (chap. 21), disposing of all that belonged to His willing people, He makes His entry into Jerusalem as King and Lord, according to the testimony of Zechariah. But although entering as King — the last testimony to the beloved city, which (to their ruin) was going to reject Him — He comes as a meek and lowly King. The power of God influences the heart of the multitudes, and they salute Him as King, as Son of David,

making use of the language supplied by Psalm 118,* which celebrates the millennial sabbath brought in by the Messiah, then to be acknowledged by the people. The multitude spread their garments to prepare the way for their meek, though glorious King; they cut down branches from the trees to bear Him testimony; and He is conducted in triumph to Jerusalem, while the people cry, “Hosanna Save now] to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!” Happy for them if their hearts had been changed to retain this testimony in the Spirit. But God sovereignly disposed their hearts to bear this testimony; He could not allow His Son to be rejected without receiving it.

[* This Psalm is peculiarly prophetic of the time of His future reception, and is often cited in connection with it.]

And now the King is going to review everything, still maintaining His position of humility and of testimony. Apparently the different classes come to judge Him, or to perplex Him; but in fact they all present themselves before Him to receive at His hands, one after another, the judgment of God respecting them. It is a striking scene that opens before us — the true Judge, the everlasting King, presenting Himself for the last time to His rebellious people with the fullest testimony to His rights and to His power; and they, coming to harass and condemn Him, led by their very malice to pass before Him one after another, laying open their real condition, to receive their judgment from His lips, without His forsaking for a moment (unless in cleansing the temple, before this scene commenced) the position of Faithful and True Witness in all meekness on the earth.

The difference between the two parts of this history is distinguishable. The first presents the Lord in His character of Messiah and Jehovah. As Lord, He commands the ass to be brought. He enters the city, according to the prophecy, as King. He cleanses the temple with authority. In answer to the priests’ objection He quotes Psalm 8, which speaks of the manner in which Jehovah caused Himself to be glorified, and perfected the praises due to Him out of the mouth of babes. In the temple also He heals Israel. He then leaves them, no longer lodging in the city, which He could no longer own, but with the remnant outside. The next day, in a remarkable figure He exhibits the curse about to fall upon the nation. Israel was the fig-tree of Jehovah; but it cumbered the ground. It was covered with leaves,

but there was no fruit. The fig-tree, condemned by the Lord, presently withers away. It is a figure of this unhappy nation, of man in the flesh with every advantage, which bore no fruit for the Husbandman.

Israel in fact possessed all the outward forms of religion, and were zealous for the law and the ordinances, but they bore no fruit unto God. So far as placed under responsibility to bring forth fruit, that is to say, under the old covenant, they will never do so. Their rejection of Jesus put an end to all hope. God will act in grace under the new covenant; but this is not the question here. The fig-tree is Israel as they were, man cultivated by God, but in vain. All was over. That which He said to the disciples of the mountain's removing, while it is a great general principle, refers also, I doubt not, to that which should take place in Israel by means of their ministry. Looked at corporately on the earth as a nation, Israel should disappear, and be lost among the Gentiles. The disciples were those whom God accepted according to their faith.

We see the Lord entering Jerusalem as a king — Jehovah, the King of Israel — and judgment pronounced on the nation. Then follow the details of judgment on the different classes of which it was composed. First come the chief priests and elders, who should have guided the people; they draw near to the Lord and question His authority. Thus addressing Him, they took the place of heads of the nation, and assumed to be judges, capable of pronouncing on the validity of any claims that might be made; if not, why concern themselves with Jesus?

The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, puts a question to them which tests their capability and by their own confession they were incapable. How then judge Him?* To tell them the foundation of His authority, was useless. It was too late now to tell them. They would have stoned Him, if He had alleged its true source. He replies, Decide on John the Baptist's mission. If they could not do this, why inquire respecting His? They cannot do it. If they acknowledged John to have been sent of God it would be acknowledging Christ. To deny it would be to lose their influence with the people. Of conscience there was no question with them. They confess their inability. Jesus then declines their competency as leaders and guardians of the faith of the people. They had judged themselves; and the

Lord proceeds to set their conduct, and the Lord's dealings with them, plainly before their eyes, from verse 28 to chapter 22:14.

[* This throwing back on conscience is often the wisest answer, when the will is perverse.]

First, while professing to do the will of God, they did it not; while the openly wicked had repented and done His will. They, seeing this, were still hardened. Again, not only had natural conscience remained untouched, whether by the testimony of John, or by the sight of repentance in others, but, although God had used every means to make them bring forth fruit worthy of His culture, He had found nothing in them but perversity and rebellion. The prophets had been rejected, and His Son would be so likewise. They desired to have His inheritance for themselves. They could not but acknowledge that in such case the consequence must necessarily be the destruction of those wicked men, and the bestowal of the vineyard on others. Jesus applies the parable to themselves, by quoting Psalm 118, which announces that the stone rejected by the builders should become the head-stone of the corner; moreover, that whosoever should fall on this stone — as the nation was at that moment doing — should be broken; but that on whomsoever it should fall — and this would be the lot of the rebellious nation in the last days — it should grind them to powder. The chief priests and the Pharisees understood that He spoke of them, but they dared not lay hands on Him, because the multitude took Him for a prophet. This is the history of Israel, as under responsibility, even till the last days. Jehovah was seeking fruit in His vineyard.

In **CHAPTER 22**, their conduct with respect to the invitations of grace is presented in its turn. The parable is therefore a similitude of the kingdom of heaven. The purpose of God is to honor His Son by celebrating His marriage. First of all the Jews, already invited, are bidden to the marriage feast. They would not come. This was done during Christ's lifetime. Afterwards, all things being ready, He again sends forth messengers to induce them to come. This is the mission of the apostles to the nation, when the work of redemption had been accomplished. They either despise the message or slay the messengers.* The result is the destruction of those wicked men and of their city. This is the destruction that fell upon Jerusalem. On their rejection of the invitation, the destitute, the Gentiles, those who were outside, are brought in to the feast, and the wedding is

furnished with guests. Another thing is now presented. It is true, that we have seen the judgment of Jerusalem in this parable, but, as it is a similitude of the kingdom, we have the judgment of that which is within the kingdom also. There must be fitness for the occasion. For a wedding feast there must be a wedding garment. If Christ is to be glorified, everything must be according to His glory. There may be an outward entrance into the kingdom, a profession of Christianity; but he who is not clothed with that which appertains to the feast will be cast out. We must be clothed with Christ Himself. On the other hand, all is prepared — nothing is required. It was not the guest's part to bring anything; the King provided all. But we must be imbued with the spirit of that which is done. If there is any thought of what was suitable to a wedding feast, the need of a wedding garment to appear in would surely be felt: if not, the honor of the King's Son has been forgotten. The heart was a stranger to it; the man himself shall become so by the judgment of the King when He takes cognizance of the guests who have come in.

[* Contempt and violence are the two forms of the rejection of the testimony of God, and of the true witness. They hate the one and love the other, or cleave to the one and despise the other.]

Thus also grace has been shown to Israel, and they are judged for refusing the invitation of the great King to the marriage of His Son. And then the abuse of this grace by those who appear to accept it is also judged. The bringing in of the Gentiles is declared.

Here concludes the history of the judgment of Israel in general, and of the character which the kingdom would assume.

After this (chap. 22:15, et seq.) the different classes of the Jews come forward, each in turn. First, the Pharisees and the Herodians (that is, those who favored the authority of the Romans, and those who were opposed to it) seek to entangle Jesus in His talk. The blessed Lord answers them with that perfect wisdom that ever displayed itself in all He said and all He did. On their part, it was pure wickedness manifesting a total want of conscience. It was their own sin that had brought them under the Roman yoke — a position contrary indeed to that which should have belonged to the people of God on earth. Apparently therefore Christ must either become an object of suspicion to the authorities, or renounce His claim to be the Messiah and consequently the Deliverer. Who had occasioned this

dilemma? It was the fruit of their own sins. The Lord shows them that they had themselves accepted the yoke. The money bore the mark of this: let them render it then to those unto whom it belonged, and let them also — which they were not doing — render unto God the things that were God's. He leaves them under the yoke which they were obliged to confess they had accepted. He reminds them of the rights of God; which they had forgotten. Such might moreover have been Israel's state according to the establishment of power in Nebuchadnezzar, as a "spreading vine of low stature."

The Sadducees come next before Him, and question Him as to the resurrection, thinking to prove its absurdity. Thus, as the condition of the nation had been exhibited in His discourse with the Pharisees, the unbelief of the Sadducees is displayed here. They thought only of the things of this world, seeking to deny the existence of another. But whatever the state of degradation and subjection into which the people had fallen, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, changed not. The promises made to the fathers remained sure, and the fathers were living to enjoy these promises hereafter. It was the word and the power of God which were in question. The Lord maintains them with power and evidence. The Sadducees were silenced.

The lawyers, struck with His reply, ask a question, which gives the Lord occasion to extract from the whole law, that which, in the sight of God, is its essence, presenting thus its perfection, and that which — by whatever means it may be reached — forms the happiness of those that walk in it. Grace alone rises higher.

Here their questioning ceases. All is judged, all is brought to light with respect to the position of the people, and the sects of Israel; and the Lord has laid before them the perfect thoughts of God respecting them, whether on the subject of their condition, of His promises, or of the substance of the law.

It was now the Lord's turn to propose His question in order to bring out His own position. He asks the Pharisees to reconcile the title of Son of David with that of Lord which David himself gave Him, and that in connection with the ascension of this same Christ to sit at the right hand of God until God had made all His enemies His footstool, and established His

throne in Zion. Now this was the whole of Christ's position at that moment. They were unable to answer Him, and no man durst ask Him any more questions. In fact, to understand that Psalm, would have been to understand all the ways of God with respect to His Son at the time they were going to reject Him. This necessarily closed these discourses by showing the true position of Christ, who, although the Son of David, must ascend on high to receive the kingdom, and, while waiting for it, sit at the right hand of God according to the rights of His glorious Person — David's Lord, as well as David's Son.

There is another point of interest to be remarked here. In these interviews and these discourses with the different classes of the Jews, the Lord brings out the condition of the Jews on all sides with respect to their relations with God, and then the position which He took Himself. He first shows their national position towards God, as under responsibility to Him, according to natural conscience and the privileges belonging to them. The result would be their cutting off, and the bringing in of others into the Lord's vineyard. This is chapter 21:28-46. He then exhibits their condition with regard to the grace of the kingdom, and the introduction of Gentile sinners. Here also the result is the cutting off and the destruction of the city.* Afterwards the Herodians and the Pharisees, the friends of the Romans and their enemies, the pretended friends of God, bring out the true position of the Jews with respect to the imperial power of the Gentiles and to God. In His interview with the Sadducees, He shows the certainty of the promises made to the fathers, and the relationship in which God stood to them in respect of life and resurrection. After this He puts the real meaning of the law before the scribes; and then the position which He took, Himself the Son of David, according to Psalm 110, which was linked with His rejection by the leaders of the nation who stood around Him.

[* Observe here, that from chapter 21:28 to the end, we have the responsibility of the nation looked at as in possession of their original privileges, according to which they ought to have born fruit. Not having done so, another is put in their place. This was not the cause of the judgment which was, and yet is in a more terrible way to be, executed on Jerusalem, and which even then accomplished the destruction of the city. The death of Jesus, the last of those who had been sent to look for fruit, brings judgment on His murderers (Matthew 21:33-41). The destruction of Jerusalem is the consequence of the rejection of the testimony to the kingdom sent to call them in grace. In the first case, the judgment was upon the husbandmen — the scribes, and chief priests, and leaders of the people. The judgment executed on account of the

rejection of the testimony to the kingdom goes much farther (see chap. 22:7). Some despise the message, others ill-treat the messengers; and, grace being thus rejected, the city is burned up, and its inhabitants cut off. Compare chap. 23:36, and see the historical prophecy in Luke 21. The distinction is maintained in all three gospels.]

CHAPTER 23 clearly shows how far the disciples are viewed in connection with the nation, inasmuch as they were Jews, although the Lord judges the leaders, who beguiled the people and dishonored God by their hypocrisy. He speaks to the multitude and to His disciples, saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.” Being thus expositors of the law, they were to be obeyed in all that they said according to that law, although their own conduct was but hypocrisy. That which is important here is the position of the disciples; it is in fact the same as that of Jesus. They are in connection with all that is of God in the nation, that is to say, with the nation as the recognised people of God — consequently, with the law as possessing authority from God. At the same time the Lord judges, and the disciples also were practically to judge, the walk of the nation, as publicly represented by their leaders. While still forming part of the nation, they were carefully to avoid the walk of the scribes and Pharisees. After having reproached these pastors of the nation with their hypocrisy, the Lord points out the way in which they themselves condemned the deeds of their fathers — by building the sepulchres of the prophets whom they had slain. They were, then, the children of those who slew them, and God would put them to the test by sending them also prophets and wise men and scribes, and they would fill up the measure of their iniquity by putting these to death and persecuting them — condemned thus out of their own mouths — in order that all the righteous blood which had been shed, from Abel’s to that of the prophet Zechariah, should come upon this generation. Frightful amount of guilt, accumulated from the beginning of the enmity which sinful man, when placed under responsibility, has ever shown to the testimony of God; and which increased daily, because the conscience became more hardened each time that it resisted this testimony! The truth was so much the more manifest from its witnesses having suffered. It was a rock, exposed to view, to be avoided in the people’s path. But they persisted in their evil course, and every step in advance, every similar act, was the proof of a still increasing obduracy. The patience of God, while graciously dealing in testimony, had not been unobservant of their ways,

and under this patience all had accumulated. All would be heaped upon the head of this reprobate generation.

Remark here the character given to the apostles and christian prophets. They are scribes, wise men, prophets, sent to the Jews — to the ever rebellious nation. This very clearly brings out the aspect in which this chapter regards them. Even the apostles are “wise men,” “scribes,” sent to the Jews as such.

But the nation — Jerusalem, God’s beloved city — is guilty and is judged. Christ, as we have seen, since the cure of the blind man near Jericho, presents Himself as Jehovah the King of Israel. How often would He have gathered the children of Jerusalem, but they would not! And now their house should be desolate, until (their hearts being converted) they should use the language of Psalm 118, and, in desire, hail His arrival who came in the name of Jehovah, looking for deliverance at His hands, and praying to Him for it — in a word, until they should cry Hosanna to Him that should come. They would see Jesus no more until, humbled in heart, they should pronounce Him blessed whom they were expecting, and whom they now rejected — in short, until they were prepared in heart. Peace should follow, desire precede, His appearing.

The last three verses exhibit clearly enough the position of the Jews, or of Jerusalem, as the center of the system before God. Long since, and many times, would Jesus, Jehovah the Savior, have gathered the children of Jerusalem together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but they would not. Their house should remain forsaken and desolate, but not for ever. After having killed the prophets, and stoned the messengers sent unto them, they had crucified their Messiah, and rejected and slain those whom He had sent to proclaim grace unto them even after His rejection. Therefore should they see Him no more — until they had repented, and the desire to see Him was produced in their hearts, so that they should be prepared to bless Him, and would bless Him in their hearts, and confess their readiness to do so. The Messiah, who was about to leave them, should be seen of them no more until repentance had turned their hearts unto Him whom they were now rejecting. Then they should see Him. The Messiah, coming in the name of Jehovah, shall be manifested to His people Israel. It is Jehovah their Savior who should appear, and the Israel who had

rejected Him should see Him as such. The people should thus return into the enjoyment of their relationship with God.

Such is the moral and prophetic picture of Israel. The disciples, as Jews, were viewed as part of the nation, though as a remnant spiritually detached from it, and witnessing in it.

We have already seen that the rejection of the testimony to the kingdom in grace, is the cause of the judgment that falls upon Jerusalem and its inhabitants. Now in chapter 24 we have the position of this testimony in the midst of the people; the condition of the Gentiles, and the relation in which they stood to the testimony rendered by the disciples; after this, the condition of Jerusalem, consequent upon her rejection of the Messiah, and her contempt for the testimony; and then the universal overthrow at the end of those days: a state of things which should be ended by the appearance of the Son of man, and the gathering together of the elect of Israel from the four winds.

We must examine this remarkable passage, at once a prophecy, and instruction to the disciples for their direction in the path they must follow amid the coming events.

Jesus departs from the temple, and that for ever — a solemn act, which, we may say, executed the judgment He had just pronounced. The house was now desolate. The hearts of the disciples were still bound to it by their former prepossessions. They draw His attention to the magnificent buildings that composed it. Jesus announces to them its entire destruction. Seated apart with Him on the Mount of Olives, the disciples inquire when these things were to happen, and what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age. They class together the destruction of the temple, the coming of Christ, and the end of the age. We must observe, that here the end of the age is the end of the period during which Israel was subject to the law under the old covenant: a period which was to cease, giving place to the Messiah and to the new covenant. Observe also that God's government of the earth is the subject, and the judgments that should take place at Christ's coming, which would put an end to the existing age. The disciples confounded that which the Lord had said of the destruction of the temple with this period.* The Lord treats the subject from His own point of view (that is to say, with regard to the testimony

which the disciples were to render in connection with the Jews during His absence and to the end of the age). He adds nothing as to the destruction of Jerusalem, which He had already announced. The time of His coming was purposely hidden. Moreover the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus put an end, in fact, to the position which the Lord's instructions had in view. There was no longer any cognizable testimony among the Jews. When this position shall be resumed, the applicability of the passage will also recommence. After the destruction of Jerusalem until that time the church only is in question.

[* In fact, this position of Israel, and the testimony connected with it, were interrupted by the destruction of Jerusalem; and this is the reason why that event presents itself to the mind in connection with this prophecy, of which it is certainly not the fulfillment. The Lord is not yet come, neither the great tribulation; but the state of things to which the Lord alludes, to the end of verse 14, was violently and judicially interrupted, by the destruction of Jerusalem, so that in this point of view there is a connection.]

The Lord's discourse is divided into three parts: 1. The general condition of the disciples and of the world during the time of the testimony, to the end of verse 14; 2. The period marked out by the fact that the abomination of desolation stands in the holy place (v. 15); 3. The Lord's coming and the gathering together of the elect in Israel (v. 29).

The time of the disciples' testimony is characterised by false Christs and false prophets among the Jews; persecution of those who render testimony, betraying them to the Gentiles. But there is yet something more definite with regard to those days. There would be false Christs in Israel. There would be wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes. They were not to be troubled: the end would not be yet. These things were only a beginning of sorrows. They were principally outward things. There were other events which would bring them into greater trial, and test them more thoroughly things more from within. The disciples should be delivered up, put to death, hated of all nations. The consequence of this among those who made profession would be that many would be offended; they would betray one another. False prophets would arise and deceive many, and, because iniquity abounded, the love of many should wax cold — a sorrowful picture. But these things would give occasion for the exercise of a faith that had been put to the proof. He who endured to the end should be saved. This concerns the sphere of testimony in particular. That which

the Lord says is not absolutely limited to the testimony in Canaan; but as it is from thence the testimony goes forth, it is all connected with that land as the center of God's ways. But, in addition to this, the gospel of the kingdom should be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then should the end come — the end of this age. Now, although heaven is the source of authority when the kingdom shall be established, Canaan and Jerusalem are its earthly center. So that the idea of the kingdom, while extending throughout the world, turns our thoughts to the land of Israel. It is "this gospel of the kingdom"* which is here spoken of; it is not the proclamation of the union of the church with Christ, nor redemption in its fullness, as preached and taught by the apostles after the ascension, but the kingdom which was to be established on the earth, as John the Baptist, and as the Lord Himself, had proclaimed. The establishment of the universal authority of the ascended Christ should be preached in all the world to test their obedience, and to furnish those who had ears to hear with the object of faith.

[* The gospel of the kingdom was confined to Israel in chapter 10 and here this, though no subject of the teaching, is the subject supposed up to verse 14, but there is no formal distinction made: the mission in chapter 28 is to the Gentiles; but then there is nothing of the kingdom but rather the contrary, though Christ be only risen, but all power given to Him in heaven and earth.]

This is the general history of that which would take place until the end of the age, without entering on the subject of the proclamation which founded the assembly properly so called. The impending destruction of Jerusalem, and the refusal of the Jews to receive the gospel, caused God to raise up a special testimony by the hands of Paul, without annulling the truth of the coming kingdom. That which follows proves that such a going forth of testimony of the kingdom will take place at the end, and that the testimony will reach all nations before the coming of that judgment which will put an end to the age.

But there will be a moment when, within a certain sphere (that is, in Jerusalem and its vicinity) a special time of suffering shall set in as regards the testimony in Israel. In speaking of the abomination that maketh desolate, the Lord refers us to Daniel, that we may understand whereof He speaks. Now Daniel (chap. 12, where this tribulation is spoken of) brings us definitely to the last days — the time when Michael shall stand up for

Daniel's people, that is, the Jews, who are under the domination of the Gentiles — the days in which there shall be a time of trouble, such as never had been nor ever again should be, and in which the remnant should be delivered. In the latter part of the previous chapter of that prophet, this time is called "the time of the end," and the destruction of the king of the north is prophetically declared. Now the prophet announces that 1335 days before the full blessing (blessed is he that has part therein!) the daily sacrifice should be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up; that from this moment there should be 1290 days (that is, one month more than the 1260 days spoken of in the Apocalypse, during which the woman who flees from the serpent is nourished in the wilderness; and also than the three years and a half of Daniel 7). At the end, as we find here, the judgment comes and the kingdom is given to the saints.

Thus it is proved that this passage refers to the last days and to the position of the Jews at that time. The events of the time past since the Lord uttered it confirm this thought. Neither in 1260 days, nor in 1260 years, after the days of Titus, nor in 30 days or years after, did any event take place which could be the accomplishment of these days in Daniel. The periods are gone by many years ago. Israel has not been delivered, neither has Daniel stood in his lot at the end of those days. It is equally plain that Jerusalem is in question in the passage, and its vicinity, for they that are in Judea are commanded to flee into the mountains. The disciples who shall be there at that time are to pray that their flight may not be on a sabbath day — an additional testimony that it is Jews who are the subject of the prophecy; but a testimony also of the tender care which the Lord takes of those who are His, thinking even in the midst of these unparalleled events, of whether it would be wintry weather at the time of their flight.

Besides this, other circumstances prove, if further proof were needed, that it is the Jewish remnant who are in question, and not the assembly. We know that all believers are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. They will afterwards return with Him. But here there will be false Christs on the earth, and people will say, "He is here in the wilderness," "He is there in the secret chambers." But the saints who shall be caught up and return with the Lord have nothing at all to do with false Christs on earth, since they will go up to heaven to be with Him there, before He returns to

the earth; while it is easy to understand that the Jews, who are expecting earthly deliverance, should be liable to such temptations, and that they should be deceived by them unless kept by God Himself.

This part then of the prophecy applies to the last days, the last three years and a half before the judgment which will be suddenly poured out at the coming of the Son of man. The Lord will come suddenly as a flash of lightning, as an eagle to its prey, unto the spot where the object of His judgment is found. Immediately after the tribulation of those last three years and a half, the whole hierarchical system of government shall be shaken and utterly overthrown. Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This verse (30) contains the answer to the second part of the disciples' inquiry in verse 3. The Lord gives His disciples the warnings necessary for their guidance; but the world would see no signs, however plain they might be to those that understand. But this sign should be at the moment of the Lord's appearing. The brightness of His glory whom they had despised would show them who it was that came; and it would be unexpected. What a terrible moment, when, instead of a Messiah who should answer to their worldly pride, the Christ whom they had despised shall appear in the heavens!

Afterwards the Son of man, thus come and manifested, would send to gather all the elect of Israel from the four corners of the earth. It is this which ends the history of the Jews, and even that of Israel, in answer to the disciples' question, and unfolds the dealings of God with respect to the testimony among the people who had rejected it, announcing the time of their deep distress, and the judgment that shall be poured out in the midst of this scene when Jesus comes, the subversion of all powers great and small being complete.

The Lord gives the history of the testimony in Israel, and that of the people themselves, from the moment of His departure until His return; but the length of time, during which there should be neither people nor temple nor city, is not specified. It is this which gives importance to the capture of Jerusalem. It is not here spoken of in direct terms — the Lord does not describe it; but it put an end to that order of things to which His discourse applies, and this application is not resumed until Jerusalem and the Jews

are again brought forward. The Lord announced it at the beginning. The disciples thought that His coming would take place at the same time. He answers them in such a manner that His discourse should be of use to them until the capture of Jerusalem. But when once the abomination of desolation is mentioned, we find ourselves carried on into the last days.

The disciples were to understand the signs He gave them. I have already said that the destruction of Jerusalem, by the fact itself, interrupted the application of His discourse. The Jewish nation was set aside; but verse 34 has a much wider sense, and one more really proper to it. Unbelieving Jews should exist, as such, until all was accomplished. Compare Deuteronomy 32:5, 20, where this judgment on Israel is specially in view. God hides His face from them until He shall see what their end will be, for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. This has taken place. They are a distinct race of people unto this day. That generation exists in the same condition — a monument of the abiding certainty of God's dealings, and of the Lord's words.

To conclude, the government of God, exercised with regard to this people, has been traced to its end. The Lord comes, and He gathers together the dispersed elect of Israel.

The prophetic history continues in chapter 25:31, which is connected with chapter 24:30. And as chapter 24:31 relates the gathering together of Israel after the appearance of the Son of man, chapter 25:31 announces His dealings in judgment with the Gentiles. He will appear doubtless as the lightning with regard to the apostasy, which will be as a dead body in His sight. But when He shall come solemnly to take His earthly place in glory, that will not pass away like lightning. He shall sit upon the throne of His glory, and all nations shall be gathered before Him on His throne of judgment, and they shall be judged according to their treatment of the messengers of the kingdom, who had gone out to preach it unto them. These messengers are the brethren (v. 40); those who had received them are the sheep; those who had neglected their message are the goats. The account then which begins chapter 25:31, of the separation of sheep and goats and of its result, pictures the nations who are judged on earth according to their treatment of these messengers. It is the judgment of the living, so far at least as regards the nations — a judgment as final as that of

the dead. It is not Christ's judgment in battle as in Revelation 19. It is a session of His supreme tribunal in His right of government over the earth, as in Revelation 20:4 I speak of the principle or rather of the character of the judgment. I do not doubt that these brethren are Jews, such as the disciples were, that is to say, those who will be in a similar position as to their testimony. The Gentiles, who had received this message, should be accepted, as though they had treated Christ in the same manner. His Father had prepared for them the enjoyment of the kingdom; and they should enter into it, being still on earth, for Christ was come down in the power of eternal life.*

[* There is no possible ground for applying this parable to what is called the general judgment, an expression indeed wholly unscriptural. First, there are three parties, not merely two — goats, sheep, and brethren; then, it is the judgment of the Gentiles only; and, further, the ground of judgment is wholly inapplicable to the great mass even of these last. The ground of judgment is the way these brethren have been received. Now none have been sent at all to the vast majority of the Gentiles in long ages. The time of this ignorance God winked at, and another ground of judgment as to them is given in the beginning of Romans. Christians and Jews have been already treated of in chapter 24 and the previous part of chapter 25. It is just those whom the Lord finds on earth when He comes, and who will be judged according to their treatment of the messengers He has sent.]

I have, for the moment, passed over all between chapter 24:31 and chapter 25:31, because the end of this last chapter completes all that concerns the government and the judgment of the earth. But there is a class of persons whose history is given us in its great moral features intermediately between these two verses I have just mentioned.

These are the disciples of Christ, outside the testimony born in the midst of Israel, to whom He has committed His service, and a position in connection with Himself, during His absence. This position and this service are in connection with Christ Himself, and not in connection with Israel, wherever it may be that this service is accomplished.

There are however, before we come to these, some verses of which I have not yet spoken, which apply more particularly to the state of things in Israel, as warning to the disciples who are there, and describe the discriminating judgment which takes place among the Jews in the last days. I speak of them here, because all this part of the discourse — namely, from chapter 24:31 to chapter 25:31 — is an exhortation, an address from the

Lord, on the subject of their duties during His absence. I refer to chapter 24:32-44. They speak of the continual expectation which their ignorance of the moment when the Son of man would come imposed on the disciples, and in which the disciples were intentionally left (and the judgment is the earthly one); while from verse 45, the Lord addresses Himself more directly, and at the same time in a more general manner, to their conduct during His absence, not in connection with Israel, but with His own — His household. He had committed to them the task of supplying them with suitable food in due season. This is the responsibility of ministry in the assembly.

It is important to remark that in the first parable the state of the assembly is looked at as a whole; the parable of the virgins and that of the talents give individual responsibility. Hence the servant who is unfaithful is cut off and has his portion with hypocrites. The state of the responsible assembly depended on their waiting for Christ, or their heart saying He delays His coming. It would be on His return that judgment should be pronounced on their faithfulness during the interval. Faithfulness should be approved in that day. On the other hand, practical forgetfulness of His coming would lead to licence and tyranny. It is not an intellectual system that is meant here: “the evil servant says in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming”; his will was concerned in it. The result was that the fleshly will manifested itself. It was no longer devoted service to His household, with a heart set upon the Master’s approval at His return; but worldliness in conduct, and the assumption of arbitrary authority, to which the service appointed him gave occasion. He eats and drinks with the drunken, he unites himself to the world and partakes in its ways; he smites his fellow-servants at his will. Such is the effect of putting off during His absence, deliberately in heart, the Lord’s return and holding the assembly to be settled down here; instead of faithful service, worldly-mindedness and tyranny. Is it not too true a picture?

What is it that has happened to those who had the place of service in the house of God? The consequences on either hand are these: the faithful servant, who from love and devotion to his Master applied himself to the welfare of His household, should be made ruler on his Master’s return over all His goods; those who have been faithful in the service of the house shall be set over all things by the Lord, when He takes His place of power and

acts as King. All things are given into the hands of Jesus by the Father. Those who in humility have been faithful to His service during His absence shall be made rulers over all that is committed to Him, that is, over all things — they are but the “goods” of Jesus. On the other hand, he who during the Lord’s absence had set himself up as master, and followed after the spirit of the flesh and of the world to which he had united himself, should not merely have the world’s portion: his Master should come quite unexpectedly, and he should receive the punishment of hypocrites. What a lesson for those who take to themselves a place of service in the assembly! Observe here, that it is not said he is drunken himself, but that he eats and drinks with those that are so. He allies himself with the world and follows its customs. This moreover is the general aspect which the kingdom will assume in that day, although the heart of the evil servant was wicked. The Bridegroom would indeed tarry; and the consequences that might be expected from the heart of man will not fail to be realised. But the effect, we then find, is to make manifest those who had* really the grace of Christ and those who had not.

[* How solemn the testimony given here to the effect of the assembly’s losing the present expectation of the Lord’s return! What causes the professing church to run into hierarchical oppression and worldliness, so as to be cut off in the end as hypocrites, is saying in the heart, My Lord delayeth his coming — giving up the present expectation. That has been the source of the ruin. The true christian position was lost as soon as they began to put off the Lord’s coming; and they are treated, note, though in this state, as the responsible servant.]

CHAPTER 25. Professors, during the Lord’s absence, are here presented as virgins, who went out to meet the Bridegroom, and light Him to the house. In this passage He is not the Bridegroom of the church. No others go to meet Him for His marriage with the church in heaven. The bride does not appear in this parable. Had she been introduced, it would have been Jerusalem on earth. The assembly is not seen in these chapters as such.

It is here individual* responsibility during the absence of Christ. That which characterised the faithful at this period was that they came out from the world, from Judaism, from everything, even religion connected with the world, to go and meet the coming Lord. The Jewish remnant, on the contrary, wait for Him in the place where they are. If this expectation were real, the characteristic of one governed by it would be the thought of that

which was necessary for the coming One — the light, the oil. Otherwise, to be the companions of professors meanwhile, and to carry lamps with them, would satisfy the heart. Nevertheless they all took a position; they go out, they leave the house to go out and meet the Bridegroom. He tarries. This also has taken place. They all fall asleep. The whole professing church has lost the thought of the Lord's return — even the faithful who have the Spirit. They must also have gone in again somewhere to sleep at ease — a place of rest for the flesh. But at midnight, unexpectedly, the cry is raised, "Behold, the bridegroom; go ye out to meet him." Alas! they needed the same call as at first. They must again go out to meet Him. The virgins rise, and trim their lamps. There is time enough between the midnight cry and the Bridegroom's arrival to prove the condition of each. There were some who had no oil in their vessels. Their lamps were going out.** The wise had oil. It was impossible for them to share it with the others. Those only who possessed it went in with the Bridegroom to take part in the marriage. He refused to acknowledge the others. What business had they there? The virgins were to give light with their lamps. They had not done it. Why should they share the feast? They had failed in that which gave this place. What title had they to be at the feast The virgins of the feast were virgins who accompanied the Bridegroom. These had not done so. They were not admitted. But even the faithful ones had forgotten the coming of Christ. They fell asleep. But, at least, they possessed the essential thing that corresponded to it. The grace of the Bridegroom causes the cry to be raised which proclaims His arrival. It awakens them: they have oil in their vessels; and the delay, which occasions the lamps of the unfaithful to go out, gives the faithful time to be ready and at their place; and forgetful as they may have been, they go in with the Bridegroom to the wedding feast +

[* The servant in chapter 24 is collective responsibility.]

[** The word rather signifies torches. With them they had, or should have had, oil in vessels to feed the flame.]

[+ And note here, the waking up is by the cry; it wakes up all. There IS enough to rouse all professors to needed activity; but the effect of this is to put them to the test, and separate them. It was not the time of getting oil or supplies of grace to those already professors; conversion is not the subject of the parable. The question of getting oil is only I doubt now, to show it was not the time of doing so.]

We pass now from state of soul to service.

For in truth (v. 14) it is as a man who had gone away from his home — for the Lord dwelt in Israel — and who commits his goods to his own servants, and then departs. Here, we have the principles that characterise faithful servants, or the contrary. It is not now the personal individual expectation, and the possession of the oil, requisite for a place in the Lord's glorious train; neither is it the public and general position of those who were in the Master's service, characterised as position and as a whole, and therefore represented by a single servant; it is individual faithfulness in the service, as before in the expectation of the Bridegroom. The Master on His return will reckon with each one. Now what was their position? What was the principle that would produce faithfulness? Observe, first of all, that it is not providential gifts, earthly possessions, that are meant. These are not the "goods that Jesus committed to His servants when He went away. They were gifts which fitted them to labor in His service while He was absent. The Master was sovereign and wise. He gave differently to each, and to each according to his capacity. Each was fitted for the service in which he was employed, and the gifts needed for its fulfillment were bestowed on him. Faithfulness to perform it was the only thing in question. That which distinguished the faithful from the unfaithful was confidence in their Master. They had sufficient confidence in His well-known character, in His goodness, His love, to labor without being authorised in any other manner than by their knowledge of His personal character, and by the intelligence which that confidence and that knowledge produced. Of what use to give them sums of money, except to trade with them? Had He failed in wisdom when He bestowed these gifts? The devotedness that flowed from knowledge of their Master counted upon the love of Him whom they knew. They labored, and they were rewarded. This is the true character, and the spring, of service in the church. It is this that the third servant lacked. He did not know his Master — he did not trust in Him. He could not even do that which was consistent with his own thoughts. He waited for some authorisation which would be a security against the character his heart falsely gave his Master. Those who knew their Master's character entered into His joy.

There is this difference between the parable here and that in Luke 19, that in the latter each man receives one pound; his responsibility is the only

question. And consequently he who gained ten pounds is set over ten cities. Here the sovereignty and the wisdom of God are concerned, and he who labors is guided by the knowledge he has of his Master; and the counsels of God in grace are accomplished. He who has the most receives yet more. At the same time the reward is more general. He who has gained two talents, and he who has gained five, enter alike into the joy of the Lord whom they have served. They have known Him in His true character, they enter into His full joy. The Lord grant it unto us!

There is more than this in the second parable — that of the virgins. It refers more directly and more exclusively to the heavenly character of Christians. It is not the assembly, properly so called, as a body; but the faithful have gone out to meet the Bridegroom, who was returning to the marriage. At the time of His return to execute judgment, the kingdom of heaven will assume the character of persons come out from the world, and still more from Judaism — from all that, in point of religion, belongs to the flesh — from all established worldly form — to have to do with the coming Lord alone, and to go out to meet Him. This was the character of the faithful from the beginning, as having part in the kingdom of heaven, if they had understood the position in which they were placed by the Lord's rejection. The virgins, it is true, had gone in again; and this falsified their character; but the midnight cry brought them back into their true place. Therefore they go in with the Bridegroom, and there is no question of judging and rewarding, but of being with Him. In the first parable, and in that of Luke, the subject is His return to earth, and individual recompense — the results, in the kingdom, of their conduct during the King's absence.* Service and its results are not the subject in the parable of the virgins. Those who have no oil do not go in at all. This is enough. The others have blessing in common; they go in with the Bridegroom to the marriage. There is no question of particular reward, nor of difference in conduct between them. It was the heart's expectation, though grace had to bring them back into it. Whatever the place of service might have been, the reward was sure. This parable applies and is limited to the heavenly portion of the kingdom as such. It is a similitude of the kingdom of heaven.

[* In that of the talents in Matthew, we get indeed the ruling over many things, the kingdom, but it is more full through the expression, Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord; and the blessing is conferred on all alike who were faithful in service, great or small.]

We may also remark here, that the delay of the Master is noticed in the third parable likewise — "after a long time" (v. 19). Their faithfulness and their constancy were thus put to the test. May the Lord give unto us to be found faithful and devoted, now in the end of the ages, that He may say unto us, "Good and faithful servants!" It is worthy of remark that in these parables those who are in service, or go out at first, are the same as those found at the end. The Lord would not hold out the supposition of delay beyond "we who are alive and remain."*

[* So in the churches in Revelation, He takes existing churches, though I doubt not it is a complete history of the church.]

Weeping and gnashing of teeth are his portion who has not known his Master, who has outraged Him by the thoughts he entertained of His character.

In verse 31 the prophetic history is resumed from verse 31 of chapter 24. There we saw the Son of man appear like a flash of lightning, and afterwards gather together the remnant of Israel from the four corners of the earth. But this is not all. If He thus appears in a manner as sudden as unexpected, He also establishes His throne of judgment and glory on the earth. If He destroys His enemies whom He finds in rebellion against Himself, He also sits upon His throne to judge all nations. This is the judgment on earth of the living. Four different parties are here found together; the Lord, the Son of man Himself — the brethren — the sheep — and the goats. I believe the brethren here to be Jews, His disciples as Jews, whom He had employed as His messengers, to preach the kingdom during His absence. The gospel of the kingdom was to be preached as a testimony to all nations; and then the end of the age should come. At the time here spoken of, this has been done. The result should be manifested before the throne of the Son of man on earth.

He calls these messengers therefore His brethren. He had told them they should be ill-treated: they had been so. Still there were some who had received their testimony.

Now such was His affection for His faithful servants, so highly did He value them, that He judged those to whom the testimony was sent according to the manner in which they had received these messengers, whether well or ill, as though it had been done to Himself. What an

encouragement for His witnesses during that time of trouble, tried as their faith should be in service! At the same time it was justice morally to those who were judged; for they had rejected the testimony by whomsoever it was rendered. We have also the result of their conduct, both the one and the other. It is the King — for this is the character Christ has now taken on earth — who pronounces judgment; and He calls the sheep (those who had received the messengers, and had sympathised with them in their afflictions and persecutions) to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; for such had been the purpose of God with respect to this earth. He had always the kingdom in view. They were the blessed of His (the King's) Father. It was not children who understood their own relation with their Father; but they were the receivers of blessing from the Father of the King of this world. Moreover they were to enter into everlasting life; for such was the power, through grace, of the word which they had received into their heart. Possessed of everlasting life, they should be blessed in a world that was blessed also.

They who had despised the testimony and those that bore it, had despised the King who sent them; they should go away into everlasting punishment.

Thus the whole effect of Christ's coming, with regard to the kingdom and to His messengers during His absence, is unfolded: with respect to the Jews, as far as verse 31 of chapter 24; with respect to His servants during His absence, to the end of verse 30 of chapter 25, including the kingdom of heaven in its present condition, and the heavenly rewards that shall be given; and then, from verse 31 to the end of chapter 25, with respect to the nations who shall be blessed on the earth at His return.

The Lord had finished His discourses. He prepares (chap. 26) to suffer, and to make His last and touching adieu to His disciples, at the table of His last passover on earth, at which He instituted, the simple and precious memorial which recalls His sufferings and His love with such profound interest. This part of our Gospel requires little explanation — not, assuredly, that it is of less interest, but because it needs to be felt rather than explained.

With what simplicity the Lord announces that which was to happen! (v. 2). He had already arrived at Bethany, six days before the passover (John 12:1): there He abode, with the exception of the last supper, until He was

taken captive in the garden of Gethsemane, although He visited Jerusalem, and partook of His last meal there.

We have already examined the discourses uttered during those six days, as well as His actions, such as the cleansing of the temple. That which precedes this chapter (26) is either the manifestation of His rights as Emmanuel, King of Israel, or that of the judgment of the great King with respect to the people — a judgment expressed in discourses to which the people could make no answer; or, finally, the condition of His disciples during His absence. We have now His submission to the sufferings appointed Him, to the judgment about to be executed upon Him; but which was, in truth, only the fulfillment of the counsels of God His Father, and of the work of His own love.

The picture of man's dreadful sin in the crucifixion of Jesus unfolds before our eyes. But the Lord Himself (chap. 26:1) announces it beforehand with all the calmness of One who had come for this purpose. Before the consultations of the chief priests had taken place, Jesus speaks of it as a settled thing: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."

Afterwards (v. 3) the priests, the scribes, and the elders assemble to concert their plans for obtaining possession of His Person, and ridding themselves of Him.

In a word, first, the marvelous counsels of God, and the submission of Jesus, according to His knowledge of those counsels and of the circumstances which should accomplish them; and, afterwards, the iniquitous counsels of man, which do but fulfill those of God. Their purposed arrangement of detail not to take Him on the feast day as they dreaded the people (chap. 26:5) was not God's and fails: He was to suffer at the feast.

Judas was but the instrument of their malice in the hand of Satan; who, after all, did but arrange these things according to divine intention. They wished, but in vain, to avoid taking Him at the time of the feast, on account of the multitude, who might favor Jesus, if He appealed to them. They had done so at His entrance into Jerusalem. They supposed Jesus would do so, for wickedness always reckons on finding its own principles

in others. This is why it so frequently fails in circumventing the upright — they are artless. Here it was the will of God, that Jesus should suffer at the feast. But He had prepared a gracious relief to the heart of Jesus — a balm to His heart more than to His body — a circumstance which is used by the enemy to drive Judas to extremity and put him in connection with the chief priests.

Bethany (linked in memory with the last moments of peace and tranquillity in the Savior's life, the place where dwelt Martha and Mary, and Lazarus the risen dead) Bethany* receives Jesus for the last time: the blessed but momentary retreat of a heart which, ever ready to pour itself out in love, was ever straitened in a world of sin, that did not and could not respond to it; yet a heart which has given us, in His relations with this beloved family, the example of an affection perfect, yet human, which found sweetness in being responded to and appreciated. The nearness of the cross, where He would have to set His face as a flint, did not deprive His heart of the joy or the sweetness of this communion, while rendering it solemn and affecting. In doing the work of God He did not cease to be man. In everything He condescended to be ours. He could no longer own Jerusalem, and this sanctuary sheltered Him for a moment from the rude hand of man. Here He could display what He ever was as man. It is with reason, that the act of one who in a certain sense could appreciate what He felt** (whose affection instinctively entered into the rising enmity against the object she loved and was drawn out by it), and the act that expressed the estimate her heart had of His preciousness and grace should be told in all the world. This is a scene, a testimony, that brings the Lord sensibly near to us, that awakens a feeling in our hearts which sanctifies by binding them to His beloved Person.

[* It was not in Martha's house that this scene took place, but that of Simon the leper: Martha served and Lazarus sat at meat. This makes the intelligent act of Mary more entirely personal.]

[** No instance is found of the disciples ever understanding what Jesus said to them.]

His daily life was one continued tension of soul, in proportion to the strength of His love — a life of devotedness in the midst of sin and misery. For a moment He could, and would own (in presence of the power of evil, now to have its way, and the love that clung to Him thus bowing under it,

through true knowledge of Him cultivated in sitting at His feet) that devotedness to Himself, drawn out by that which His soul was in divine perfectness bowing to. He could give an intelligent voice, its true meaning, to that which divinely wrought affection silently acted on.*

[* Christ meets the heart of the poor woman in the city which was a sinner, and told God's mind out there, and told it to her. He meets Mary's heart here, and justifies and satisfies her affection, and gave the divine estimate of what she did. He met Mary Magdalene's heart at the sepulchre, to whom the world was emptiness if He was not there, and tells God's mind in its highest forms of blessing. Such is the effect of attachment to Christ.]

The reader will do well carefully to study this scene of touching condescension and outpouring of heart. Jesus, Emmanuel, King and Supreme Judge, had just been causing all things to pass in judgment before Him (from chap. 21 to the end of 25). He had finished that which He had to say. His task here, in this respect, was accomplished. He now takes the place of Victim; He has only to suffer, and can allow Himself freely to enjoy the touching expressions of affection that flow from a heart devoted to Him. He could but taste the honey and pass on; but He does taste it, and did not reject an affection which His heart could and did appreciate.

Again, observe the effect of deep affection for the Lord. This affection necessarily breathes the atmosphere in which, at that moment, the spirit of the Lord is found. The woman who anointed Him was not informed of the circumstances about to happen, nor was she a prophetess. But the approach of that hour of darkness was felt by one whose heart was fixed on Jesus.* The different forms of evil developed themselves before Him, and displayed themselves in their true colors; and, under the influence of one master, even Satan, grouped themselves around the only object against whom it was worthwhile to array this concentration of malice, and who brought their true character out into open daylight.

[* The enmity of the chiefs of Israel was known to the disciples — "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" And afterwards by Thomasa gracious testimony to the love of one who afterwards showed his unbelief as to Jesus' resurrection — "let us go that we may die with him." Mary's heart doubtless felt this enmity, and as it grew, her attachment to the Lord grew with it.]

But the perfectness of Jesus, which drew out the enmity, drew out the affection in her; and she (so to speak) reflected the perfectness in the

affection; and as that perfectness was put in action and drawn to light by the enmity, so was her affection. Thus Christ's heart could not but meet it. Jesus, by reason of this enmity, was still more the object that occupied a heart which, doubtless led of God, instinctively apprehended what was going on. The time of testimony, and even that of the explanation of His relationship to all around Him, was over. His heart was free to enjoy the good and true and spiritual affections of which He was the object; and which, whatever might be their human form, showed so plainly their divine origin, in that they were attached to that object on which, at this solemn moment, all the attention of heaven was centered.

Jesus Himself was conscious of His position. His thoughts were on His departure. During the exercise of His power, He hides — He forgets — Himself. But now oppressed, rejected, and like a lamb led to the slaughter, He feels that He is the just object of the thoughts of those who belong to Him, of all who have hearts to appreciate that which God appreciates. His heart is full of the coming events, see v. 2, 10-13, 18, 21.

But yet a few words more on the woman who anointed Him. The effect of having the heart fixed in affection on Jesus is shown in her in a striking manner. Occupied with Him, she is sensible of His situation. She feels what affects Him; and this causes her affection to act in accordance with the special devotedness which that situation inspires. As hatred against Him rose up to murderous intent, the spirit of devotedness to Him grows in answer to it in her. Consequently, with the tact of devotedness, she does precisely that which was suited to His situation. The poor woman was not intelligently aware of this; yet she did the thing that was meet. Her value for the Person of Jesus, so infinitely precious to her, made her quick-sighted with respect to that which was passing in His mind. In her eyes Christ was invested with all the interest of His circumstances; and she lavishes upon Him that which expressed her affection. Fruit of this sentiment, her action met the circumstances; and, although it was but the instinct of her heart, Jesus gives it all the value which His perfect intelligence could attribute to it, embracing at once the sentiments of her heart and the coming events.

But this testimony of affection and devotedness to Christ brings out the selfishness, the want of heart, of the others. They blame the poor woman.

Sad proof (to say nothing of Judas*) how little the knowledge of that which concerns Jesus necessarily awakens suitable affection in our hearts! After this Judas goes out, and agrees with the unhappy priests to betray Jesus to them for the price of a slave.

[* Judas's heart was the spring of this evil, but the other disciples, not occupied with Christ, fall into the snare.]

The Lord pursues His career of love; and as He had accepted the poor woman's testimony of affection, so He now bestows on His disciples one of infinite value to our souls. Verse 16 concludes the subject of which we have been speaking: Christ's knowledge, according to God, of that which awaited Him; the conspiracy of the priests; the affection of the poor woman, accepted by the Lord; the selfish cold-heartedness of the disciples; the treachery of Judas.

The Lord now institutes the memorial of the true passover. He sends the disciples to make arrangements for the celebration of the feast at Jerusalem. He points out Judas as the one who would deliver Him up to the Jews. It will be noticed, that it was not merely His knowledge of the one who should betray Him which the Lord here expresses — He knew that when He called him; but He says, "One of you shall betray me." It was that which touched His heart: He wished it to touch theirs likewise.

He then points out that it is a Savior slain who is to be remembered. It is no longer a question of the living Messiah: all that was over. It was no longer the remembrance of Israel's deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. Christ, and Christ slain, began an entirely new order of things. Of Him they were now to think — of Him slain on earth. He then draws their attention to the blood of the new covenant, adding that which extends it to others besides the Jews, without naming them — "It is shed for many." Moreover, this blood is not, as at Sinai, only to confirm the covenant, for fidelity to which they were responsible; it was shed for the remission of sins. So that the Lord's supper presents the remembrance of Jesus slain, who, by dying, has broken with the past; has laid the foundation of the new covenant; obtained the remission of sins; and opened the door to the Gentiles. It is only in His death that the supper presents Him to us. His blood is apart from His body: He is dead. It is neither Christ living on the earth, nor Christ glorified in heaven. He is separate from His people, as to

their joys on earth; but they are to expect Him as the companion of the happiness He has secured for them — for He condescends to be so — in better days: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new* with you in my Father's kingdom." But, these links broken, who, save Jesus, could sustain the conflict? All would forsake Him. The testimonies of the word should be accomplished. It was written, "I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad."

[* "New" is not anew, but in an entirely new way.]

Nevertheless He would go, to renew His relationship, as a risen Savior, with these poor of the flock, to the same place where He had already identified Himself with them during His life. He would go before them into Galilee. This promise is very remarkable, because the Lord resumes, under a new form, His Jewish relationship with them and with the kingdom. We may here remark that, as He had judged all classes (to the end of chap. 25), He now exhibits the character of His relationship with all those among whom He maintained any. Whether it is the woman, or Judas, or the disciples, each one takes his place in connection with the Lord. This is all we find here. If Peter had natural energy enough to go a little farther, it would only be for a deeper fall in the place where the Lord alone could stand.

And now He isolates Himself to present, in supplication to His Father, the sufferings that awaited Him.

But while isolating Himself for prayer, He takes three of His disciples with Him, that in this solemn moment they may watch with Him. They were the same three who were with Him during the transfiguration. They were to see His glory in the kingdom, and His sufferings. He goes a little way beyond them. As for them, they fall asleep, as they did on the mount of transfiguration. The scene here is described in Hebrews 5:7. Jesus was not yet drinking the cup, but it was before His eyes. On the cross He drank it, made sin for us, His soul feeling itself forsaken of Him. Here it is the power of Satan, using death as a terror with which to overwhelm Him. But the consideration of this subject will be more in place when we come to Luke's Gospel.

We here see His soul under the load of death — by anticipation as He alone could know it, nor had it as yet lost its sting. We know who has the power of death, and death as yet had the full character of the wages of sin, and the curse, of God's judgment. But He watches and He prays. As man, subjected by His love to this assault, in the presence of the most powerful temptation to which He could be exposed, on the one hand He watches; on the other, He presents His anguish to His Father. His communion was not interrupted here, however great His distress. This distress only cast Him the more, in all submission and in all reliance, upon His Father. But if we were to be saved, if God was to be glorified in Him who had undertaken our cause, the cup must not pass away from Him. And His submission is complete.

He tenderly reminds Peter of his false confidence,* making him sensible of his weakness; but Peter was too full of himself to profit by it; he awakes from his sleep, but his self-confidence is not shaken. A sadder experience was needed for its cure.

[* It is wonderful to see the Lord in the full agony of the anticipated cup, only as yet presenting it to His Father, not drinking the cup; yet turning to the disciples and speaking to them in calm grace as if in Galilee, and turning back to the dreadful conflict of spirit Himself exactly for what was before His soul. In Matthew He is victim, I add, and every aggravation, with no alleviating circumstance, is here what His soul meets.]

The Lord therefore takes the cup, but He takes it from His Father's hand. It was His will that He should drink it. Committing Himself thus entirely to His Father, it is neither from the hand of His enemies, nor from that of Satan (though they were the instruments), that He takes it. According to the perfection with which He had subjected Himself to the will of God in this matter, committing all to Him, it is from His hand alone that He receives it. It is the Father's will. It is thus that we escape from second causes, and from the temptations of the enemy, by seeking only the will of God who directs all things. It is from Him we receive affliction and trial, if they come.

The disciples need no longer watch: the hour is come.* He was to be betrayed into the hands of men. This was saying enough. Judas designates Him by a kiss. Jesus goes to meet the multitude, rebuking Peter for seeking to resist with carnal weapons. Had Christ wished to escape, He could have

asked for twelve legions of angels and had them; but all things must be fulfilled.** It was the hour of His submission to the effect of the malice of man and the power of darkness, and God's judgment against sin. He is the Lamb for the slaughter. Then all the disciples forsake Him. He surrenders Himself, setting before the crowd that came what they were doing. If no one can prove Him guilty, He will not deny the truth. He confesses the glory of His Person as Son of God, and declares that henceforth they should see the Son of man no longer in the meekness of One who would not break the bruised reed, but coming in the clouds of heaven, and sitting on the right hand of power. Having born this testimony He is condemned on account of that which He said of Himself — for the confession of the truth. The false witnesses did not succeed. The priests and the heads of Israel were guilty of His death, by virtue of their own rejection of the testimony He rendered to the truth. He was the Truth; they were under the power of the father of lies. They rejected the Messiah, the Savior of His people. He would come to them no more, except as Judge.

[* I purpose speaking on the Lord's sufferings when studying the Gospel of Luke, where they are described more in detail; because it is as Son of man that He is there especially presented.]

[** Remark here in so solemn and crucial a moment, the place that the Lord gives to the scriptures: that thus it must be, for it was there (v. 54). They are the word of God.]

They insult and outrage Him. Each one alas! takes, as we have seen, his own place — Jesus, that of Victim; the others, the place of betrayal, rejection, abandonment, denial of the Lord. What a picture! What a solemn moment! Who could stand in it? Christ alone could steadily pass through it. And He passed through it as a victim. As such, He must be stripped of all, and that in the presence of God. Everything else disappeared, except the sin which led to it; and, according to grace, that also before the powerful efficacy of this act. Peter, self-confident, hesitating, detected, answering with untruth, swearing, denies his Master; and, painfully convinced of man's powerlessness against the enemy of his soul and against sin, he goes out and weeps bitterly: tears, which cannot efface his guilt, but which, while proving the existence, through grace, of uprightness of heart, bear witness to that powerlessness which uprightness of heart cannot remedy.*

[* I think it will be found, on comparing the Gospels, that the Lord was examined at Caiaphas's over night, when Peter denies Him, and that they met formally again in the morning, and, asking the blessed Lord, received from Himself the confession on which they led Him to Pilate. Over night it was only the active leaders. In the morning there was a formal assembling of the Sanhedrim.]

After this (chap. 27), the unhappy priests and heads of the people deliver up their Messiah to the Gentiles, as He had told His disciples. Judas, in despair under Satan's power, hangs himself, having cast the reward of his iniquity at the feet of the chief priests and elders. Satan was forced to bear witness, even by a conscience that he had betrayed, to the Lord's innocence. What a scene! Then the priests, who had made no conscience of buying His blood from Judas, scruple to put the money into the treasury of the temple, because it was the price of blood. In the presence of that which was going on, man was obliged to show himself as he is and the power of Satan over him. Having taken counsel, they buy a burying-ground for strangers. These were profane enough in their eyes for that, provided they themselves were not defiled with such money. Yet it was the time of God's grace to the stranger, and judgment on Israel. Moreover they established thereby a perpetual memorial of their own sin, and of the blood which has been shed. Aeldama is all that remains in this world of the circumstances of this great sacrifice. The world is a field of blood, but it speaks better things than that of Abel.

This prophecy, we know, is in the book of Zechariah. The name "Jeremiah" may have crept into the text when there was nothing more than "by the prophet"; or it might be because Jeremiah stood first in the order prescribed by the Talmudists for the books of prophecy; for which reason, very likely, also, they said, "Jeremiah, or one of the prophets," as in chapter 16:14. But this is not the place for discussion on the subject.

Their own part in the Jewish scene closes. The Lord stands before Pilate. Here the question is not whether He is the Son of God, but whether He is the King of the Jews. Although He was this, yet it was only in the character of Son of God that He would allow the Jews to receive Him. Had they received Him as the Son of God, He would have been their King. But that might not be: He must accomplish the work of atonement. Having rejected Him as Son of God, the Jews now deny Him as their King. But the Gentiles also become guilty in the person of their head in Palestine, the

government of which had been committed to them. The Gentile head should have reigned in righteousness. His representative in Judea acknowledged the malice of Christ's enemies; his conscience, alarmed by his wife's dream, seeks to evade the guilt of condemning Jesus. But the true prince of this world, as regards present exercise of dominion, was Satan. Pilate, washing his hands (futile attempt to exonerate himself), delivers up the guiltless to the will of His enemies, saying, at the same time, that he finds no fault in Him. And he releases to the Jews a man guilty of sedition and murder, instead of the Prince of life. But it was again on His own confession, and that only, that He was condemned, confessing the same thing in the Gentile court as He had done in the Jewish, in each the truth, witnessing a good confession of what concerned the truth as to those before whom He was.

Barabbas,* the expression of the spirit of Satan who was a murderer from the beginning, and of rebellion against the authority which Pilate was there to maintain — Barabbas was loved by the Jews; and with him, the wrongful carelessness of the governor, who was powerless against evil, endeavored to satisfy the will of the people whom he ought to have governed “All the people” make themselves guilty of the blood of Jesus in the solemn word, which remains fulfilled to this day, till sovereign grace, according to God's purpose, takes it off — solemn but terrible word, “His blood be upon us and upon our children.” Sad and frightful ignorance which self-will has brought upon a people who rejected the light! Alas! how each one, I again say, takes his own place in the presence of this touchstone — a rejected Savior. The company of the Gentiles, the soldiers, do that in derision, with the brutality habitual to them as heathen and as executioners, which the Gentiles shall do with joyful worship, when He whom they now mocked shall be truly the King of the Jews in glory. Jesus endures it all. It was the hour of His submission to the full power of evil. patience must have its perfect work, in order that His obedience may be complete on every side. He bore it all without relief, rather than fail in obedience to His Father. What a difference between this and the conduct of the first Adam surrounded with blessings!

[* Strange to say, this means son of Abba, as if Satan was mocking them with the name.]

Every one must be the servant of sin, or of the tyranny of wickedness, at this solemn hour, in which all is put to the proof. They compel one Simon (known afterwards, it appears, among the disciples) to bear the cross of Jesus; and the Lord is led away to the place of His crucifixion. There He refuses that which might have stupefied Him. He will not shun the cup He had to drink, nor deprive Himself of His faculties in order to be insensible to that which it was the will of God He should suffer. The prophecies of the Psalms are fulfilled in His Person, by means of those who little thought what they were doing. At the same time, the Jews succeeded in becoming to the last degree contemptible. Their King was hung. They must bear the shame in spite of themselves. Whose fault was it? But, hardened and senseless, they share with a malefactor the miserable satisfaction of insulting the Son of God, their King, the Messiah, to their own ruin, and quote, so blinding is unbelief, from their own scriptures, as the expression of their own mind, that which in them is put into the mouth of the unbelieving enemies of Jehovah. Jesus felt it all; but the anguish of His trial, where after all He was a calm and faithful witness, the abyss of His sufferings, contained something far more terrible than all this malice or abandonment of man. The floods doubtless lifted up their voices.* One after another the waves of wickedness dashed against Him; but the depths beneath that awaited Him, who could fathom? His heart, His soul — the vessel of a divine love — could alone go deeper than the bottom of that abyss which sin had opened for man, to bring up those who lay there, after He had endured its pains in His own soul. A heart that had been ever faithful was forsaken of God. Where sin had brought man, love brought the Lord, but with a nature and an apprehension in which there was no distance, no separation, so that it should be felt in all its fullness. No one but He who was in that place could fathom or feel it.

[* We find in Matthew, specially collected, the dishonor done to the Lord and the insults offered Him, and with Mark the forsaking of God.]

It is too a wonderful spectacle to see the one righteous man in the world declare at the end of His life He was forsaken of God. But thus it was He glorified Him as none else could have done it, and where none but He could have done it — made sin, in the presence of God as such, with no veil to hide, no mercy to cover or bear it with.

The fathers, full of faith, had in their distress experienced the faithfulness of God, who answered the expectation of their hearts. But Jesus (as to the condition of His soul at that moment) cried in vain. “A worm and no man” before the eyes of men, He had to bear the forsaking of the God in whom He trusted.

Their thoughts far from His, they that surround Him did not even understand His words, but they accomplished the prophecies by their ignorance. Jesus, bearing testimony by the loudness of His voice that it was not the weight of death that oppressed Him, gives up the ghost.

The efficacy of His death is presented to us in this Gospel in a double aspect. First, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. God, who had been always hidden behind the veil, discovered Himself completely by means of the death of Jesus. The entrance into the holy place is made manifest — a new and living way which God has consecrated for us through the veil. The entire Jewish system, the relations of man with God under its sway, its priesthood, all fell with the rending of the veil. Every one found himself in the presence of God without a veil between. The priests were to be always in His presence. But, by this same act, the sin, which would have made it impossible for us to stand there, was for the believer entirely put away from before God. The holy God, and the believer, cleansed from his sins, are brought together by the death of Christ. What love was that which accomplished this!

Secondly, besides this, such was the efficacy of His death, that when His resurrection had burst the bonds that held them, many of the dead appeared in the city — witnesses of His power who, having suffered death, had risen above it, and overcome it, and destroyed its power, or taken it into His own hands. Blessing was now in resurrection.

The presence therefore of God without a veil, and sinners without sin before Him, prove the efficacy of Christ’s sufferings.

The resurrection of the dead, over whom the king of terrors had no more right, displayed the efficacy of the death of Christ for sinners, and the power of His resurrection. Judaism is over for those that have faith, and the power of death also. The veil is rent. The grave gives up its prey; He is Lord of the dead and of the living.*

[* The glory of Christ in ascension, and as Lord of all, does not come within the scope of Matthew historically.]

There is yet another especial testimony to the mighty power of His death, to the import of that word, “If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me.” The centurion who was on guard at the crucifixion of the Lord, seeing the earthquake and those things that were done, trembling, confesses the glory of His Person; and, stranger as he is to Israel, renders the first testimony of faith among Gentiles: “Truly this was the Son of God.”

But the narrative goes on. Some poor women — to whom devotedness often gives, on God’s part, more courage than to men in their more responsible and busy position — were standing near the cross, beholding what was done to Him they loved.*

[* The part that women take in all this history is very instructive, especially to them. The activity of public service, that which may be called “work,” belongs naturally to men (all that appertains to what is generally termed ministry), although women share a very precious activity in private. But there is another side of christian life which is particularly theirs; and that is personal and loving devotedness to Christ. It is a woman, who anointed the Lord while the disciples murmured; women, who were at the cross, when all except John had forsaken Him; women, who came to the sepulchre, and who were sent to announce the truth to the apostles who had gone after all to their own home; women, who ministered to the Lord’s need. And indeed this goes farther. Devotedness in service is perhaps the part of man; but the instinct of affection, that which enters more intimately into Christ’s position, and is thus more immediately in connection with His sentiments, in closer communion with the sufferings of His heart — this is the part of woman: assuredly a happy part. The activity of service for Christ puts man a little out of this position, at least if the Christian is not watchful. Everything has however its place. I speak of that which is characteristic; for there are women who have served much, and men who have felt much. Note also here, what I believe I have remarked, that this clinging of heart to Jesus is the position where the communications of true knowledge are received. The first full gospel is announced to the poor woman that was a sinner who washed His feet, the embalming for His death to Mary, our highest position to Mary Magdalene, the communion Peter desired to John who was in His bosom. And here the women have a large share.]

But they were not the only ones who filled the place of the terrified disciples. Others — and this often happens — whom the world had held back, when once the depth of their affection is stirred by the question of His sufferings whom they really loved, when the moment is so painful that others are terrified, then (emboldened by the rejection of Christ) they feel

that the time is arrived for decision and become fearless confessors of the Lord. Hitherto associated with those that have crucified Him, they must now either accept that act, or declare themselves. Through grace they do the latter.

God had prepared all beforehand. His Son was to have His tomb with the rich. Joseph comes boldly to Pilate and asks for the body of Jesus. He wraps the body, which Pilate grants him, in a clean linen cloth, and lays it in his own sepulchre, which had never served to hide the corruption of man. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary* for they were known — sat near the sepulchre, bound by all that remained to their faith of Him whom they had loved and followed with adoration during His life.

[* That is, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and mother of James and Joses, constantly spoken of as “the other Mary.” In John 19:25, Mary the wife of Cleophas has been taken as in apposition with His mother’s sister. But this is simply a mistake. It is another person. There were four — three Marys and His mother’s sister.]

But unbelief has no faith in itself, and, fearing lest that which it denies be true, it mistrusts everything. The chief priests request Pilate to guard the sepulchre, in order to frustrate any attempt the disciples might make to found the doctrine of the resurrection on the absence of the body of Jesus from the tomb in which it had been laid. Pilate bids them secure the sepulchre themselves; so that all they did was to make themselves involuntary witnesses to the fact, and assure us of the accomplishment of the thing they dreaded. Thus Israel was guilty of this effort of futile resistance to the testimony which Jesus had rendered to His own resurrection. They were a testimony against themselves to its truth. The precautions which Pilate would not perhaps have taken they carried to the extreme, so that all mistake as to the fact of His resurrection was impossible.

The Lord’s resurrection is briefly related in Matthew. The object is again, after the resurrection, to connect the ministry and service of Jesus — now transferred to His disciples — with the poor of the flock, the remnant of Israel. He again assembled them in Galilee, where He had constantly instructed them, and where the despised among the people dwelt afar from the pride of the Jews. This connected their work with His, in that which especially characterised it with reference to the remnant of Israel.

I shall examine the details of the resurrection elsewhere Here I only consider its bearing in this Gospel. The sabbath ended (Saturday evening with us — chap. 28), the two Marys come to see the sepulchre. At this moment that was all they did. Verses 1, 2 are not consecutive, 2-4 go together. When the earthquake and its attendant circumstances took place, no one was there except the soldiers. At night all was secure. The disciples knew nothing of it in the morning. When the women arrived at dawn, the angel who sat at the door of the sepulchre re-assured them with the tidings of the Lord's resurrection. The angel of the Lord had come down and opened the door of the tomb, which man had closed with every possible precaution.* They had in truth only guaranteed by unexceptionable witnesses the truth of the apostles' preaching, by placing the soldiers there. The women, by their visit the evening before, and in the morning when the angel spoke to them, received a full assurance to faith of the fact of His resurrection. All that is presented here is the facts. The women had been there in the evening. The intervention of the angel certified to the soldiers the true character of His coming forth from the tomb; and the visit of the women in the morning established the fact of His resurrection as an object of faith to themselves. They go and announce it to the disciples, who — so far from having done that which the Jews imputed to them — did not even believe the assertions of the women. Jesus Himself appears to the women who were returning from the sepulchre, having believed the words of the angel.

[* But I apprehend the Lord Jesus had left the tomb before the stone was rolled away; that was for mortal eyes.]

As I have already said, Jesus connects Himself with His former work among the poor of the flock, afar from the seat of Jewish tradition, and from the temple, and from all that linked the people with God according to the old covenant. He appoints His disciples to meet Him there, and there they find Him and recognise Him; and it is there, in this former scene of the labors of Christ, according to Isaiah 8 and 9, that they receive their commission from Him. Hence we have not the ascension of Christ at all in this Gospel, but all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and accordingly the commission given to His disciples extends to all nations (Gentiles). To them they were to proclaim His rights, and make disciples of them.

It was not however the name of the Lord only, nor in connection with His throne at Jerusalem. Lord of heaven and earth, His disciples were to proclaim Him throughout all nations, founding their doctrine on the confession of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. They were to teach, not the law, but the precepts of Jesus. He would be with them, with the disciples who thus confessed Him, unto the end of the age. It is this which connects all that will be accomplished until Christ sits upon the great white throne with the testimony that He Himself rendered on the earth in the midst of Israel. It is the testimony of the kingdom, and of its Head, once rejected by a people that knew Him not. It links the testimony to the nations with a remnant in Israel owning Jesus as Messiah but now risen from the dead, as He had said, but not to a Christ known as ascended on high. Nor does it present Jesus alone, nor Jehovah, as any longer the subject of testimony, but the revelation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as the holy name by which the nations were connected with God.