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COMMENTARY

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

by John Nelson Darby

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John Nelson Darby, 1800-1882

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LUKE

The Gospel of Luke sets the Lord before us in the character of Son of man, revealing God in delivering grace among men. Hence the present operation of grace and its effect are more referred to, and even the present time prophetically, not the substitution of other dispensations as in Matthew, but of saving heavenly grace. At first, no doubt (and just because He is to be revealed as man, and in grace to men), we find Him, in a prefatory part in which we have the most exquisite picture of the godly remnant, presented to Israel, to whom He had been promised, and in relationship with whom He came into this world; but afterwards this Gospel presents moral principles which apply to man, whosoever he may be, whilst yet manifesting Christ for the moment in the midst of that people. This power of God in grace is displayed in various ways in its application to the wants of men. After the transfiguration, which is recounted earlier in the narration by Luke* than in the other Gospels, we find the judgment of those who rejected the Lord, and the heavenly character of the grace which, because it is grace, addresses itself to the nations, to sinners, without any particular reference to the Jews, overturning the legal principles according to which the latter pretended to be, and as to their external standing were originally called at Sinai to be, in connection with God. Unconditional promises to Abraham, etc., and prophetic confirmation of them, are another thing. They will be accomplished in grace, and were to be laid hold of by faith. After this, we find that which should happen to the Jews according to the righteous government of God; and, at the end, the account of the death and resurrection of the Lord, accomplishing the work of redemption. We must observe that Luke (who morally sets aside the Jewish system, and who introduces the Son of man as the man before God, presenting Him as the One who is filled with all the fullness of God dwelling in Him bodily, as the man before God, according to His own heart, and thus as Mediator between God and man, and center of a moral system much more vast than that of Messiah among the Jews) we must observe, I repeat, that Luke, who is occupied with these new relations (ancient, in fact, as to the counsels of God), gives us the facts belonging to the Lord's connection

with the Jews, owned in the pious remnant of that people, with much more development than the other evangelists, as well as the proofs of His mission to that people, in coming into the world — proofs which ought to have gained their attention, and fixed it upon the child who was born to them.

[* That is, as to the contents of the Gospel. In the ninth chapter His last journey up to Jerusalem begins; and thence on to the latter part of the eighteenth, where (v. 31) His going up to that city is noticed, the evangelist gives mainly a series of moral instructions, and the ways of God in grace now coming in. In verse 35 of chapter 18 we have the blind man of Jericho already noticed as the commencement of His last visit to Jerusalem.]

In Luke, I add, that which especially characterises the narrative and gives its peculiar interest to this Gospel is, that it sets before us that which Christ is Himself. It is not His official glory, a relative position that He assumed; neither is it the revelation of His divine nature, in itself; nor His mission as the great Prophet. It is Himself, as He was, a man on the earth — the Person whom I should have met every day had I lived at that time in Judea, or in Galilee.

I would add a remark as to the style of Luke, which may facilitate the study of this Gospel to the reader. He often brings a mass of facts into one short general statement, and then expatiates at length on some isolated fact, where moral principles and grace are displayed.

Many had undertaken to give an account of that which was historically received among Christians, as related to them by the companions of Jesus; and Luke thought it well — having followed these things from the beginning, and thus obtained exact knowledge respecting them — to write methodically to Theophilus, in order that he might have the certainty of those things in which he had been instructed. It is thus that God has provided for the instruction of the whole church, in the doctrine contained in the picture of the Lord's life furnished by this man of God; who, personally moved by christian motives, was directed and inspired by the Holy Ghost for the good of all believers.*

[* The union of motive and inspiration, which infidels have endeavored to set in opposition to each other, is found in every page of the word. Moreover the two things are only incompatible to the narrow mind of those who are unacquainted with the ways of God. Cannot God impart motives, and through these motives engage a man to undertake some task, and then direct

him, perfectly and absolutely, in all that he does? Even if it were a human thought (which I do not at all believe), if God approved of it, could not He watch over its execution so that the result should be entirely according to His will?

At verse 5 the evangelist begins with the first revelations of the Spirit of God respecting these events, on which the condition of God's people and that of the world entirely depended; and in which God was to glorify Himself to all eternity.

But we immediately find ourselves in the atmosphere of Jewish circumstances. The Jewish ordinances of the Old Testament, and the thoughts and expectations connected with them, are the framework in which this great and solemn event is set. Herod, king of Judea, furnishes the date; and it is a priest, righteous and blameless, belonging to one of the twenty-four classes, whom we find on the first step of our way. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron; and these two upright persons walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord (Jehovah) without blame. All was right before God, according to His law in the Jewish sense. But they did not enjoy the blessing that every Jew desired; they had no child. Nevertheless, it was according, we may say, to the ordinary ways of God in the government of His people, to accomplish His blessing while manifesting the weakness of the instrument — a weakness that took away all hope according to human principles. Such had been the history of the Sarahs, the Rebeccas, the Hannahs, and many more, of whom the word tells us for our instruction in the ways of God.

This blessing was often prayed for by the pious priest; but until now the answer had been delayed. Now, however, when, at the moment of exercising his regular ministry, Zacharias drew near to burn incense, which, according to the law, was to go up as a sweet savor before God (type of the Lord's intercession), and while the people were praying outside the holy place, the angel of the Lord appears to the priest on the right side of the altar of incense. At the sight of this glorious personage Zacharias is troubled, but the angel encourages him by declaring himself to be the bearer of good news; announcing to him that his prayers, so long apparently addressed in vain to God, were granted. Elizabeth should bear a son, and the name by which he should be called was, "The favor of the Lord," a source of joy and gladness to Zacharias, and whose birth should be the

occasion of thanksgiving to many. But this was not merely as the son of Zacharias. The child was the Lord's gift, and should be great before Him; he should be a Nazarite, and filled with the Holy Ghost, from his mother's womb: and many of the children of Israel should he turn to the Lord their God. He should go before Him in the spirit of Elias, and with the same power to re-establish moral order in Israel, even in its sources, and to bring back the disobedient to the wisdom of the just — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The spirit of Elias was a stedfast and ardent zeal for the glory of Jehovah, and for the establishment, or re-establishment by repentance, of the relations between Israel and Jehovah. His heart clung to this link between the people and their God, according to the strength and glory of the link itself, but in the sense of their fallen condition, and according to the rights of God in connection with these relationships. The spirit of Elias — although indeed the grace of God towards His people had sent him — was in a certain sense a legal spirit. He asserted the rights of Jehovah in judgment. It was grace opening the door to repentance, but not the sovereign grace of salvation, though what prepared the way to it. It is in the moral force of his call to repentance that John is here compared to Elias, in bringing back Israel to Jehovah. And in fact Jesus was Jehovah.

But the faith of Zacharias in God and in His goodness did not come up to the height of his petition (alas! too common a case), and when it is granted at a moment that required the intervention of God to accomplish his desire, he is not able to walk in the steps of an Abraham or a Hannah, and he asks how this thing can now take place.

God, in His goodness, turns His servant's want of faith into an instructive chastisement for himself, and into a proof for the people that Zacharias had been visited from on high. He is dumb until the word of the Lord is fulfilled; and the signs which he makes to the people, who marvel at his staying so long in the sanctuary, explain to them the reason.

But the word of God is accomplished in blessing towards him; and Elizabeth, recognising the good hand of God upon her with a tact that belongs to her piety, goes into retirement. The grace which blessed her did not make her insensible to that which was a shame in Israel, and which, although removed, left its traces as to man in the superhuman

circumstances through which it was accomplished. There was a rightmindedness in this, which became a holy woman. But that which is rightly concealed from man has all its value before God, and Elizabeth is visited in her retreat by the mother of the Lord. But here the scene changes, to introduce the Lord Himself into this marvelous history which unfolds before our eyes.

God, who had prepared all beforehand, sends now to announce the Savior's birth to Mary. In the last place that man would have chosen for the purpose of God — a place whose name in the eyes of the world, sufficed to condemn those who came from thence — a maiden, unknown to all whom the world recognised, was betrothed to a poor carpenter. Her name was Mary. But everything was in confusion in Israel: the carpenter was of the house of David. The promises of God — who never forgets them, and never overlooks those who are their object — found here the sphere for their accomplishment. Here the power and the affections of God are directed, according to their divine energy. Whether Nazareth was small or great was of no importance, except to show that God does not expect from man, but man from God. Gabriel is sent to Nazareth, to a virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David.

The gift of John to Zacharias was an answer to his prayers — God faithful in His goodness towards His people who wait upon Him.

But this is a visitation of sovereign grace. Mary, a chosen vessel for this purpose, had found grace in God's sight. She was favored* by sovereign grace — blessed among women. She should conceive and bring forth a son: she should call Him Jesus. He should be great, and should be called the Son of the Highest. God should give Him the throne of His father David. He should reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and His kingdom should have no end.

[* The expressions, "found favor" and "highly favored" have not at all the same meaning. Personally she had found favor, so that she was not to fear: but God had sovereignly bestowed on her this grace, this immense favor, of being the mother of the Lord. In this she was the object of God's sovereign favor.]

It will be observed here, that the subject which the Holy Ghost sets before us is the birth of the child, as He would be down here in this world, as brought forth by Mary — of Him who should be born.

The instruction given by the Holy Ghost on this point is divided into two parts: first, that which the child to be born should be; secondly, the manner of His conception, and the glory which would be its result. It is not simply the divine nature of Jesus that is presented, the Word which was God, the Word made flesh; but that which was born of Mary, and the way in which it should take place. We know well that it is the same precious and divine Savior of whom John speaks that is in question; but He is here presented to us under another aspect, which is of infinite interest to us; and we must consider Him as the Holy Ghost presents Him, as born of the virgin Mary in this world of tears.

To take first the verses 31-33.

It was a child really conceived in Mary's womb, who brought forth this child at the time which God had Himself appointed for human nature. The usual time elapsed before its birth. As yet this tells us nothing of the manner. It is the fact itself, which has an importance that can neither be measured nor exaggerated. He was really and truly man, born of a woman as we are — not as to the source nor as to the manner of His conception, of which we are not yet speaking, but as to the reality of His existence as man. He was really and truly a human being. But there were other things connected with the Person of the One who should be born that are also set before us. His name should be called Jesus, that is, Jehovah the Savior. He should be manifested in this character and with this power. He was so.

This is not connected here with the fact, "for he shall save his people from their sins," as in Matthew, where it was the manifestation to Israel of the power of Jehovah, of their God, in fulfillment of the promises made to that people. Here we see that He has a right to this name; but this divine title lies hidden under the form of a personal name; for it is the Son of man who is presented in this Gospel, whatever His divine power might be. Here we are told, "He" — the One who should be born — "should be great," and (born into this world) "should be called the Son of the Highest." He had been the Son of the Father before the world was; but this child, born on earth, should be called — such as He was down here — the Son of the Highest: a title to which He would thoroughly prove His right by His acts, and by all that manifested what He was. A precious thought to us and full of glory, a child born of a woman legitimately bears this name, "Son of the

Highest” — supremely glorious for One who is in the position of a man and really was such before God.

But other things still were connected with the One that should be born. God would give Him the throne of His father David. Here again we plainly see that He is considered as born, as man, in this world. The throne of His father David belongs to Him. God will give it Him. By right of birth He is heir to the promises, to the earthly promises which, as to the kingdom appertained to the family of David; but it should be according to the counsels and the power of God. He should reign over the house of Jacob — not only over Judah, and in the weakness of a transitory power and an ephemeral life, but throughout the ages; and of His kingdom there should be no end. As indeed Daniel had predicted, it should never be taken by another. It should never be transferred to another people. It should be established according to the counsels of God which are unchangeable, and His power which never fails. Until He delivered up the kingdom to God the Father, He should exercise a royalty that nothing could dispute; which He would deliver up (all things being fulfilled) to God, but the royal glory of which should never be tarnished in His hands.

Such should be the child born — truly, though miraculously born as man. To those who could understand His name it was Jehovah the Savior.

He should be King over the house of Jacob according to a power that should never decay and never fail, until blended with the eternal power of God as God.

The grand subject of the revelation is, that the child should be conceived and born; the remainder is the glory that should belong to Him, being born.

But it is the conception that Mary does not understand. God permits her to ask the angel how this should be. Her question was according to God. I do not think there was any want of faith here. Zacharias had constantly asked for a son — it was only a question of the goodness and the power of God to perform his request — and was brought by the positive declaration of God to a point at which he had only to trust in it. He did not trust to the promise of God. It was only the exercise of the extraordinary power of God in the natural order of things. Mary asks, with holy confidence, since God thus favored her, how the thing should be accomplished, outside the

natural order. Of its accomplishment she has no doubt (see verse 45; “Blessed,” said Elizabeth, “is she that believed.”) She inquires how it shall be accomplished, since it must be done outside the order of nature. The angel proceeds with his commission, making known to her the answer of God to this question also. In the purposes of God, this question gave occasion (by the answer it received) to the revelation of the miraculous conception.

The birth of Him who has walked upon this earth was the thing in question — His birth of the virgin Mary. He was God, He became man; but here it is the manner of His conception in becoming a man upon the earth. It is not what He was that is declared. It is He who was born, such as He was in the world, of whose miraculous conception we here read. The Holy Ghost should come upon her — should act in power upon this earthen vessel, without its own will or the will of any man. God is the source of the life of the child promised to Mary, as born in this world and by His power. He is born of Mary — of this woman chosen by God. The power of the Highest should overshadow her, and therefore that which should be born of her should be called the Son of God. Holy in His birth, conceived by the intervention of the power of God acting upon Mary (a power which was the divine source of His existence on the earth, as man), that which thus received its being from Mary, the fruit of her womb, should even in this sense have the title of Son of God. The holy thing which should be born of Mary should be called the Son of God. It is not here the doctrine of the eternal relationship of the Son with the Father. The Gospel of John, the Epistle to the Hebrews, that to the Colossians, establish this precious truth, and demonstrate its importance; but here it is that which was born by virtue of the miraculous conception, which on that ground is called the Son of God.

The angel announces to her the blessing bestowed on Elizabeth through the almighty power of God; and Mary bows to the will of her God — the submissive vessel of His purpose, and in her piety acknowledges a height and greatness in these purposes which only left to her, their passive instrument, her place of subjection to the will of God. This was her glory, through the favor of her God.

It was befitting that wonders should accompany, and bear a just testimony to, this marvelous intervention of God. The communication of the angel was not without fruit in the heart of Mary; and by her visit to Elizabeth, she goes to acknowledge the wonderful dealings of God. The piety of the virgin displays itself here in a touching manner. The marvelous intervention of God humbled her, instead of lifting her up. She saw God in that which had taken place, and not herself; on the contrary the greatness of these marvels brought God so near her as to hide her from herself. She yields herself to His holy will: but God has too large a place in her thoughts in this matter to leave any room for self-importance.

The visit of the mother of her Lord to Elizabeth was a natural thing to herself, for the Lord had visited the wife of Zacharias. The angel has made it known to her. She is concerned in these things of God, for God was near her heart by the grace that had visited her. Led by the Holy Ghost in heart and affection, the glory that belonged to Mary, in virtue of the grace of God who had elected her to be the mother of her Lord, is recognised by Elizabeth, speaking by the Holy Ghost. She also acknowledges the pious faith of Mary, and announces to her the fulfillment of the promise she had received (all that took place being a signal testimony given to Him who should be born in Israel and among men).

The heart of Mary is then poured out in thanksgiving. She owns God her Savior in the grace that has filled her with joy, and her own low estate — a figure of the condition of the remnant of Israel — and that gave occasion to the intervention of God's greatness, with a full testimony that all was of Himself. Whatever might be the piety suitable to the instrument whom He employed, and which was found indeed in Mary, it was in proportion as she hid herself that she was great; for then God was all, and it was through her that He intervened for the manifestation of His marvelous ways. She lost her place if she made anything of herself, but in truth she did not. The grace of God preserved her, in order that His glory might be fully displayed in this divine event. She recognises His grace, but she acknowledges that all is grace towards her.

It will be remarked here that, in the character and the application of the thoughts that fill her heart, all is Jewish. We may compare the song of Hannah, who prophetically celebrated this same intervention; and see also

verses 54, 55. But, observe, she goes back to the promises made to the fathers, not to Moses, and she embraces all Israel. It is the power of God, which works in the midst of weakness, when there is no resource, and all is contrary to it. Such is the moment that suits God, and, to the same end, instruments that are null, that God may be all.

It is remarkable that we are not told that Mary was full of the Holy Ghost. It appears to me that this is an honorable distinction for her. The Holy Ghost visited Elizabeth and Zacharias in an exceptional manner. But, although we cannot doubt that Mary was under the influence of the Spirit of God, it was a more inward effect, more connected with her own faith, with her piety, with the more habitual relations of her heart with God (that were formed by this faith and by this piety), and which consequently expressed itself more as her own sentiments. It is thankfulness for the grace and favor conferred on her the lowly one, and that in connection with the hopes and blessing of Israel. In all this there appears to me a very striking harmony in connection with the wondrous favor bestowed upon her. I repeat it, Mary is great inasmuch as she is nothing; but she is favored by God in a way that is unparalleled, and all generations shall call her blessed.

But her piety, and its expression in this song, being more personal, an answer to God rather than a revelation on His part, it is clearly limited to that which was necessarily for her the sphere of this piety — to Israel, to the hopes and promises given to Israel. It goes back, as we have seen, to the farthest point of God's relations with Israel — and they were in grace and promise, not law — but it does not go outside them.

Mary abides three months with the woman whom God had blessed, the mother of him who was to be the voice of God in the wilderness; and she returns to follow humbly her own path, that the purposes of God may be accomplished.

Nothing more beautiful of its kind than this picture of the intercourse between these pious women, unknown to the world, but the instruments of God's grace for the accomplishment of His purpose, glorious and infinite in their results. They hide themselves, moving in a scene into which nothing enters but piety and grace; but God is there, as little known to the world as were these poor women, yet preparing and accomplishing

that which the angels desire to fathom in its depths. This takes place in the hill country, where these pious relatives dwelt. They hid themselves; but their hearts, visited by God and touched by His grace, responded by their mutual piety to these wondrous visits from above; and the grace of God was truly reflected in the calmness of a heart that recognised His hand and His greatness, trusting in His goodness and submitting to His will. We are favored in being admitted into a scene, from which the world was excluded by its unbelief and alienation from God, and in which God thus acted.

But that which piety recognised in secret, through faith in the visitations of God, must at length be made public, and be fulfilled before the eyes of men. The son of Zacharias and Elizabeth is born, and Zacharias (who, obedient to the word of the angel, ceases to be dumb) announces the coming of the Branch of David, the horn of Israel's salvation, in the house of God's elect King, to accomplish all the promises made to the fathers, and all the prophecies by which God had proclaimed the future blessing of His people. The child whom God had given to Zacharias and Elizabeth should go before the face of Jehovah to prepare His ways; for the Son of David was Jehovah, who came according to the promises, and according to the word by which God had proclaimed the manifestation of His glory.

The visitation of Israel by Jehovah, celebrated by the mouth of Zacharias, embraces all the blessing of the millennium. This is connected with the presence of Jesus, who brings in His own Person all this blessing. All the promises are Yea and Amen in Him. All the prophecies encircle Him with the glory then to be realised, and make Him the source from which it springs. Abraham rejoiced to see the glorious day of Christ.

The Holy Ghost always does this, when His subject is the fulfillment of the promise in power. He goes on to the full effect which God will accomplish at the end. The difference here is, that it is no longer the announcement of joys in a distant future, when a Christ should be born, when a child should be brought forth, to bring in their joys in days still obscured by the distance at which they were seen. The Christ is now at the door, and it is the effect of His presence that is celebrated. We know that, having been rejected, and being now absent, the accomplishment of these things is necessarily put off until He returns; but His presence will

bring their fulfillment, and it is announced as being connected with that presence.

We may remark here, that this chapter confines itself within the strict limits of the promises made to Israel, that is to say, to the fathers. We have the priests, the Messiah, His forerunner, the promises made to Abraham, the covenant of promise, the oath of God. It is not the law; it is the hope of Israel — founded on the promise, the covenant, the oath of God, and confirmed by the prophets — which has its realisation in the birth of Jesus, of the Son of David. It is not, I again say, the law. It is Israel under blessing, not indeed yet accomplished, but Israel in the relationship of faith with God who would accomplish it. It is only God and Israel who are in question, and that which had taken place in grace between Him and His people alone.

In the next chapter (2) the scene changes. Instead of the relations of God with Israel according to grace, we see first the pagan emperor of the world — the head of Daniel's last empire — exercising his power in Emmanuel's land, and over the people of God, as though God did not know them. Nevertheless we are still in presence of the birth of the Son of David, of Emmanuel Himself; but He is outwardly under the power of the head of the beast, of a pagan empire. What a strange state of things is brought in by sin! Take special notice however that we have grace here: it is the intervention of God which makes all this manifest. Connected with it are some other circumstances which it is well to observe. When the interests and the glory of Jesus are in question, all this power — which governs without the fear of God, which reigns, seeking its own glory, in the place where Christ should reign — all the imperial glory is but an instrument in the hands of God for the fulfillment of His counsels. As to the public fact, we find the Roman emperor exercising despotic and pagan authority in the place where the throne of God should have been, if the sin of the people had not made it impossible.

The emperor will have all the world registered, and every one goes to his own city. The power of the world is set in motion, and that by an act which proves its supremacy over those who, as the people of God, should have been free from all but the immediate government of their God, which was their glory — an act which proves the complete degradation and

servitude of the people. They are slaves, in their bodies and in their possessions, to the heathen, because of their sins (see Nehemiah 9:36, 37). But this act only accomplishes the marvelous purpose of God, causing the Savior-king to be born in the village where, according to the testimony of God, that event was to take place. And, more than that, the divine Person, who was to excite the joy and the praises of heaven, is born among men, Himself a child in this world.

The state of things in Israel and in the world, is the supremacy of the Gentiles and the absence of the throne of God. The Son of man, the Savior, God manifested in the flesh, comes to take His place — a place which grace alone could find or take in a world that knew Him not.

This registration is so much the more remarkable, in that, as soon as the purpose of God was accomplished, it was carried no farther; that is to say, not till afterwards, under the government of Cyrenius.*

[* I have no doubt that the only right translation of this passage is, “The census itself was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.” The Holy Ghost notes this circumstance to show that, when once the purpose of God was accomplished, the decree was not historically carried out till afterwards. A great deal of learning has been spent on what I believe to be simple and clear in the text.]

The Son of God is born in this world, but He finds no place there. The world is at home, or at least by its resources it finds a place, in the inn; it becomes a kind of measure of man’s place in, and reception by, the world; the Son of God finds none, save in the manger. Is it for nothing that the Holy Ghost records this circumstance? No. There is no room for God, and that which is of God, in this world. So much the more perfect therefore is the love that brought Him down to earth. But He began in a manger and ended on the cross, and along the way had not where to lay His head. The Son of God — a child, partaking in all the weakness and all the circumstances of human life, thus manifested — appears in the world.*

[* That is to say, as an infant. He did not appear, like the first Adam, coming out, in His perfection, from the hand of God. He is born of a woman, the Son of man, which Adam was not.]

But if God comes into this world, and if a manger receives Him, in the nature He had taken in grace, the angels are occupied with the event on which depends the fate of the whole universe, and the accomplishment of

all the counsels of God; for He has chosen weak things to confound things that are mighty. This poor infant is the object of all the counsels of God, the upholder and heir of the whole creation, the Savior of all who shall inherit glory and eternal life.

Some poor men who were faithfully performing their toilsome labors, afar from the restless activity of an ambitious and sinful world, receive the first tidings of the Lord's presence on earth. The God of Israel did not seek for the great among His people, but had respect to the poor of the flock. Two things here present themselves. The angel who comes to the shepherds of Judea announces to them the fulfillment of the promises of God to Israel. The choir of angels celebrate in their heavenly chorus of praise all the real import of this wondrous event.

“Unto you,” says the heavenly messenger who visits the poor shepherds, “is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” This was proclaiming good tidings to them and to all the people.*

[* “All the people” (not, as in the Authorised Version, “all people”).]

But in the birth of the Son of man, God manifest in the flesh, the accomplishment of the incarnation had far deeper importance than this. The fact that this poor infant was there, disallowed and left (humanly speaking) to its fate by the world, was (as understood by the heavenly intelligences, the multitude of the heavenly host, whose praises resounded at the angel's message to the shepherds) “Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good pleasure of God] in men.” These few words embrace such widely extended thoughts, that it is difficult to speak suitably of them in a work like this; but some remarks are necessary. First, it is deeply blessed to see that the thought of Jesus excludes all that could oppress the heart in the scene which surrounded His presence on earth. Sin, alas! was there. It was manifested by the position in which this wondrous infant was found. But if sin had placed Him there, grace had placed Him there. Grace superabounds; and in thinking of Him, blessing, grace, the mind of God respecting sin, that which God is, as manifested by the presence of Christ, absorb the mind and possess the heart, and are the heart's true relief in a world like this. We see grace alone; and sin does but magnify the fullness, the sovereignty, the perfection of that grace. God, in His glorious dealings, blots out the sin with respect to which He acts, and which He

thus exhibits in all its deformity; but there is that which “much more aboundeth.” Jesus, come in grace, fills the heart. It is the same thing in all the details of christian life. It is the true source of moral power, of sanctification, and of joy.

We see next, that there are three things brought out by the presence of Jesus born as a child on the earth. First, glory to God in the highest. The love of God — His wisdom — His power (not in creating a universe out of nothing, but in rising above the evil, and turning the effect of all the enemy’s power into an occasion of showing that this power was only impotence and folly in presence of that which may be called “the weakness of God”)the fulfillment of His eternal counsels — the perfection of His ways where evil had come in — the manifestation of Himself amidst the evil in such a manner as to glorify Himself before the angels: in a word, God had so manifested Himself by the birth of Jesus, that the hosts of heaven, long familiar with His power, could raise their chorus, “Glory to God in the highest!” and every voice unites in sounding forth these praises. What love like this love? and God is love. What a purely divine thought, that God has become man! What supremacy of good over evil! What wisdom in drawing nigh to the heart of man and the heart of man back to Him! What fitness in addressing man! What maintenance of the holiness of God! What nearness to the heart of man, what participation in his wants, what experience of his condition! But beyond all, God above the evil in grace, and in that grace visiting this defiled world to make Himself known as He had never yet been known!

The second effect of the presence of Him who manifested God on the earth is, that peace should be there. Rejected — His name should be an occasion of strife; but the heavenly choir are occupied with the fact of His presence, and with the result, when fully produced of the consequences, wrapped up in the Person of Him who was there (looked at in their proper fruits), and they celebrate these consequences. Manifested evil should disappear; His holy rule should banish all enmity and violence. Jesus, mighty in love, should reign, and impart the character in which He had come to the whole scene that should surround Him in the world He came into, that it might be according to His heart who took delight therein (Proverbs 8:31).* See, as regards a smaller scale, Psalm 85:10, 11.

[* This quotation leads to a glorious apprehension, both of what was then doing, and of our blessing. The special interest of God is in the sons of men; wisdom (Christ is the wisdom of God) daily Jehovah's delight, rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth, before creation, so that it was counsel, and His delight in the sons of men. His incarnation is the full proof of this. In Matthew we have our Lord, when He takes His place with the remnant as this is, fully revealed, and it is in the Son's taking this place as man and being anointed of the Holy Ghost, that the whole Trinity is fully revealed. This is a wonderful unfolding of God's ways.]

The means of this — redemption, the destruction of Satan's power, the reconciliation of man by faith, and of all things in heaven and earth with God — are not here pointed out. Everything depended on the Person and presence of Him who was born. All was wrapped up in Him. The state of blessing was born in the birth of that child.

Presented to the responsibility of man, man is unable to profit by it, and all fails. His position thereby becomes only so much the worse.

But, grace and blessing being attached to the Person of Him just born, all their consequences necessarily flow forth. After all it was the intervention of God accomplishing the counsel of His love, the settled purpose of His good pleasure. And, Jesus once there, the consequences could not fail: whatever interruption there might be to their fulfillment, Jesus was their surety. He came into the world. He contained in His Person, He was the expression of, all these consequences. The presence of the Son of God in the midst of sinners said to all spiritual intelligence, "Peace on the earth."

The third thing was the good pleasure* the affection of God — in men. Nothing more simple, since Jesus was a man He had not taken hold of angels.

[* This is the same word as when it is said of Christ, "In whom I am well pleased." It is beautiful to see the unjealous celebration, by these holy beings, of the advancement of another race to this exalted place by the incarnation of the Word. It was God's glory, and that sufficed them. This is very beautiful.]

It was a glorious testimony that the affection, the good pleasure, of God was centered in this poor race, now far from Him, but in which He was pleased to accomplish all His glorious counsels. So in John 1 the life was the light of men.

In a word, it was the power of God present in grace in the Person of the Son of God taking part in the nature, and interesting Himself in the lot, of a being who had departed from Him, and making him the sphere of the accomplishment of all His counsels, and of the manifestation of His grace and His nature to all His creatures. What a position for man! for it is indeed in man that all this is accomplished. The whole universe was to learn in man, and in what God therein was for man, that which God was in Himself, and the fruit of all His glorious counsels, as well as its complete rest in His presence, according to His nature of love. All this was implied in the birth of that child of whom the world took no notice. Natural and marvelous subject of praise to the holy inhabitants of heaven, unto whom God had made it known! It was glory to God in the highest.

Faith was in exercise in those simple Israelites to whom the angel of the Lord was sent; and they rejoiced in the blessing fulfilled before their eyes, and which verified the grace that God had shown in announcing it to them. The word, “as it was told unto them,” adds its testimony of grace to all that we enjoy by the lovingkindness of God.

The child receives the name of Jesus on the day of His circumcision, according to Jewish custom (see chap. 1:59), but according to the counsels and revelations of God, communicated by the angels of His power. Moreover everything was performed according to the law; for historically we find ourselves still in connection with Israel. He who was born of a woman was born under the law.

The condition of poverty in which Jesus was born is also shown by the sacrifice offered for the purification of His mother.

But another point is here made prominent by the Holy Ghost, insignificant as He may apparently be who gave occasion to it.

Jesus is recognised by the godly remnant of Israel, so far as the Holy Ghost acts in them. He becomes a touchstone for every soul in Israel. The condition of the remnant taught by the Holy Ghost (that is, of those who had taken the position of the remnant) was this: They were sensible of the misery and ruin of Israel, but waited upon the God of Israel, trusting to His unchangeable faithfulness for the consolation of His people. They still said: How long? And God was with this remnant. He had made known to

those who thus trusted in His mercy the coming of the promised One, who was to be the fulfillment of this mercy to Israel.

Thus, in presence of the oppression of the Gentiles, and of the iniquity of a people who were ripening or rather ripened in evil, the remnant who trust in God do not lose that which, as we saw in the preceding chapter, belonged to Israel. In the midst of Israel's misery they had for their consolation that which promise and prophecy had declared for Israel's glory.

The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he should not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. That was the consolation, and it was great. It was contained in the Person of Jesus the Savior, without going farther into the details of the manner or the time of the accomplishment of Israel's deliverance.

Simeon loved Israel; he could depart in peace, since God had blessed Him according to the desires of faith. The joy of faith ever dwells on the Lord and on His people, but sees, in the relationship that exists between them, all the extent of that which gives rise to this joy. Salvation, the deliverance of God, was come in Christ. It was for the revelation of the Gentiles, till then hidden in the darkness of ignorance without a revelation; and for the glory of Israel, the people of God. This indeed is the fruit of the government of God in Christ, that is to say, the millennium. But if the Spirit revealed to this pious and faithful servant of the God of Israel the future which depended on the presence of the Son of God, He revealed to him that he held the Savior Himself in his arms; thus giving him present peace, and such a sense of the favor of God that death lost its terrors. It was not a knowledge of the work of Jesus acting on an enlightened and convicted conscience; but it was the fulfillment of the promises to Israel, the possession of the Savior, and the proof of the favor of God, so that the peace which flowed from thence filled his soul. There were the three things: the prophecy that announced the coming of Christ, the possession of Christ, and the effect of His presence in the whole world. We are here in connection with the remnant of Israel, and consequently find nothing of the church and of purely heavenly things. The rejection comes afterwards. Here it is all that belongs to the remnant, in the way of blessing, through the presence of Jesus. His work is not the present subject.

What a beautiful picture, and what a testimony rendered to this child, by the manner in which through the power of the Holy Ghost He filled the heart of this holy man at the close of his earthly life! Observe also what communications are made to this feeble remnant, unknown amid the darkness that covered the people. But the testimony of this holy man of God (and how sweet it is to think how many of these souls, full of grace and of communion with the Lord, have flourished in the shade, unknown to men, but well known to and beloved of God; souls who, when they appear, coming out of their retreat according to His will in testimony to Christ, bear so blessed a witness to a work of God which is carried on in spite of all that man is doing, and behind the painful and embittered scene that is unfolding on the earth!), Simeon's testimony here, was more than the expression of the deeply interesting thoughts which had filled his heart in communion between himself and God. This knowledge of Christ and of the thoughts of God respecting Him, which is developed in secret between God and the soul, gives understanding of the effect produced by the manifestation to the world of Him who is its object. The Spirit speaks of it by the mouth of Simeon. In his previous words we received the declaration of the sure fulfillment of God's counsels in the Messiah, the joy of his own heart. Now it is the effect of the presentation of Jesus, as the Messiah to Israel on the earth, which is described. Whatever may have been the power of God in Christ for blessing, He put the heart of man to the test. He should thus be, by revealing the thoughts of many hearts (for He was light), and so much the more that He was humbled in a world of pride, an occasion of falling to many, and the means of rising to many from their low and degraded condition. Mary herself, although the mother of the Messiah, should have her own soul pierced through by a sword; for her child should be rejected, the natural relationship of the Messiah to the people broken and disallowed. This contradiction of sinners against the Lord laid all hearts bare as to their desires, their hopes, and their ambition, whatever forms of piety might be assumed.

Such was the testimony rendered in Israel to the Messiah, according to the action of the Spirit of God upon the remnant, amid the bondage and misery of that people: the full accomplishment of the counsels of God towards Israel, and towards the world through Israel, for joy of heart to the faithful who had trusted in these promises, but for a test at that moment to every

heart by means of a Messiah who was a sign spoken against. The counsels of God and the heart of man were revealed in Him.

Malachi had said that those who feared the Lord in the evil days, when the proud were called happy, should often speak together. This time had arrived in Israel. From Malachi to the birth of Jesus, there was but the passage of Israel from misery to pride — a pride moreover that was dawning even in the days of the prophet. That which he said of the remnant was also being accomplished; they “spake together.” We see that they knew each other, in this lovely picture of God’s hidden people: “She spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel.” Anna, a holy widow, who departed not from the temple, and who deeply felt the misery of Israel, had besieged the throne of God with a widowed heart, for a people to whom God was no longer a husband, who were really widowed like herself, and she now makes known to all who pondered on these things together, that the Lord had visited His temple. They had looked for redemption in Jerusalem; and now the Redeemer — unknown of men — was there. What a subject of joy to this poor remnant! What an answer to their faith!

But Jerusalem was not after all the place in which God visited the remnant of His people, but the seat of pride of those who said “the temple of the Lord.” And Joseph and Mary, having performed all that which the law required, return with the child Jesus to take their place together with Him in the despised spot which should give Him its name, and in those regions where the despised remnant, the poor of the flock, had more their place, and where the testimony of God had announced that the light should appear.

There His early days were spent in the physical and mental growth of the true humanity which He had assumed. Simple and precious testimony! But He was not less conscious, when the time was come for speaking to men, of His real relationship to His Father. The two things are united in that which is said at the end of the chapter. In the development of His humanity is manifested the Son of God on earth. Joseph and Mary, who (while marvelling at all that happened to Him) did not thoroughly know by faith His glory, blame the child according to the position in which He formally stood towards them. But this gives occasion to the manifestation

of another character of perfection in Jesus. If He was the Son of God and had the full consciousness of it, He was also the obedient man, essentially and ever perfect and sinless — an obedient child, whatever sense He also had of another relationship unconnected in itself with subjection to human parents. Consciousness of the one did not injure His perfection in the other. His being the Son of God secured His perfection as a man and a child on the earth.

But there is another important thing to remark here; it is, that this position had nothing to do with His being anointed with the Holy Ghost. He fulfilled, no doubt, the public ministry which He afterwards entered on according to the power and the perfection of that anointing; but His relationship to His Father belonged to His Person itself. The bond existed between Him and His Father. He was fully conscious of it, whatever might be the means or the form of its public manifestation, and of the power of His ministry. He was all that a child ought to be; but it was the Son of God who was so. His relationship to His Father was as well known to Him, as His obedience to Joseph and to His mother was beautiful, becoming, and perfect.

Here we close this touching and divine history of the birth and early days of the divine Savior, the Son of man. It is impossible to have anything more profoundly interesting. Henceforward it is in His ministry, in His public life, that we shall find Him, rejected of men, but accomplishing the counsels and the work of God; separate from all, in order to do this in the power of the Holy Ghost, given to Him without measure, to fulfill that course with which nothing can be compared, with respect to which it would be lowering the truth to call it interesting. It is the center and the means, including His death, His offering Himself without spot to God — and the only possible means — of all relationship between our souls and God; the perfection of the manifestation of His grace, and the foundation of all relationship between any creature and Himself.

In **CHAPTER 3** we find the exercise of the ministry of the word towards Israel, and that for the introduction of the Lord into this world. It is not the promises to Israel and the privileges secured to them by God, nor the birth of that child who was heir to all the promises; the empire, itself a testimony to Israel's captivity, being an instrument for the

accomplishment of the word respecting the Lord. The years are here reckoned according to the reign of the Gentiles. Judea is a province in the hands of the Gentile empire, and the other parts of Canaan are divided under different chiefs, subordinate to the empire.

The Jewish system continues nevertheless; and the high priests were there to note the years of their subjection to the Gentiles by their names, and at the same time to preserve the order, the doctrine, and the ceremonies of the Jews, as far as could be done in their circumstances at that period.

Now the word of God is ever sure, and it is when the relationships of God with His people fail on the side of their faithfulness, that God in sovereignty maintains His relationship by means of communications through a prophet. His sovereign word maintains it when there are no other means.

But in this case Jehovah's message to His people had a peculiar character; for Israel was already ruined, having forsaken the Lord. The goodness of God had still left the people outwardly in their land; but the throne of the world was transferred to the Gentiles. Israel was now called to repent, to be forgiven, and to take a new place through the coming of the Messiah.

The testimony of God is therefore not in connection with His ordinances at Jerusalem, although the righteous submit to them. Nor does the prophet call them back to faithfulness on the ground on which they were. It is His voice in the wilderness, making His paths straight, in order that He may come, as from without, to those who repented and prepared themselves for His coming. Moreover, since it was the Jehovah Himself who came, His glory should not be confined within the narrow limits of Israel. All flesh should see the salvation wrought by God. The condition of the nation itself was that out of which God called them to come by repentance, proclaiming the wrath that was about to fall upon a rebellious people. Besides, if God came, He would have realities, the true fruits of righteousness, and not the mere name of a people. And He came in His sovereign power, which was able to raise up out of nothing that which He would have before Him. God comes. He would have righteousness as to man's responsibility, because He is righteous. He could raise up a seed unto Abraham by His divine power, and that from the very stones, if He

saw fit. It is the presence, the coming of God Himself, that here characterises everything.

Now, the axe was already at the root of the trees, and each was to be judged according to its fruits. It was in vain to plead that they were Jews; if they enjoyed that privilege, where were its fruits? But God did not accept any according to man's estimate of righteousness and privilege, nor the proud judgment the self-righteous might form of others. He addressed Himself to the conscience of all.

Accordingly the publicans, objects of hatred to the Jews, as instruments of the fiscal oppression of the Gentiles; and the soldiers, who executed the arbitrary mandates of the kings, imposed on the people by the Roman will, or that of heathen governors, were exhorted to act in accordance with that which the true fear of God would produce, in contrast with the iniquity habitually practiced in accordance with the will of man; the multitude were exhorted to practical charity, while the people, considered as a people, were treated as a generation of vipers, on whom the wrath of God was coming. Grace dealt with them in warning of judgment, but judgment was at the door.

Thus, from verses 3-14, we have these two things: in 3-6 the position of John towards the people as such, in the thought that God Himself would soon appear; in 6-14 his address to the conscience of individuals; verses 7, 8, 9 teaching them that the formal privileges of the people would afford no shelter in the presence of the holy and righteous God, and that to take refuge in national privilege was only to bring wrath upon themselves — for the nation was under judgment and exposed to the wrath of God. In verse 10 he comes to details. In verses 15-17 the question as to the Messiah is solved.

The great subject however of this passage — the great truth which the testimony of John displayed before the eyes of the people — was that God Himself was coming. Man was to repent. Privileges, granted meanwhile as means of blessing, could not be pleaded against the nature and the righteousness of Him who was coming, nor destroy the power by which He could create a people after His own heart. Nevertheless the door of repentance was open according to His faithfulness towards a people whom He loved.

But there was a special work for the Messiah according to the counsels, the wisdom, and the grace of God He baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire. That is to say, He brought in the power and the judgment which dispelled evil, whether in holiness and blessing, or in destruction.

He baptises with the Holy Ghost. This is not merely a renewal of desires, but power, in grace, in the midst of evil.

He baptises with fire. This is judgment that consumes the evil.

This judgment is thus applied to Israel, His threshing-floor. He would gather His wheat in safety elsewhere; the chaff should be burnt up in judgment.

But at length John is put in prison by the regal head of the people. Not that this event took place historically at that moment; but the Spirit of God would set forth morally the end of his testimony, in order to commence the life of Jesus, the Son of man, but born the Son of God in this world.

It is with verse 21 that this history begins, and in a manner both wonderful and full of grace. God, by John the Baptist, had called His people to repentance; and those on whom His word produced its effect came to be baptised by John. It was the first sign of life and of obedience. Jesus, perfect in life and in obedience, come down in grace for the remnant of His people, goes thither, taking His place with them, and is baptised with the baptism of John as they were. Touching and marvelous testimony! He does not love at a distance, nor merely in bestowing pardon; He comes by grace into the very place where the sin of His people had brought them, according to the sense of that sin which the converting and quickening power of their God had wrought in them. He leads His people there by grace, but He accompanies them when they go. He takes His place with them in all the difficulties of the way, and goes with them to meet all the obstacles that present themselves; and truly, as identifying Himself with the poor remnant, those excellent of the earth, in whom was all His delight, calling Jehovah His Lord; and making Himself of no reputation, not saying that His goodness extended to God, not taking His eternal place with God, but the place of humiliation; and, for that very reason, of perfection in the position to which He had humbled Himself, but a perfection that

recognised the existence of sin, because in fact there was sin, and it behoved the remnant to be sensible of it in returning to God. To be sensible of it was the beginning of good. Hence He can go with them. But in Christ, however humble grace might be, His taking that path with them was grace that wrought in righteousness; for in Him it was love and obedience, and the path by which He glorified His Father. He went in by the door.

Jesus therefore, in taking this place of humiliation which the state of the beloved people required, and to which grace brought Him, found Himself in the place of the fulfillment of righteousness, and of all the good pleasure of the Father, of which He thus became the object, as in this place.

The Father could acknowledge Him, as the One who satisfied His heart in the place where sin and, at the same time, the objects of His grace, were found, that He might give free course to His grace. The cross was the full accomplishment of this. We shall say a word on the difference when speaking of the temptation of the Lord; but it is the same principle as to Christ's loving will and obedience. Christ was here with the remnant, instead of being substituted for them and put in their place to atone for sin; but the object of the Father's delight had, in grace, taken His place with the people, viewed as confessing their sins* before God, and presenting themselves to God as concerned in them, while by this really morally out of them, and renewed in heart to confess them, without which the Lord could not have been with them, except as a witness to preach grace to them prophetically.

[* He took it in and with the godly remnant, in the act which distinguished them from the unrepentant, but was the right place of the people, the first act of spiritual life. The remnant with John is the true Jew taking his true place with God. This Christ goes with them in.]

Jesus having taken this position, and praying — appearing as the godly man, dependent on God and lifting up His heart to God, thus also the expression of perfection in that position — heaven opens to Him. By baptism He took His place with the remnant; in praying — being there — He exhibited perfection in His own relationship with God. Dependence, and the heart going up to God, as the first thing and as the expression, so to say, of its existence, is the perfection of man here below; and, in this case, of man in such circumstances as these. Here then heaven can open.

And observe, it was not heaven opening to seek some one afar from God, nor grace opening the heart to a certain feeling; but it was the grace and perfection of Jesus which caused heaven to open. As it is said, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.” Thus also it is the positive perfection of Jesus* that is the reason of heaven’s opening. Remark also here that, when once this principle of reconciliation is brought in, heaven and earth are not so far from each other. It is true that, till after the death of Christ, this intimacy must be centered in the Person of Jesus and realised by Him alone, but that comprised all the rest. Proximity was established, although the grain of wheat had to remain alone, until it should “fall into the ground and die.” Nevertheless the angels, as we have seen, could say, “Peace on earth, the good pleasure of God] in men.” And we see the angels with the shepherds, and the heavenly host in the sight and hearing of earth praising God for that which had taken place; and here, heaven open upon man, and the Holy Ghost descending visibly upon Him.

[* Remark here, Christ has no object in heaven to fix His attention on, as Stephen; He is the object of heaven. So He was to Stephen by the Holy Ghost, when heaven was open to the saint. His Person is always clearly evident, even when He puts His people in the same place with Himself or connects Himself with them. See on this Matthew.]

Let us examine the import of this last case. Christ has taken His place with the remnant in their weak and humble condition, but in it fulfilling righteousness. The entire favor of the Father rests upon Him, and the Holy Ghost comes down to seal and anoint Him with His presence and His power. Son of God, man on earth, heaven is open to Him, and all the affection of heaven is centered upon Him, and upon Him associated with His own.* The first step which these humbled souls take in the path of grace and of life finds Jesus there with them, and, He being there, the favor and delight of the Father, and the presence of the Holy Ghost. And let us always remember that it is upon Him as man while Son of God.

[* I do not speak here of the union of the church with Christ in heaven, but His taking His place with the remnant, who come to God through grace, led by the efficacy of His word, and by the power of the Spirit This is the reason I apprehend that we find all the people baptised, and then Jesus comes and is associated with them.]

Such is the position of man accepted before God. Jesus is its measure, its expression. It has these two things — the Father’s delight, and the power

and seal of the Holy Ghost; and that in this world, and known by him who enjoys it. There is now this difference, already noticed, that we look by the Holy Ghost into heaven where Jesus is, but we take His place down here.

Let us contemplate man thus in Christ — heaven open — the power of the Holy Ghost upon Him and in Him — the testimony of the Father, and the relationship of the Son with the Father.

It will be remarked that the genealogy of Christ is here traced, not to Abraham and David, that He should be the heir of the promises after the flesh, but to Adam; in order to exhibit the true Son of God a man on earth, where the first Adam lost his title, such as it was. The last Adam, the Son of God, was there, accepted of the Father, and preparing to take upon Himself the difficulties into which the sin and fall of the first Adam had brought those of his race who drew nigh to God under the influence of His grace.

The enemy was through sin in possession of the first Adam; and Jesus must gain the victory over Satan, if He would deliver those who are under his power. He must bind the strong man. To conquer him practically is the second part of the christian life. Joy in God, conflict with the enemy, make up the life of the redeemed, sealed with the Holy Ghost and walking by His power. In both these things the believer is with Jesus, and Jesus with him.

The unknown Son of God on earth, Jesus, is led (chap. 4) into the wilderness by the Holy Ghost, with whom He had been sealed, to undergo the temptation of the enemy, beneath which Adam fell. But Jesus endured this temptation in the circumstances in which we stand, not those in which Adam stood; that is to say, He felt it in all the difficulties of the life of faith, tempted in all points like as we are, sin excepted. Take notice here that it is no question of bondage to sin, but of conflict. When it is a question of bondage, it is a question of deliverance, not of conflict. It was in Canaan that Israel fought. They were delivered out of Egypt; they did not fight there.

In Luke the temptations are arranged according to their moral order: first, that which bodily need required; second, the world; third, spiritual

subtlety. In each the Lord maintains the position of obedience and of dependence, giving God and His communications to man — His word — their true place. Simple principle, which shelters us in every attack, but which, by its very simplicity, is perfection! Nevertheless let us remember that this is the case; for raising ourselves to marvelous heights is not the thing required of us, but the following that which applies to our human condition as the normal rule for its guidance. It is obedience, dependence — doing nothing except as God wills it, and reliance on Him. This walk supposes the word. But the word is the expression of the will, the goodness, and the authority of God, applicable to all the circumstances of man as he is. It shows that God interests Himself in all that regards him: why then should man act of himself without looking to God and to His word? Alas! speaking of men in general, they are self-willed. To submit and be dependent is precisely that which they will not. They have too much enmity to God to trust in Him. It was this, therefore, which distinguished the Lord. The power to work a miracle God could bestow on whom He would. But an obedient man, who had no will to do anything with respect to which the will of God was not expressed, a man who lived by the word, a man who lived in complete dependence upon God and had a perfect trust, which required no other proof of God's faithfulness than His word, no other means of certainty that He would intervene than His promise of so doing, and who waited for that intervention in the path of His will — here was something more than power. This was the perfection of man, in the place where man stood (not simply innocence, for innocence has no need of trusting God in the midst of difficulties, and sorrows, and questions raised by sin, and the knowledge of good and evil), and a perfection which sheltered one who possessed it from every attack Satan could make upon him; for what could he do to one who never went beyond the will of God, and to whom that will was the only motive for action? Moreover, the power of the Spirit of God was there Accordingly we find that simple obedience directed by the word is the only weapon employed by Jesus. This obedience requires dependence on God, and trust in God, in order to accomplish it.

He lives by the word: this is dependence. He will not tempt (that is, put God to the test) to see if He is faithful: this is trust.

He acts when God wills, and because He wills, and does that which God wills. All the rest He leaves with God. This is obedience; and, remark, not obedience as submission to God's will where there was an adverse one, but where God's will was the one motive for action. We are sanctified to the obedience of Christ.

Satan is overcome and powerless before this last Adam, who acts according to the power of the Spirit, in the place where man is found, by the means which God has given to man, and in the circumstances in which Satan exercises his power. Sin there was none, or it would have been to yield, not to conquer. It was shut out by obedience. But Satan is overcome in the circumstances of temptation in which man is found. Bodily need, which would have become lust if self-will had entered into it, instead of dependence on the will of God; the world and all its glory, which, so far as it is the object of man's covetousness, is in fact the kingdom of Satan (and it was on that ground that Satan tried to bring Jesus, and showed himself to be Satan in so doing); and, lastly, self-exaltation in a religious way through the things which God has given us — these were the points of the enemy's attack. But there was no self-seeking in Jesus.

We have found, then, in these things which we have been looking at, a man filled with the Holy Ghost, and born of the Holy Ghost on earth, perfectly well-pleasing to God and the object of His affection, His beloved Son, in the position of dependence; and a man, the conqueror of Satan amid those temptations by which he usually gains advantage over man-conqueror in the power of the Holy Ghost, and by making use of the word, as dependent, obedient, and trusting in God in the ordinary circumstances of man. In the first position, Jesus stood with the remnant; in the second, alone — as in Gethsemane and on the cross. Nevertheless, it was for us; and, accepted as Jesus, we have in a certain sense the enemy to overcome. But it is a conquered enemy whom we resist in the strength of the Holy Ghost, who is given unto us in virtue of redemption. If we resist him, he flees; for he has met his conqueror. The flesh does not resist him. He finds Christ in us. Resistance in the flesh does not lead to victory.

Jesus conquered the strong man and then spoiled his goods; but it was in temptation, obedience, having no will but that of God, dependence, the use of the word, abiding in subjection to God, that Jesus gained the victory

over him. In all this the first Adam failed. After Christ's victory, we also as servants of Christ gain actual victories, or rather the fruits of the victory already gained in the presence of God.

The Lord has now taken His place, so to speak, for the work of the last Adam — the man in whom is the Spirit without measure, the Son of God in this world by His birth. He has taken it as the seed of the woman (nevertheless, conceived of the Holy Ghost); He has taken it as the Son of God perfectly well-pleasing to God in His Person as man here below; and He has taken it as the conqueror of Satan. Owned to be the Son of God, and sealed with the Holy Ghost by the Father, heaven being open to Him as man, His genealogy is, however, traced up to Adam; and, the descendant of Adam, without sin, full of the Holy Ghost, He conquers Satan (as the obedient man, having no motive but the will of God), and sets Himself to accomplish the work which God His Father committed to Him in this world, and that as man, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

He returns, in the power of the Spirit, into Galilee,* and His fame spreads through all the region round about.

He presents Himself in this character: "The Spirit of Jehovah is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted,... to preach the acceptable year of Jehovah." Here He stops. That which follows in the prophet, respecting the deliverance of Israel by the judgment which avenges them of their enemies, is omitted by the Lord.

Now Jesus does not announce promises, but their fulfillment in grace by His own presence. The Spirit is upon this man, full of grace; and the God of grace in Him manifests His goodness. The time of deliverance is come; the vessel of His favor to Israel is there in their midst.

[* And here note, as anointed with the Holy Ghost and led by Him He goes to be tempted, and returns in the power of it. None was lost, and this power was as much shown in the apparently negative result of overcoming, as in the miraculous manifestation of power afterwards on men.]

The examination of the prophecy renders this testimony so much the more remarkable, that the Spirit, having declared the sin of the people and their judgment, in the chapters that precede these words, speaks (when introducing the Christ, the Anointed) only of grace and blessing to Israel: if

there is vengeance, it should be executed upon their enemies for the deliverance of Israel.

But here it is grace in His Person, this man, the Son of God, full of the Holy Ghost, in order to proclaim the mercy of a God who is faithful to His promises, and to comfort and lift up the bruised and the poor in spirit. Blessing was there, presenting itself before them. They could not misunderstand it, but they do not recognise the Son of God. “Is not this Joseph’s son?” We have here the whole history of Christ — the perfect manifestation of grace in the midst of Israel, His land, and His people; and they knew Him not. No prophet is accepted in his own country.

But this rejection opened the way to a grace which went beyond the limits that a rebellious people would set to it. The woman of Sarepta, and Naaman, were testimonies of this grace.

Wrath fills the heart of those who reject grace. Unbelieving, and incapable of discerning the blessing that had visited them, they will not have it go elsewhere. The pride which rendered them unable to appreciate grace would not hear of its communication to others.

They seek to destroy Jesus, but He goes on His way. Here is the whole history of Jesus among the people traced beforehand.

He went His way; and the Spirit preserves to us the acts and the cures which characterise His ministry in the aspect of the efficacy of grace, and of its extension to others besides Israel.

Power was in Him whose grace was rejected. Acknowledged by devils, if not by Israel, He expels them by a word. He heals the sick. All the power of the enemy, all the sad outward effects of sin, disappear before Him. He heals, He withdraws; and when entreated to remain (the effect of His works that procured Him that honor from the people which He did not seek), He goes away to labor elsewhere in the testimony committed to Him. He seeks to accomplish His work, and not to be honored.

He preaches everywhere among the people. He casts out the enemy, He removes sufferings, and proclaims the goodness of God to the poor.

Man, He was come for men. He will associate others (chap. 5) with Himself in this glorious work. He has a right to do it. If He is in grace a

servant, He is so according to the full power of the Holy Ghost. He works a miracle well adapted to strike those whom He would call, and which made them feel that everything was at His disposal, that all depended on Him, that where man could do nothing He could do everything. Peter, stricken in conscience by the presence of the Lord, confesses his unworthiness, but drawn by grace goes to Christ. Grace raises him up, and appoints him to speak of itself to others — to fish for men. Already it was not a preacher of righteousness among the people of God, but one who drew into His net those that were afar off. He attracted to Himself as the manifestation on earth of the power and the character of God. It was grace which was there.

He was there with the will and the power to heal that which was a figure of sin, and incurable but by the intervention of God. But God had intervened; and in grace He can say, and says, to one who acknowledged His power but doubted His will, “I will, be thou clean.”* Yet He submitted to Jewish ordinances as one obedient to the law. Jesus prayed, as a man dependent on God. This was His perfection as a man born under the law. Moreover, He must needs acknowledge the ordinances of God, not yet abrogated by His rejection. But this obedience as man became a testimony; for the power of Jehovah alone could heal leprosy, and He had healed it, and the priests were to acknowledge that which had been done.

[* If a man touched a leper, he was unclean. But here grace works, and Jesus undefilable touches the leper (God in grace, undefilable, but a man touching the defiled thing to cleanse it).]

But He brings pardon as well as cleansing. He gives a proof of this by removing all infirmity, and imparting strength to one who had none. This was not the doctrine that God could pardon. They believed that. But God had intervened, and pardon was present. They would no longer have to wait for the last day, nor for a day of judgment, to know their condition. A Nathan would not be required to come and proclaim it on the part of a God who was in heaven while His people were on earth. Pardon was come, in the Person of the Son of man come down to earth. In all this, Jesus gave proofs of the power and the rights of Jehovah. In this instance it was the fulfillment of Psalm 103:3; but, at the same time, He gives these proofs as accomplished by the power of the Holy Ghost, without measure in man, in His own Person the true Son of God. The Son of man has power on

earth to forgive sins: in fact, Jehovah was come, a man on earth. The Son of man was there before their eyes, in grace, to exercise this power — a proof that God had visited them.

In both these instances* the Lord, while displaying a power fitted to extend, and that was to extend, beyond this sphere, displays it in connection with Israel. The cleansing was a proof of the power of Jehovah in the midst of Israel, and the pardon was in connection with His government in Israel, and therefore proved itself by the perfect cure of the sick man, according to the psalm already quoted.** No doubt, these rights were not limited to Israel, but at that moment they were exercised in connection with this nation. He cleansed, in grace, that which Jehovah alone could cleanse. He pardoned that which Jehovah alone could pardon, taking away all the consequence of their sin. It was, in this sense, a governmental pardon; the power of Jehovah present, fully to restore and re-establish Israel — wherever, at least, faith could profit by it. Afterwards, we shall find pardon for peace of soul.

[* The call of Peter is more general in this respect, that it is connected with the Person of Christ. Nevertheless, although he was a fisher of men (a word used evidently in contrast with the fishes he was occupied with), he exercised his ministry more particularly with regard to Israel. But it was power in the Person of Christ that governed his heart; so that it was fundamentally, the new thing, but as yet in its connection with Israel, while extending beyond them. It is at the end of chapter 7 and in chapter 8 that we enter on ground beyond the narrow limits of Israel.]

[** Compare Job 33, 36 and James 5:14, 15 — the first outside dispensations, and James under Christianity. In Israel, it is the Lord Himself in sovereign grace.]

The call of Levi, and that which follows, shows that not only was this power of grace to extend beyond Israel, but that the old vessel was not able to bear it. It must form a vessel for itself.

We may also remark here, on the other hand, that faith is characterised by perseverance. In the consciousness of the evil, an evil without remedy, and in the assurance that One able to heal is there, it does not allow itself to be discouraged — does not put off the relief of its need. Now, the power of God was there to meet this need.

This terminates that part of the narrative which reveals, in a positive way, divine power, visiting the earth in grace, in the Person of the Son of man, and exercised in Israel, in the condition in which it found them.

That which follows characterises its exercise in contrast with Judaism. But that which we have already examined is divided into two parts, having distinct characters which deserve to be noticed. First, from chapter 4:31-41, it is the power of the Lord manifesting itself on His part, as triumphing (without any particular connection with the mind of the individual) over all the power of the enemy, whether in sickness or in possession. The power of the enemy is there: Jesus casts it out, and heals those who are suffering from it. But, secondly, His occupation is to preach. And the kingdom was not only the manifestation of a power which casts out all that of the enemy, but of a power which brought souls also into connection with God. We see this in chapter 5:1-26. Here their condition before God, — sin, and faith, are in question — in a word, all that belonged to their relationship with God.

Here, consequently, we see the authority of the word of Christ upon the heart, the manifestation of His glory (He is owned as Lord), conviction of sin, just jealousy for His glory, in the sense of His holiness which should keep itself inviolate; the soul taking God's part against itself, because it loves holiness and respects the glory of God, even while feeling the attraction of His grace; so that, owing to this, everything is forgotten — fish, nets, boat, danger: “one thing” already possesses the soul. The Lord's answer then dispels all fear, and He associates the freed soul with Himself in the grace which He had exercised towards it, and in the work which He wrought in behalf of men. It was already delivered morally from all that was around it; now, in the full enjoyment of grace, it is set free by the power of grace, and wholly given to Jesus. The Lord — perfect manifestation of God — in creating new affections by this revelation of God, separates the heart from all that bound it to this world, to the order of the old man, in order to set it apart for Himself — for God. He surrounds Himself with all that is delivered, becoming its center; and, indeed, delivers by being so.

He then cleanses the leper, which none but Jehovah could do. Still He does not come out of His position under the law; and, however great His fame,

He maintains His place of perfect dependence as man before God. The leper, the unclean, may return to God.

He next forgives. The guilty one is no longer so before God; he is pardoned. At the same time he receives strength. Nevertheless it is still the Son of man who is there. In both cases faith seeks the Lord, bringing its need before Him.

The Lord now exhibits the character of this grace in connection with its objects. Being supreme, being of God, it acts in virtue of its rights. Human circumstances do not hinder it. It adapts itself by its very nature to human need, and not to human privileges. It is not subject to ordinances,* and does not come in through them. The power of God by the Spirit was there, and acted for itself, and produced its own effects, setting aside that which was old — that to which man was attached,** and to which the power of the Spirit could not be confined.

[* Christ, born under the law, was subject to them; but that is a different thing. Here it is a divine power acting in grace.]

[** But here also the Lord, in giving the reasons why the disciples did not follow the ordinances, and the institutions, of John and of the Pharisees, connects them with the two principles already pointed out — His position in the midst of Israel, and the power of grace which went beyond its limits. The Messiah, Jehovah Himself, was among them, in this grace (in spite of their failure under the law, in spite of their subjection to the Gentiles) according to which Jehovah named Himself “I am the Lord that healeth thee.” At least, He was there in the supremacy of grace for faith. Those therefore who owned Him as the Messiah, the husband of Israel, could they fast while He was with them? He would leave them: without doubt that would be their time to fast. Moreover, secondly, it is always impossible. He could not adapt the new cloth of Christianity to the old garment of Judaism, in its nature incapable of receiving its energy, or adapting itself to grace, worn out withal as a dispensation by sin, and under which Israel was, in judgment, made subject to the Gentiles. Besides, the power of the Spirit of God in grace could not be restricted to the ordinances of the law. It would destroy them by its very strength. The call of Levi violated, and most openly, all the prejudices of the Jews. Their own fellow-countrymen were the instruments of their masters’ extortion, and reminded them in the most painful manner of their subjection to the Gentiles. But the Lord was there in grace to seek sinners. That which the Holy Ghost sets before us is the presence of the Lord, and the rights which are necessarily attached to His Person and to His sovereign grace, which had come into Israel, but necessarily went beyond its limits (setting aside, consequently, the legal system which could not receive the new thing). This is the key to all these narratives. Thus, also, in that which follows respecting the sabbath, the

one case shows the supremacy which His glorious Person gave Him over that which was the sign of the covenant itself; and the other, that the goodness of God cannot abdicate its rights and its nature. He would do good even on a sabbath-day.]

The scribes and Pharisees would not have the Lord associate with the wicked and disreputable. God seeks those who need Him — sinners — in grace.

When they ask why His disciples do not observe the customs and the ordinances of John and the Pharisees, by which they guided the legal piety of their disciples, it is that the new thing could not be subjected to the forms that belonged to that which was old, and which could not sustain the strength and energy of that which came from God. The old were the forms of man after the flesh; the new, the energy of God, according to the Holy Ghost. Moreover it was not the time for a piety that took the form of self-mortification. What else could man do? But the Bridegroom was there.

Nevertheless, man would prefer that which was old, because it was man, and not the energy of God.

The circumstances related in chapter 6:1-10 have reference to the same truth, and in an important aspect. The sabbath was the sign of the covenant between Israel and God — rest after finished works. The Pharisees blame the disciples of Christ, because they rub out the ears of corn in their hands. Now a rejected David had overleapt the barrier of the law when his need required it. For when God's Anointed was rejected and cast out, everything became in a manner common. The Son of man (Son of David, rejected like the son of Jesse, the elect and anointed king) was Lord of the sabbath; God, who established this ordinance, was above the ordinances He had established, and present in grace the obligation of man yielded to the sovereignty of God; and the Son of man was there with the rights and the power of God. Marvellous fact! Moreover the power of God present in grace did not allow misery to exist, because it was the day of grace. But this was setting aside Judaism. That was the obligation of man to God, Christ was the manifestation of God in grace to men.* Availing Himself of the rights of supreme goodness, and displaying a power that authorised His pretension to assert those rights, He heals, in a full synagogue, the man with the withered hand. They are filled with madness at this manifestation of power, which overflows and carries away

the dykes of their pride and self-righteousness. We may observe that all these circumstances are gathered together with an order and mutual connection that are perfect.**

[* This is an important point. A part in the rest of God is the distinctive privilege of saints — of God's people. Man had it not at the fall, still God's rest remained the special portion of His people. He did not get it under the law. But every distinct institution under the law is accompanied by an enforcement of the sabbath, the formal expression of the rest of the first Adam, and this Israel will enjoy at the end of this world's history. Till then, as the Lord said so blessedly, My Father worketh hitherto and I work. For us, the day of rest is not the seventh day, the end of this world's week; but the first day, the day after the sabbath, the beginning of a new week, a new creation, the day of Christ's resurrection, the commencement of a new state for man, for the accomplishment of which all creation round us waits, only we are before God in Spirit as Christ is. Hence the Sabbath, the seventh day, the rest of the first creation on human and legal ground, is always treated with rejection in the New Testament, though not set aside till judgment came, but as an ordinance it died with Christ in the grave, where He passed it — only it was made for man as a mercy. The Lord's day is our day, and precious external earnest of the heavenly rest.]

[** I may remark here that, where chronological order is followed in Luke, it is the same as in Mark and that of the events, not as in Matthew put together to bring out the object of the Gospel; only he occasionally introduces a circumstance which may have happened at another time illustrative of the subject historically related. But in chapter 9 Luke arrives at the last journey up to Jerusalem (v. 51), and, from this on, a series of moral instruction follows to chapter 18:31, chiefly, if not all, during the period of this journey, but which for the most part has little to say to dates.]

The Lord had shown that this grace — which had visited Israel according to all that could be expected from the Lord Almighty, faithful to His promises — could, nevertheless, not be confined to the narrow limits of that people, nor be adapted to the ordinances of the law; that men desired the old things, but that the power of God acted according to its own nature. He had shown that the most sacred, the most obligatory, sign of the old covenant, must bow to His title superior to all ordinance, and give place to the rights of His divine love which was in action. But the old thing was thus judged, and passing away. He had shown Himself in everything — in the calling of Peter especially — to be the new center, around which all that sought God and blessing must gather; for He was the living manifestation of God and of blessing in men. Thus God was manifested, the old order of things was worn out and unable to contain this grace, and the remnant were separated — around the Lord — from a world that saw

no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. He now acted on this basis; and if faith sought Him in Israel, this power of grace manifested God in a new way. God surrounds Himself with men, as the center of blessing in Christ as man. But He is love, and in the activity of that love He seeks the lost. None but one, and one who was God and revealed Him, could surround Himself with His followers. No prophet ever did (see John 1). None could send out with the authority and power of a divine message but God. Christ had been sent; He now sends. The name of “apostle” (sent), for He so names them, contains this deep and marvelous truth — God is acting in grace. He surrounds Himself with blessed ones. He seeks miserable sinners. If Christ, the we center of grace and happiness, surrounds Himself with followers, yet He sends also His chosen ones to bear testimony of the love which He came to manifest. God has manifested Himself in man. In man He seeks sinners. Man has part in the most immediate display of the divine nature in both ways. He is with Christ as man; and he is sent by Christ. Christ Himself does this as man. It is man full of the Holy Ghost. Thus we see Him again manifested in dependence on His Father before choosing the apostles; He retired to pray, He passes the night in prayer.

And now He goes beyond the manifestation of Himself, as personally full of the Holy Ghost to bring in the knowledge of God among men. He becomes the center, around which all must come who sought God, and a source of mission for the accomplishment of His love — the center of the manifestation of divine power in grace. And, therefore, He called around Him the remnant who should be saved. His position, in every respect, is summed up in that which is said after He came down from the mountain. He comes down with the apostles from His communion with God. In the plain* He is surrounded by the company of His disciples, and then by a great multitude, drawn together by His word and works. There was the attraction of the word of God, and He healed the diseases of men, and cast out the power of Satan. This power dwelt in His Person; the virtue that went out of Him gave these outward testimonies to the power of God present in grace. The attention of the people was drawn to Him by these means. Nevertheless we have seen that the old things, to which the multitude were attached, were passing away He surrounded Himself with hearts faithful to God, the called of His grace. Here therefore He does not,

as in Matthew, announce strictly the character of the kingdom, to show that of the dispensation which was at hand, saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, etc.; but, distinguishing the remnant, by their attachment to Himself, He declares to the disciples who followed Him that they were these blessed ones. They were poor and despised, but they were blessed. They should have the kingdom. This is important, because it separates the remnant, and puts them in relationship with Himself to receive the blessing. He describes, in a remarkable manner, the character of those who were thus blessed of God.

[* Properly ‘a level place’ on the mountain.]

The Lord’s discourse is divided into several branches.

Verses 20-26 The contrast between the remnant, manifested as His disciples, and the multitude who were satisfied with the world, adding a warning to those who stood in the place of disciples, and in that gained the favor of the world. Woe be to such! Remark also here, that it is not a question of persecution for righteousness’ sake, as in Matthew, but only for His name’s sake. All was marked by attachment to His Person.

Verses 27-36. The character of God their Father in the manifestation of grace in Christ, which they were to imitate. He reveals, note, the Father’s name and puts them in the place of children.

Verses 37, 38. This character particularly developed in the position of Christ, as He was on earth at that time, Christ fulfilling His service on earth. This implied government and recompense on God’s part, as was the case with regard to Christ Himself.

Verse 39. The condition of the leaders in Israel, and the connection between them and the multitude.

Verse 40. That of the disciples in relation to Christ.

Verses 41, 42. The way to attain it, and to see clearly in the midst of evil, is to put evil away from oneself.

Afterwards, in general, its own fruit characterised every tree. Coming around Christ to hear Him was not the question, but that He should be so

precious to their hearts that they would put aside every obstacle and practically obey Him.

Let us sum up these things which we have been considering. He acts in a power which dispels evil, because He finds it there, and He is good; and God alone is good. He reaches the conscience, and calls souls to Himself. He acts in connection with the hope of Israel and the power of God to cleanse, pardon and give them strength. But it is a grace which we all need; and the goodness of God, the energy of His love, did not confine itself to that people. Its exercise did not agree with the forms on which the Jews lived (or, rather, could not live); and the new wine must be put into new bottles. The question of the sabbath settled the question of the introduction of this power; the sign of the covenant gave way to it: He who exercised it was Lord of the sabbath. The lovingkindness of the God of the sabbath was not stayed, as if having His hands tied by that which He had established in connection with the covenant. Jesus then assembles the vessels of His grace and power, according to the will of God, around Himself. They were the blessed ones, the heirs of the kingdom. The Lord describes their character. It was not the indifference and pride that arose from ignorance of God, justly alienated from Israel, who had sinned against Him, and despised the glorious manifestation of His grace in Christ. They share the distress and pain which such a condition of God's people must cause in those who had the mind of God. Hated, proscribed, put to shame for the sake of the Son of man, who had come to bear their sorrows, it was their glory. They should share His glory when the nature of God was glorified in doing all things according to His own will. They would not be put to shame in heaven; they should have their reward there, not in Israel. "In like manner had their fathers done unto the prophets." Woe unto those that were at ease in Zion, during the sinful condition of Israel, and their rejection and ill-treatment of their Messiah! It is the contrast between the character of the true remnant and that of the proud among the people.

We then find the conduct that is suitable to the former conduct which, to express it in one word, comprises in its essential elements, the character of God in grace, as manifested in Jesus on the earth. But Jesus had His own character of service as the Son of man; the application of this to their particular circumstances is added in verses 37, 38. In 39 the leaders of Israel are set before us, and in verse 40 the portion of the disciples.

Rejected like Himself, they should have His portion; but, assuming that they followed Him perfectly, they should have it in blessing, in grace, in character, in position also. What a favor!* Moreover, the judgment of self, and not of one's brother, was the means of attaining clear moral sight. The tree good, the fruit would be good. Self-judgment applies to the trees. This is always true. In self-judgment, it is not only the fruit that is corrected; it is oneself. And the tree is known by its fruit — not only by good fruit, but by its own. The Christian bears the fruit of the nature of Christ. Also it is the heart itself, and real practical obedience, that are in question.

[* This however does not speak of nature intrinsically, for in Christ was no sin. Nor has the word used for "perfect" that sense. It is one completely thoroughly instructed, formed completely by the teaching of his master He will be like him, as his master, in all in which he was formed by him. Christ was the perfection; we grow up unto Him in all things unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (see Colossians 1:28).]

Here then the great principles of the new life, in its full practical development in Christ, are set before us. It is the new thing morally, the savor and character of the new wine — the remnant made like unto Christ whom they followed, unto Christ the new center of the movement of the Spirit of God, and of the calling of His grace. Christ has come out of the walled court of Judaism, in the power of a new life and by the authority of the Most High, who had brought blessing into this enclosure, which it was unable to acknowledge. He had come out from it, according to the principles of the life itself which He announced; historically, He was still in it.

Hence, after this, we find the Spirit acting in the heart of a Gentile (chap. 7). That heart manifested more faith than any among the children of Israel. Humble in heart, and loving the people of God, as such, for the sake of God, whose people they were, and thus raised in his affections above their practical wretched state, he can see in Jesus One who had authority over everything, even as he himself had over his soldiers and servants. He knew nothing of the Messiah, but he recognised in Jesus* the power of God. This was not mere idea; it was faith. There was no such faith in Israel.

[* We have seen this to be precisely the subject of the Holy Ghost in our Gospel.]

The Lord then acts with a power which was to be the source of that which is new for man. He raises the dead. This was indeed going beyond the pale of the ordinances of the law. He has compassion on the affliction and misery of man. Death was a burden to him: Jesus delivers him from it. It was not only cleansing a leprous Israelite, nor pardoning and healing believers among His people; He restores life to one who had lost it. Israel, no doubt, will profit by it; but the power necessary to the accomplishment of this work is that which makes all things new wherever it may be.

The change of which we speak, and which these two examples so strikingly illustrate, is brought out in treating of the connection between Christ and John the Baptist, who sends to learn from the Lord's own mouth who He is. John had heard of His miracles, and sends his disciples to learn who it was that wrought them. Naturally the Messiah, in the exercise of His power, would have delivered him from prison. Was He the Messiah? or was John to wait for another? He had faith enough to depend on the answer of One who wrought these miracles; but, shut up in prison, his mind desired something more positive. This circumstance, brought about by God, gives rise to an explanation respecting the relative position of John and Jesus. The Lord does not here receive testimony from John. John was to receive Christ upon the testimony He gave of Himself; and that as having taken a position which would offend those who judged according to Jewish and carnal ideas — a position which required faith in a divine testimony, and, consequently, surrounded itself with those whom a moral change had enabled to appreciate this testimony. The Lord, in reply to John's messengers, works miracles which prove the power of God present in grace and service rendered to the poor; and declares that blessed is he who is not offended at the humble position He had taken in order to accomplish it. But He gives testimony to John, if He will receive none from him. He had attracted the attention of the people, and with reason; he was more than a prophet — he had prepared the way of the Lord Himself. Nevertheless, if he prepared the way, the immense and complete change to be made was not itself accomplished. John's ministry, by its very nature, put him outside the effect of this change. He went before it to announce the One who would accomplish it, whose presence would bring in its power on the earth. The least therefore in the kingdom was greater than he.

The people, who had received with humility the word sent by John the Baptist, bore testimony in their heart to the ways and the wisdom of God. Those who trusted in themselves rejected the counsels of God accomplished in Christ. The Lord, on this, declares plainly what their condition is. They rejected alike the warnings and the grace of God. The children of wisdom (those in whom the wisdom of God wrought) acknowledged and gave glory to it in its ways. This is the history of the reception both of John and of Jesus. The wisdom of man denounced the ways of God. The righteous severity of His testimony against evil, against the condition of His people, showed to man's eyes the influence of a devil. The perfection of His grace, condescending to poor sinners, and presenting itself to them where they were, was the wallowing in sin and the making oneself known by one's associates. Proud self-righteousness could bear neither. The wisdom of God would be owned by those who were taught by it, and by those alone.

Thereupon these ways of God towards the most wretched sinners, and their effect, in contrast with this pharisaic spirit, are shown, in the history of the woman who was a sinner in the Pharisee's house; and a pardon is revealed, not with reference to the government of God in the earth on behalf of His people (a government with which the healing of an Israelite under God's discipline was connected), but an absolute pardon, involving peace to the soul, is granted to the most miserable of sinners. It was not here merely the question of a prophet. The Pharisee's self-righteousness could not discern even that.

We have a soul that loves God, and much, because God is love — a soul that has learnt this with regard to, and by means of, its own sins, though not yet knowing forgiveness, in seeing Jesus. This is grace. Nothing more touching than the way in which the Lord shows the presence of those qualities which made this woman now truly excellent — qualities connected with the discernment of His Person by faith. In her were found divine understanding of the Person of Christ, not reasoned out indeed in doctrine but felt in its effect in her heart, deep sense of her own sin, humility, love for that which was good, devotedness to Him who was good. Everything showed a heart in which reigned sentiments proper to relationship with God — sentiments that flowed from His presence revealed in the heart, because He had made Himself known to it. This,

however, is not the place to dwell upon them; but it is important to remark that which has great moral value, when what a free pardon really is to be set forth, that the exercise of grace on God's part creates (when received into the heart) sentiments corresponding to itself, and which nothing else can produce; and that these sentiments are in connection with that grace, and with the sense of sin it produces. It gives a deep consciousness of sin, but it is in connection with the sense of God's goodness; and the two feelings increase in mutual proportion. The new thing, sovereign grace, can alone produce these qualities, which answer to the nature of God Himself, whose true character the heart has apprehended, and with whom it is in communion; and that, while judging sin as it deserves in the presence of such a God.

It will be observed, that this is connected with the knowledge of Christ Himself, who is the manifestation of this character; the true source by grace of the feeling of this broken heart; and also that the knowledge of her pardon comes afterward.* It is grace — it is Jesus Himself — His Person — that attracts this woman and produces the moral effect. She goes away in peace when she understands the extent of grace in the pardon which He pronounces. And the pardon itself has its force in her mind, in that Jesus was everything to her. If He forgave, she was satisfied. Without accounting for it to herself, it was God revealed to her heart; it was not self-approval, nor the judgment others might form of the change wrought in her. Grace had so taken possession of her heart — grace personified in Jesus — God was so manifested to her, that His approval in grace, His forgiveness, carried everything else with it. If He was satisfied, so was she. She had all in attaching this importance to Christ. Grace delights to bless, and the soul that attaches importance enough to Christ is content with the blessing it bestows. How striking is the firmness with which grace asserts itself, and does not fear to withstand the judgment of man who despises it! It takes unhesitatingly the part of the poor sinner whom it has touched. Man's judgment only proves that he neither knows nor appreciates God in the most perfect manifestation of His nature. To man, with all his wisdom, it is but a poor preacher, who deceives himself in passing for a prophet, and to whom it is not worth while to give a little water for his feet. To the believer it is perfect and divine love, it is perfect peace if he has faith in Christ. Its fruits are not yet before man; they are before God, if Christ is

appreciated. And he who appreciates Him thinks neither of himself nor of his fruits (except of the bad), but of the One who was the testimony of grace to his heart when he was nothing but a sinner.

[* To explain the expression, “Her sins are forgiven, for she loved much,” we must distinguish between grace revealed in the Person of Jesus, and the pardon He announced to those whom the grace had reached. The Lord is able to make this pardon known. He reveals it to the poor woman. But it was that which she had seen in Jesus Himself, which, by grace, melted her heart and produced the love she had to Him — the seeing what He was for sinners like herself. She thinks only of Him: He has taken possession of her heart so as to shut out other influences. Hearing that He is there, she goes into the house of this proud man, without thinking of anything but the fact that Jesus is there. His presence answered, or prevented, every question. She saw what He was for a sinner, and that the most wretched and disgraced found a resource in Him; she felt her sins in the way that this perfect grace, which opens the heart and wins confidence, causes them to be felt; and she loved much. Grace in Christ had produced its effect. She loved because of His love. This is the reason that the Lord says, “Her sins are forgiven, because she loved much.” It was not that her love was meritorious for this, but that God revealed the glorious fact that the sins — be they ever so numerous and abominable — of one whose heart was turned to God were fully pardoned. There are many whose hearts are turned to God, and who love Jesus, that do not know this. Jesus pronounces on their case with authority — sends them away in peace. It is a revelation — and answer — to the wants and affections produced in the heart made penitent by grace revealed in the Person of Christ. If God manifests Himself in this world, and with such love, He must needs set aside in the heart every other consideration. And thus, without being aware of it, this poor woman was the only one who acted suitably in those circumstances; for she appreciated the all-importance of the One who was there. A Savior-God being present, of what importance was Simon and his house? Jesus caused all else to be forgotten. Let us remember this. The beginning of man’s fall was loss of confidence in God, by the seducing suggestion of Satan that God had kept back what would make man like God. Confidence in God lost, man seeks, in the exercise of his own will, to make himself happy: lusts, sin, transgression follow. Christ is God in infinite love, winning back the confidence of man’s heart to God. Removal of guilt, and power to live to God, are another thing, and found in their own place through Christ, as pardon comes in its place here. But the poor woman, through grace, had felt that there was one heart she could trust, if none else; but that was God’s. God is light and God is love. These are the two essential names of God, and in every true case of conversion both are found. In the cross they meet; sin is brought fully into the light, but in that by which love is fully known. So in the heart light reveals sin, that is God as light does, but the light is there by perfect love. The God who shows the sins is there in perfect love to do it. Christ was this in this world. Revealing Himself, He must be both; so Christ was love in the world, but the light of it. So in the heart. The love through grace gives confidence, and thus the light is gladly let in, and in the confidence in the love, and seeing self in the light, the heart has wholly met God’s heart: so with this poor woman. This

is where the heart of man and God always and alone meet. The Pharisee had neither. Pitch dark, neither love nor light were there. He had God manifest in the flesh in his house and saw nothing — only settled that He was not a prophet. It is a wondrous scene to see these three hearts. Man's as such resting on false human righteousness, God's, and the poor sinner's — fully meeting it as God did hers. Who was the child of wisdom? for it is a commentary on that expression. And note, though Christ had said nothing of it, but bowed to the slight, yet He was not insensible to the neglect which had not met Him with the common courtesies of life. To Simon He was a poor preacher, whose pretensions he could judge, certainly not a prophet; for the poor woman, God in love, and bringing her heart into unison with His as to her sins and as to herself, for love was trusted in. Note, too, this clinging to Jesus is where true light is found: here the fruitful revelation of the gospel; to Mary Magdalene, as to the highest privilege of saints.]

This is the new thing — grace, and even its fruits in their perfection: the heart of God manifested in grace, and the heart of man a sinner — responding to it by grace, having apprehended, or rather having been apprehended by, the perfect manifestation of that grace in Christ.

In CHAPTER 8 the Lord explains the import and the effect of His ministry; and especially, I doubt not, its effect among the Jews.

However great the unbelief, Jesus carries on His work to the end, and the fruits of His work appear. He goes to preach the good news of the kingdom. His disciples (the fruit, and the witnesses by grace, in their measure, in the same manner as Himself, of His mighty word) accompany Him; and other fruits of this same word, witnesses also by their own deliverance from the power of the enemy, and by the affection and devotedness flowing from thence by grace — a grace which acted also in them, according to the love and devotedness that attach to Jesus. Here women have a good place.* The work was strengthened and consolidated, and characterises itself by its effects.

[* It is exceedingly interesting to see the distinct place of the disciples and the women. Nor, as said above, have the women a bad place. We find them again at the cross and the sepulchre when — at any rate save John — the disciples had fled, or, even if called by the women to the sepulchre, gone home! when they saw He was raised.]

The Lord explains its true nature. He did not take possession of the kingdom, He did not seek for fruit; He sowed the testimony of God in order to produce fruit. This, in a striking way, is the altogether new thing. The word was its seed. Moreover it was the disciples only — who had

followed and attached themselves to His Person, by grace and by virtue of the manifestation of the power and grace of God in His Person — to whom it was given to understand the mysteries, the thoughts of God, revealed in Christ, of this kingdom which was not being openly established by power. Here the remnant is very clearly distinguished from the nation. To “others” it was in parables, that they might not understand. For that the Lord Himself must be received morally. Here this parable is not accompanied by others. Alone it marks out the position. The warning, which we considered in Mark, is added. Finally the light of God was not manifested in order to be hidden. Moreover everything should be made manifest. Therefore they must take heed how they heard, for, if they possessed that which they heard, they should receive more: otherwise even that should be taken from them.

The Lord puts a seal upon this testimony, namely, that the thing in question was the word, which drew to Him and to God those who were to enjoy the blessing; and that the word was the basis of all relationship with Himself, declaring, when they spoke to Him of His mother and brethren, by whom He was related to Israel after the flesh, that He acknowledged as such none others but those who heard and obeyed the word of God.

Besides the evident power manifested in His miracles the accounts that follow — to the end of chapter 8 — present different aspects of the work of Christ, and of His reception, and of its consequences.

First the Lord — although, apparently, He takes no notice — is associated with His disciples in the difficulties and storms that surround them, because they have embarked in His service. We have seen that He gathered the disciples around Himself: they are devoted to His service. As far as man’s power to avert it went, they were in imminent danger. The waves are ready to swallow them up. Jesus, in their eyes, cares nothing about it; but God has permitted this exercise of faith. They are there on account of Christ, and with Him. Christ is with them; and the power of Christ, for whose sake they are in the storm, is there to protect them. They are together with Him in the same vessel. If as to themselves they might perish, they are associated in the counsels of God with Jesus, and His presence is their safeguard. He permits the storm, but He is Himself in the vessel. When He shall awake and manifest Himself, all will be calm.

In the healing of the demoniac, in the country of the Gadarenes, we have a living picture of what was passing.

As to Israel, the remnant — however great the enemy's power — is delivered. The world beseeches Jesus to depart, desiring their own ease, which is more disturbed by the presence and power of God than by a legion of devils. He goes away. The man who was healed — the remnant — would fain be with Him; but the Lord sends him back (into the world that He quitted Himself) to be a witness of the grace and power of which he had been the subject.

The herd of swine, I doubt not, set before us the career of Israel towards their destruction, after the rejection of the Lord. The world accustoms itself to the power of Satan — painful as it may be to see it in certain cases — never to the power of God.

The next two histories present the effect of faith, and the real need with which the grace that meets it has to do. The faith of the remnant seeks Jesus to preserve the life of that which is ready to perish. The Lord answers it, and comes Himself to answer it. On the way (it is there He was, and, as to final deliverance, He is still there), in the midst of the crowd that surrounded Him, faith touches Him. The poor woman had a disease which no means at man's disposal could heal. But power is found in the Man, Christ, and comes forth from Him for the healing of man, wherever faith exists, while waiting for the final accomplishment of His mission on earth. She is healed, and confesses before Christ her condition and all that had happened to her: and thus, by means of the effect of faith, testimony is rendered to Christ. The remnant is manifested, faith distinguishes them from the multitude; their condition being the fruit of divine power in Christ.

This principle applies to the healing of every believer, and, consequently, to that of the Gentiles, as the apostle argues. Healing power is in the Person of Christ; faith — by grace and by the attraction of Christ — profits by it. It does not depend on the relationship of the Jew, although, as to his position, he was the first to profit by it. It is a question of what there is in the Person of Christ, and of faith in the individual. If there is faith in the individual, this power acts; he goes away in peace, healed by the power of God Himself.

But, in fact, if we consider in full the condition of man, it was not sickness merely which was in question, but death. Christ, before the full manifestation of the state of man, met it, so to speak, on the way; but, as in the case of Lazarus, the manifestation was allowed; and to faith this manifestation took place in the death of Jesus. Thus, here, it is permitted that the daughter of Jairus should die before the arrival of Christ; but grace has come to raise from the dead, with the divine power that alone can accomplish it; and Jesus, in comforting the poor father, bids him not to fear, but only to believe, and his daughter should be made whole. It is faith in His Person, in the divine power in Him, in the grace that comes to exercise it, which obtains joy and deliverance. But Jesus does not seek the multitude here; the manifestation of this power is only for the consolation of those who feel their need of it, and for the faith of those who are really attached to Him. The multitude know, indeed, that the maiden is dead; they bewail her, and do not understand the power of God that can raise her up. Jesus gives back to her parents the child whose life He had restored. Thus will it be with the Jews at the end, in the midst of the unbelief of the many. Meantime by faith we anticipate this joy, convinced that it is our state by grace; we live: only that for us it is in connection with Christ in heaven, the firstfruits of a new creation.

With respect to His ministry, Jesus will have this hidden. He must be received according to the testimony which He bore to the conscience and to the heart. On the way this testimony was not entirely finished. We shall see His last efforts with the unbelieving heart of man in the succeeding chapters.

In **CHAPTER 9** the Lord charges the disciples with the same mission in Israel as that which He Himself fulfilled. They preach the kingdom, heal the sick, and cast out devils. But this is added, that their work takes the character of a final mission. Not that the Lord had ceased to work, for He also sent forth the seventy; but final in this sense, that it became a definite testimony against the people if they rejected it. The twelve were to shake off the dust from their feet on leaving the cities that would reject them. This is intelligible at the point we have reached in the Gospel. It is repeated, with a yet greater force, in the case of the seventy. We shall speak of it in the chapter that relates to their being sent forth. Their mission comes after the manifestation of His glory to the three disciples.

But the Lord as long as He was here continued His exercise of power in mercy, for it was what He personally was here, and sovereign goodness in Him was above all the evil He met with.

To go on with our chapter. That which follows verse 7 shows that the fame of His marvelous works had reached the ears of the king. Israel was without excuse. Whatever little conscience there was felt the effect of His power. The people also followed Him. Gone apart with the disciples, who had returned from their mission, He is soon surrounded by the multitude; again, their servant in grace, however great their unbelief, He preaches to them and heals all who needed it.

But He would give them a fresh and very especial proof of the divine power and presence that was among them. It had been said that in the time of Israel's blessing from the Lord, when He should make the horn of David to flourish, He would satisfy the poor with bread. Jesus now does so. But there is more than this here. We have seen throughout this Gospel that He exercises this power, in His humanity, by the unmeasured energy of the Holy Ghost. Hence a marvelous blessing for us, granted according to the sovereign counsels of God, through the perfect wisdom of Jesus in selecting His instruments. He will have the disciples do it. Nevertheless the power that performs it is all His own. The disciples see nothing beyond that which their eyes can estimate. But, if He who feeds them is Jehovah, He ever takes His place Himself in the dependence of the nature He had assumed. He retires with His disciples, and there, afar from the world, He prays. And, as in the two remarkable cases* of the descent of the Holy Ghost and the selection of the Twelve, so here also His prayer is the occasion of the manifestation of His glory — glory which was due to Him, but which the Father gave Him as man, and in connection with the sufferings and the humiliation, which, in His love, He voluntarily underwent.

[* Observe also here, that it is not only in the case of acts of power, or in that of testimony to the glory of His Person in answer to His prayer, that these prayers are offered. His conversation with the disciples respecting the change in the dispensations of God (in which He speaks of His sufferings, and forbids them to make Him known as the Christ) is introduced by His prayer when He was in a desert place with them. That His people were to be given up for a time occupied His heart as much as the glory. Moreover, He pours out His heart to God, whatever may be the subject that occupies Him according to the ways of God.]

The attention of the people was excited, but they did not go beyond the speculations of the human mind with regard to the Savior. The disciples' faith recognised without hesitation the Christ in Jesus. But He was no longer to be proclaimed as such — the Son of man was to suffer. Counsels more important, a glory more excellent than that of the Messiah, were to be realised: but it should be through suffering — suffering that, as to human trials, His disciples were to share by following Him. But in losing their life for Him, they would gain it; for in following Jesus, the eternal life of the soul was the question and not merely the kingdom. Moreover He who was now rejected would return in His own glory, namely, as Son of man (the character He takes in this Gospel), in the glory of the Father, for He was the Son of God, and in that of the angels as Jehovah the Savior, taking place above them, although (yea as) man: He was worthy of this, for He created them. The salvation of the soul, the glory of Jesus acknowledged according to His rights, everything warned them to confess Him while He was despised and disallowed. Now, to strengthen the faith of those whom He would make pillars, and through them the faith of all, He announces that some of them, before they tasted death (they should neither wait for death, in which the value of eternal life would be felt, nor for the return of Christ), should see the kingdom of God.

In consequence of this declaration, eight days later He took the three who afterwards were pillars, and went up into a mountain to pray. There He is transfigured. He appears in glory, and the disciples see it. But Moses and Elias share it with Him. The saints of the Old Testament have part with Him in the glory of the kingdom founded upon His death. They speak with Him of His decease. They had heretofore spoken of other things. They had seen the law set up, or had sought to bring the people back to it, for the introduction of blessing; but now that this new glory is the subject, all depends on the death of Christ, and on that alone. Everything else disappears. The heavenly glory of the kingdom and death are in immediate relationship. Peter sees only the introduction of Christ into a glory equal to theirs; connecting the latter in his mind with that which they both were to a Jew, and associating Jesus with it. It is then that the two disappear entirely, and Jesus remains alone. It was He alone whom they were to hear. The connection of Moses and Elias with Jesus in the glory, depended

on the rejection of their testimony by the people to whom they had addressed it.

But this is not all. The church, properly so called, is not seen here. But the sign of the excellent glory, of the presence of God, shows itself — the cloud in which Jehovah dwelt in Israel. Jesus brings the disciples to it as witnesses. Moses and Elias disappear, and, Jesus having brought the disciples close to the glory, the God of Israel manifests Himself as the Father, and owns Jesus as the Son in whom He delighted. All is changed in the relationships of God with man. The Son of man, put to death on earth, is owned in the excellent glory to be the Son of the Father. The disciples know Him thus by the testimony of the Father, are associated with Him, and, as it were, introduced into connection with the glory in which the Father Himself thus acknowledged Jesus — in which the Father and the Son are found. Jehovah makes Himself known as Father by revealing the Son. And the disciples find themselves associated on earth with the abode of glory, from whence, at all times, Jehovah Himself had protected Israel. Jesus was there with them, and He was the Son of God. What a position! What a change for them! It is, in fact, the change from all that was most excellent in Judaism to connection with the heavenly glory, which was wrought at that moment, in order to make all things new.*

[* It is the display of the kingdom, not of the church in heavenly places. I suppose the words “they entered” must refer to Moses and Elias. But the cloud overshadowed the disciples. Yet it carries us beyond that display. The word “overshadowed” is the same as that used by the LXX for the cloud coming and filling the tabernacle. We learn from Matthew it was a bright cloud. It was the Shekinah of glory which had been with Israel in the wilderness — I may say the Father's house. His voice came from it. Into this they entered. It is this in Luke that makes the disciples afraid. God had talked with Moses out of it; but here they enter into it. Thus, besides the kingdom, there is the proper dwelling-place of the saints. This is found in Luke only. We have the kingdom, Moses and Elias in the same glory with the Son, and others in flesh on the earth, but the heavenly sojourn of the saints also.]

The personal profit of this passage is great, in that it reveals to us, in a very striking manner, the heavenly and glorious state. The saints are in the same glory as Jesus, they are with Him, they converse familiarly with Him, they converse on that which is nearest to His heart — on His sufferings and death. They speak with the sentiments that flow from circumstances which affect the heart. He was to die in the beloved

Jerusalem, instead of their receiving the kingdom. They speak as understanding the counsels of God; for the thing had not yet taken place. Such are the relationships of the saints with Jesus in the kingdom. For, up to this point, it is the manifestation of the glory as the world will see it, with the addition of the intercourse between the glorified and Jesus. The three were standing on the mountain. But the three disciples go beyond thus. They are taught of the Father. His own affections for His Son are made known to them. Moses and Elias have born testimony to Christ, and shall be glorified with Him; but Jesus now remains alone for the church. This is more than the kingdom, it is fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus (not understood, assuredly, at that time, but now is by the power of the Holy Ghost). It is wonderful, this entrance of the saints into the excellent glory, into the Shekinah, the abode of God; and these revelations on God's part of His own affections for His Son. This is more than the glory. Jesus, however, is always the object that fills the scene for us. Observe also for our position down here, that the Lord speaks as intimately of His death to His disciples on the earth as to Moses and Elias. These are not more intimate with Him than are Peter, James, and John. Sweet and precious thought! And mark how thin a veil there is between us and what is heavenly.*

[* Note too that if Jesus takes up the disciples to see the glory of the kingdom, and the entrance of the saints into the excellent glory where the Father was, He came down also and met the crowd of this world and the power of Satan where we have to walk.]

That which follows is the application of this revelation to the state of things below. The disciples are unable to profit by the power of Jesus, already manifested, to cast out the power of the enemy. And this justifies God in that which was revealed of His counsels on the mount, and leads to the setting aside of the Jewish system, in order to introduce their fulfillment. But this does not hinder the action of the grace of Christ in delivering men while He was yet with them, until man had finally rejected Him. But, without noticing the fruitless astonishment of the people, He insists with His disciples on His rejection and on His crucifixion; carrying this principle on to the renunciation of self, and the humility which would receive that which was least.

In the remainder of the chapter, from verse 46, the Gospel gives us the different features of selfishness and of the flesh that are in contrast with the grace and devotedness manifested in Christ, and that tend to prevent the believer from walking in His steps. Verses 46-48; 49, 50; 51-56, respectively, present examples* of this; and, from 57 to 62, the contrast between the illusive will of man and the efficacious call of grace; the discovery of the repugnance of the flesh, when there is a true call; and the absolute renunciation of all things, in order to obey it, are set before us by the Spirit of God.**

[* These three passages point out, each in succession, a more subtle selfishness less easily detected by man: gross personal selfishness, corporate selfishness, and the selfishness that clothes itself with the appearance of zeal for the Lord, but which is not likeness to Him.]

[** Observe that, when the will of man acts, he does not feel the difficulties, but he is not qualified for the work. When there is a true call, the hindrances are felt.]

The Lord (in reply to the spirit that sought the aggrandisement of their own company on earth, forgetful of the cross) expresses to the disciples that which He did not conceal from Himself, the truth of God, that all were in such wise against them that, if any one were not so, he was even thereby for them. So thoroughly did the presence of Christ test the heart. The other reason, given elsewhere, is not repeated here. The Spirit, in this connection, confines Himself to the point of view we are considering. Thus rejected, the Lord judges no one. He does not avenge Himself; He was come to save men's lives. That a Samaritan should repulse the Messiah was, to the disciples, worthy of destruction. Christ came to save the lives of men. He submits to the insult, and goes elsewhere. There were some who wished to serve Him here below. He had no home to which He could take them. Meantime, for this very reason, the preaching of the kingdom was the only thing to His unwearied love; the dead (to God) might bury the dead. He who was called, who was alive, must be occupied with one thing, with the kingdom, to bear testimony to it; and that without looking back, the urgency of the matter lifting him above all other thoughts. He who had put his hand to the plough must not look back. The kingdom, in presence of the enmity — the ruin — of man, of all that opposed it, required the soul to be wholly absorbed in its interests by the power of

God. The work of God, in the presence of Christ's rejection, demanded entire consecration.

The mission of the seventy follows in chapter 10, a mission important in its character for the development of the ways of God.

This character is, in fact, different in some respects from that of the beginning of chapter 9. The mission is founded on the glory of Christ manifested in chapter 9. This of necessity, settles the question more decisively of the Lord's relations with the Jews: for His glory came after, and, as to His human position, was the result of His rejection by the nation.

This rejection was not yet accomplished: this glory was only revealed to three of His disciples; so that the Lord still exercised His ministry among the people. But we see these alterations in it. He insists on that which is moral and eternal, the position into which it would bring His disciples, the true effect of His testimony in the world, and the judgment about to fall upon the Jews. Nevertheless the harvest was great. For love, unchilled by sin, saw the need through the outward opposition; but there were few moved by this love. The Lord of the harvest alone could send forth true laborers.

Already the Lord announces that they are as lambs among wolves. What a change from the presentation of the kingdom to the people of God! They were to trust (like the twelve) to the care of the Messiah present on the earth, and who influenced the heart with divine power. They were to go as the Lord's laborers, openly avowing their object, not toiling for their food, but as having claims on His part. Wholly devoted to their work, they were to salute no one. Time pressed. Judgment was coming. There were those in Israel who were not children of peace. The remnant would be distinguished by the effect of their mission on the heart, not yet judicially. But peace should rest on the children of peace. These messengers exercised the power gained by Jesus over the enemy, and which He could thus bestow (and this was much more than a miracle); and they were to declare unto those whom they visited that the kingdom of God had come nigh unto them. Important testimony! When the judgment was not executed, it required faith to recognise it in a testimony. If they were not received, they were to denounce the city, assuring them that, received or not, the kingdom of God

had come nigh. What a solemn testimony, now that Jesus was going to be rejected — a rejection that filled up the measure of man's iniquity! It would be more tolerable for infamous Sodom, in the day that judgment should be executed, than for that city.

This clearly points out the character of the testimony. The Lord denounces* the cities in which He had wrought, and assures His disciples that to reject them in their mission was the same thing as to reject Him, and that, in rejecting Him, He who had sent Him was rejected — the God of Israel — the Father. On their return they announce the power that had accompanied their mission; demons were subject to their word. The Lord replies that in effect these tokens of power had made present to His mind the full establishment of the kingdom — Satan cast out entirely from heaven (an establishment of which these miracles were only a sample); but that there was something more excellent than this, and in which they might rejoice — their names were written in heaven. The power manifested was true, its results sure, in the establishment of the kingdom but something else was beginning to appear — a heavenly people were dawning, who should have their portion with Him, whom the unbelief of the Jews and of the world was driving back to heaven.

[* In verse 25 of this chapter, as well as in chapter 13:34, we have examples of the moral order in Luke, of which we have spoken (p. 232). The testimonies of the Lord are perfectly in place. They are of infinite assistance in understanding the whole connection of the passage, and their position here throws great light on their own meaning. Historical order is not the question here. The position taken by Israel — by the disciples — by all, through the rejection of Christ, is the subject of which the Holy Ghost treats. These passages relate to it, and show very plainly the condition of the people who had been visited by Jesus, their true character, the counsels of God in bringing in the heavenly things through the fall of Israel, and the connection between the rejection of Christ and the introduction of the heavenly things, and of eternal life, and of the soul. Nevertheless the law was not broken. In fact its place was taken by grace, which, outside the law, did that which could not be done through the law. We shall see this in going on with our chapter.]

This very clearly unfolds the position now taken. The testimony of the kingdom rendered in power, leaving Israel without excuse, Jesus passed into another position — into the heavenly one. This was the true subject of joy. The disciples, however, did not yet understand it. But the Person and the power of Him who was to introduce them into the heavenly glory

of the kingdom, His right to the glorious kingdom of God, have been revealed to them by the Father. The blinding of human pride, and the Father's grace towards babes, became Him, who fulfilled the counsels of His sovereign grace through the humiliation of Jesus, and were in accordance with His heart who came to fulfill them. Moreover all things were given to Jesus. The Son was too glorious to be known, save by the Father, who was Himself only known by the revelation of the Son. To Him must men come. The root of the difficulty in receiving Him lay in the glory of His Person, who was known only to the Father, and this action and glory of the Father, which needed the Son Himself to reveal it. All this was in Jesus there on earth. But He could tell His disciples in private that, having seen in Him the Messiah and His glory, they had seen that which kings and prophets had in vain desired to see. The Father had been proclaimed to them, yet they but little understood it. In the mind of God it was their portion, realised afterwards by the presence of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of adoption.

We may remark here, the power of the kingdom bestowed on the disciples; their enjoyment at that moment (by the presence of the Messiah Himself, bringing with Him the power of the kingdom which overthrew that of the enemy) of the sight of those things of which the prophets had spoken; at the same time the rejection of their testimony, and the judgment of Israel among whom it was rendered; and, finally, the call of the Lord (while acknowledging in their work all the power that shall establish the kingdom) to rejoice, not in the kingdom thus established on earth, but in that sovereign grace of God who, in His eternal counsels, had granted them a place and a name in heaven, in connection with their rejection on earth. The importance of this chapter is evident in this point of view. Luke constantly brings in the better and unseen part in a heavenly world.

The extent of the dominion of Jesus in connection with this change, and the revelation of the counsels of God that accompanied it, are given us in verse 22, as well as the discovery of the relationships and the glory of the Father and of the Son; at the same time also the grace shown to the humble according to the character and the rights of God the Father Himself. Afterwards we find the development of the change as to moral character. The teacher of the law desires to know the conditions of eternal life. This is not the kingdom, nor heaven, but a part of the Jewish apprehension of

the relationship of man with God. The possession of life was proposed to the Jews by the law. It had, by scriptural developments subsequent to the law, been discovered to be eternal life, which they then, at least the Pharisees, attached as such to the observance of that law — a thing possessed by the glorified in heaven, by the blessed on earth during the millennium, which we now possess in earthen vessels; which the law, as interpreted by conclusions drawn from the prophetic books, proposed as the result of obedience:* “The man that doeth these things shall live by them.”

[* It is to be remarked, that the Lord never used the word eternal life in speaking of the effect of obedience. “The gift of God is eternal life.” If they had been obedient, that life might have been endless; but in fact and truth, now that sin had entered, obedience was not the way to have eternal life, and the Lord does not so state it.]

The lawyer therefore asks what it is that he must do. The answer was plain: the law (with all its ordinances, its ceremonies, all the conditions of God’s government, which the people had broken, and the violation of which led to the judgment announced by the prophets — judgment that should be followed by the establishment, on God’s part, of the kingdom in grace)the law, I say, contained the kernel of the truth in this respect, and distinctly expressed the conditions of life, if man was to enjoy it according to human righteousness — righteousness wrought by himself, by which he himself should live. These conditions were summed up in a very few words — to love God perfectly, and one’s neighbor as oneself. The lawyer giving this summary, the Lord accepts it and repeats the words of the Lawgiver: “This do, and thou shalt live.” But man has not done it and is conscious that he has not. As to God he is far away; man easily gets rid of Him; he will render Him some outward services and make his boast in them. But man is near; his selfishness makes him alive to the performance of this precept, which, if observed, would be his happiness — make this world a kind of paradise. Disobedience to it is repeated every moment, in the circumstances of each day, which bring this selfishness into play. All that surrounds him (his social ties) makes man conscious of these violations of this precept, even when the soul would not of itself be troubled about it. Here the lawyer’s heart betrays itself. Who, he asks, is my neighbor?

The Lord's answer exhibits the moral change which has taken place through the introduction of grace — through the manifestation of this grace in man, in His own Person. Our relationships with one another are now measured by the divine nature in us, and this nature is love. Man under the law measured himself by the importance he could attach to himself, which is always the opposite of love. The flesh gloried in a nearness to God which was not real, which did not belong to participation in His nature. The priest and the Levite pass by on the other side. The Samaritan, despised as such, did not ask who was his neighbor. The love that was in his heart made him a neighbor to any one who was in need. This is what God Himself did in Christ; but then legal and carnal distinctions disappeared before this principle. The love that acted according to its own impulses found the occasion of its exercise in the need that came before it.

Here ends this part of the Lord's discourses. A new subject begins in verse 38.

From that verse to the end of verse 13 in chapter 11 the Lord makes known to His disciples the two great means of blessing — the word and prayer. In connection with the word, we find the energy that attaches itself to the Lord, in order to receive it from Himself, and that leaves everything in order to hear His word, because the soul is laid hold of by the communications of God in grace. We may remark that these circumstances are connected with the change that had been wrought at that solemn moment. The reception of the word takes the place of the attentions that were due to the Messiah. These attentions were demanded by the presence of a Messiah on the earth; but, seeing the condition man was in (for he rejected the Savior), he needed the word; and Jesus, in His perfect love, will have nothing else. For man, for the glory of God, but one thing was needful; and it is that which Jesus desires. As to Himself, He would go without everything for that. But Martha, though preparing for the Lord, which was right surely, yet shows how much self is inherent in this kind of care; for she did not like to have all the trouble of it.

The prayer which He taught His disciples (chap. 11) has respect also to the position into which they came before the gift of the Holy Ghost.* Jesus Himself prayed, as the dependent man on earth. He had not yet received the promise of the Father, in order to pour it out on His disciples,

and could not till His ascension into heaven. These, however, are in relationship with God as their Father. The glory of His name, the coming of His kingdom, were to occupy their first thoughts. They depended on Him for their daily bread. They needed pardon, and to be kept from temptation. The prayer comprised the desire of a heart true to God; the need of the body committed to their Father's care; the grace required for their walk when they had sinned, and in order that their flesh should not manifest itself, that they might be saved from the power of the enemy.

[* The desire to have a form of prayer given by the Lord has led to a corruption of the text here, recognised by all who have seriously inquired into it (the object being to conform the prayer here to that given in Matthew). It runs thus: "Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, give us each day our needed bread, and forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us, and lead us not into temptation."

The Lord then dwells on perseverance, that petitions should not be those of a heart indifferent to the result. He assures them that their prayers should not be in vain; also, that their heavenly Father would give the Holy Spirit to those that asked Him. He puts them into His own relationship on earth with God. Harkening to God, applying to Him as a Father — it is the whole of practical christian life.

Afterwards the two great weapons of His testimony are shown forth, namely, casting out demons, and the authority of His word. He had manifested the power that cast out demons; they attributed it to the prince of the demons. Nevertheless He had bound the strong man; He had spoiled his goods; and this proved that the kingdom of God was indeed come. In such a case as this, God being come to deliver man, everything took its true place; everything was either of the devil, or of the Lord. Moreover, if the unclean spirit had gone out and God was not there, the wicked spirit would come back with others more wicked than himself; and the last state is worse than the first.

These things were taking place at that time. But miracles were not all. He had proclaimed the word. A woman, sensible to the joy of having a son like Jesus, declares aloud the value of such a relationship to Him after the flesh; the Lord puts this blessing, as He did in the case of Mary, on those who heard and kept His word. The Ninevites had hearkened to Jonah, the queen of Sheba to Solomon, without even one miracle being wrought; and a

greater than Jonah was now among them. There were two things there — the testimony plainly set forth (v. 33), and the motives which governed those that heard it. If the true light shone fully into the heart, there remained no darkness in it. If the perfect truth was presented according to God's own wisdom, it was the heart that rejected it. The eye was evil. The notions and motives of a heart at a distance from God only darkened it: a heart that had but one object, God and His glory, would be full of light. Moreover light does not merely display itself, it enlightens all around it. If God's light were in the soul, it would be full of it and no part dark.

Verses 37-52. Invited to the Pharisee's house, He judges the condition of the nation, and the hypocrisy of its pretended righteousness, putting His finger on the whited show and inward covetousness and self-seeking, the making God's law burdensome to others, while neglecting the fulfillment of it themselves, announcing the mission of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, the rejection of whom would fill up the measure of Israel's iniquity, and bring to a final test those who hypocritically built the tombs of the prophets their fathers had killed. And then all the blood, with respect to which God had exercised His long-suffering, sending testimonies to enlighten the people, and which had been shed on account of those testimonies, should at length be required at the hand of the rebels. The Lord's words did but stir up the malice of the Pharisees, who sought to entangle Him in His talk. In a word we have, on one side, the word of the testimony set in full relief, in place of the Messiah fulfilling the promises; and, on the other, the judgment of a nation that had rejected both, and would also reject even that which should afterwards be sent to bring them back.

CHAPTER 12 puts the disciples into this place of testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost, and with the world opposed to them, after the Lord's departure. It is the word and the Holy Ghost, instead of the Messiah on the earth. They were neither to fear opposition, nor to trust in themselves, but to fear God and trust to His help; and the Holy Ghost would teach them what to say. All things should be revealed. God reaches the soul: man can only touch the body. Here that which goes beyond present promises, the connection of the soul with God, is put forward. It is coming out from Judaism to be before God. Their calling was to manifest God in the world at all costs — to manifest Him to faith before all things were made

manifest. It might cost them dear before men: Jesus would confess them before angels. It is bringing the disciples into the light as God is in it, and the fear of God by the word and faith when the power of evil was present; all that evil, however secret, would be brought to light.

Nor this only. Blasphemy against the witness given would, in their case, be worse than blaspheming Christ. This might be forgiven (it has been indeed, and will be at the end to the Jews as a nation); but whosoever spoke in blasphemy against the testimony of the disciples blasphemed against the Holy Ghost. It should not be forgiven. But the Lord deals with their heart as well as with their conscience. He encourages them by three things: 1st, the protection of Him who counted the hairs of their head, whatever might be the trials of their faith; 2nd, the fact that, in heaven and before the angels, their faithfulness to Christ in this painful mission should be acknowledged by Him; and 3rd, the importance of their mission, its rejection being more fatally condemning than the rejection of Christ Himself. God had taken a step, and a final step, in His grace and in His testimony. The bringing to light of all things, the care of God, their being confessed by Christ in heaven, the power of the Holy Ghost with them — these are the motives and the encouragements here given to the disciples for their mission after the Lord's departure.

That which follows brings out yet more distinctly the position in which the disciples were placed, according to the counsels of God, by the rejection of Christ (v. 13). The Lord formally refuses to execute justice in Israel. This was not His place. He deals with souls, and directs their attention to another life which outlasts the present; and, instead of dividing the inheritance between the brothers, He warns the multitude to beware of covetousness, instructing them by the parable of the rich man who was suddenly called hence in the midst of his projects. What became of his soul?

But, having established this general basis, He turns to His disciples and teaches them the great practical principles that were to guide their walk. They were not to think of the morrow, but to trust in God. Moreover they had no power over it. Let them seek the kingdom of God, and all that they needed should be added. This was their position in the world that rejected Him. But besides the Father's heart was interested in them: they were to

fear nothing. It was the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. Strangers and pilgrims here, their treasure was to be in heaven; and thus their heart would be there also.* Besides this, they were to wait for the Lord. Three things were to influence their souls: the Father would give them the kingdom, their heart's treasure in heaven, and the expectation of the Lord's return. Until the Lord should come, they were required to watch — to have their lamps burning; their whole position should manifest the effect of the continual expectation of the Lord — should express this expectation. They were to be as men who waited for Him with their loins girded; and in that case, when all should be according to the Lord's own heart, re-established by His power, and they brought into His Father's house, He would make them sit down, and, in His turn, gird Himself to serve them.

[* Observe here, that the heart follows the treasure. It is not, as men say, where your heart is, your treasure is — my heart is not in it; but “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

It is of all importance to fix the attention of the reader on the point, that what the Lord looks for here is not the holding, however clearly, the Lord's coming at the end of the age, but that the Christian should be waiting for Him, in a full profession of Christ, and his heart in spiritual order. Such, the Lord will make to sit down as guests, but such for ever, in His Father's house where He has brought them, and will Himself in love minister the blessing. This love will make the blessings ten thousand fold more precious, all received from His hand. Love likes to serve, selfishness to be served. But He did not come to be ministered to. This love He will never give up.

Nothing can be more exquisite than the grace expressed in these verses, 35 and 37.*

[* Here we have the heavenly portion of those who wait for the Lord during His absence. It is the character of the we disciple in his heavenly aspect, as service in his place on earth. Observe also that the Lord was a servant down here. According to John 13 He becomes a servant on ascending to heaven, an Advocate, to wash our feet. In this place He makes Himself a servant for our blessing in heaven. In Exodus 21, if the servant who had fulfilled his service did not wish to go out free, he was brought to the judges, and was fastened to the door by an awl which bored his ear in token of perpetual bondage. Jesus had perfectly accomplished His service to His Father at the end of His life on earth. In Psalm 40 His “ears were digged” (that is, a body prepared,

which is the position of obedience: compare Philippians 2). This is the incarnation. Now His service was finished in His life on earth as man, but He loved us too much — He loved His Father too much in the character of servant — to give it up; and at His death His ear, according to Exodus 21, was bored, and He became servant for ever — a man for ever — now to wash our feet; hereafter in heaven, when He shall take us to Himself according to the passage we are considering. What a glorious picture of the love of Christ.]

On the inquiry of Peter, desirous of knowing to whom Jesus addressed these instructions, the Lord refers him to the responsibility of those to whom He committed duties during His absence. Thus we have the two things that characterise the disciples after the rejection of Christ — the expectation of His return, and service. The expectation, the vigilance that watches with girded loins to receive Him, finds its reward in rest, and in the feast (happiness ministered by Him) at which Jesus girds Himself to serve them; faithfulness in service, by having rule over all that belongs to the Lord of glory. We have seen, besides these special relationships between the walk of the disciples and their position in the world to come, the general truth of the renunciation of the world in which the Savior had been rejected, and the possession of the kingdom by the gift of the Father.

In that which He says afterwards of the service of those who bear His name during His absence, the Lord also points out those who will be in this position, but unfaithful; thus characterising those who, while publicly exercising ministry in the church, should have their portion with the unbelievers. The secret of the evil that characterises their unbelief would be found in this, that their hearts would put off the return of Jesus, instead of desiring it and hastening it by their aspirations, and serving with humility in the desire of being found faithful. They will say, He is not coming immediately; and, in consequence, they will do their own will, accommodate themselves to the spirit of the world, and assume authority over their fellow-servants. What a picture of that which has taken place! But their Master (for He was so, although they had not truly served Him) would come at a moment when they did not expect Him, as a thief in the night; and, although professing to be His servants, they should have their portion with unbelievers. Nevertheless there would be a difference between the two; for the servant who knew his own Master's will and did not make ready for Him, as the fruit of his expectations, and did not perform his Master's will, should be severely punished; whilst he who had

not the knowledge of His will should be punished less severely. I have added “own” to the word “Master,” according to the original, which signifies a recognised relationship with the Lord, and its consequent obligation. The other was ignorant of the explicit will of the Lord, but he committed the evil which in any case he ought not to have done. It is the history of true and false servants of Christ, of the professing church, and of the world in general. But there cannot be a more solemn testimony as to what brought unfaithfulness into the church, and led to its ruin and approaching judgment, namely, the giving up the present expectation of the Lord’s coming.

If it shall be required of persons according to their advantages, who will be so guilty as those that call themselves the ministers of the Lord, if they do not serve Him as in expectation of His return?

Nevertheless the Lord, thus rejected, was come to bring conflict and fire on the earth. His presence kindled it even before His rejection, in the baptism of death through which He was to pass, was accomplished. It was not, however, till after this that His love would have full liberty to develop itself in power. Thus His heart, which was love even according to the infinitude of the Godhead, was straitened until the atonement gave free course to it, and to the accomplishment of all the purposes of God, in which His power should be manifested according to that love, and to which this atonement was absolutely necessary as the basis of the reconciliation of all things in heaven and earth.*

[* It is blessed to see here how, let evil in man be what it may, it after all leads to the accomplishment of the counsels of His grace. The unbelief of man drove back divine love into the heart of Christ, unweakened surely, but unable to flow forth and express itself; but its full effect on the cross made it flow forth unhindered, in grace that reigns through righteousness, to the vilest. It is a singularly interesting and blessed passage.]

Verse 51-53. He shows in detail the divisions that would be the result of His mission. The world would no more endure faith in the Savior than it did the Savior Himself, who was its object and whom it confessed. It is well to note how the presence of the Savior draws out the evil of the human heart. The state described here is in Micah, the description of the most dreadful state of evil conceivable (Micah 7:1-7).

He then addresses Himself to the people, to warn them of the existing signs of the times in which they lived. He puts this testimony on a twofold ground: the evident signs which God gave; and the moral proofs which, even without the signs, conscience ought to acknowledge, and which thus oblige them to receive the testimony.

Be they ever so blind, they are in the way to the judge. Once delivered up, they should not come out till the chastisement of God was fully executed upon them.* (compare Isaiah 40:2).

[* Let us here, in a note, sum up the contents of these two chapters, that we may better understand the instruction they contain. In the first (12) the Lord speaks, in order to detach the thoughts of all from this world — to the disciples, by directing them to Him who had power over the soul as well as the body, and encouraging them with the knowledge of their Father's faithful care, and His purposes to give them the kingdom; meanwhile they were to be strangers and pilgrims, without anxiety as to all that happened around them — to the multitude, by showing them that the most prosperous man could not secure one day of life. But He adds something positive. His disciples were to expect Him from day to day, constantly. Not only should heaven be their portion, but there they should possess all things. They shall sit at meat, and He Will Himself serve them. This is the heavenly portion of the church at the Lords return. In service until He comes — service that requires incessant watchfulness; it will then be His turn to serve them. We next have their inheritance, and the judgment of the professing church and of the world. His teaching produced division, instead of establishing the kingdom in power. But He must die. This leads to another subject — the present judgment of the Jews. They were on the road, with God, towards judgment (chap. 13). The government of God would not manifest itself by distinguishing the wicked in Israel through partial judgments. All should perish, unless they repented. The Lord was cultivating the fig-tree for the final year; if the people of God did not bring forth fruit, it spoilt His garden. To make a pretense of the law in opposition to a God present with them (even He who had given them the law) was hypocrisy. The kingdom was not to be established by the manifestation on earth of the King's power. It should grow from a little seed until it became an immense system of power in the earth, and a doctrine which, as a system, should penetrate the whole mass. On inquiry being made whether the remnant was numerous, He insists upon entrance by the narrow gate of conversion, and of faith in Himself; for many would seek to enter into the kingdom and not be able: when once the Master of the house had risen up and shut the door (that is, Christ being rejected of Israel), in vain should they say that He had been in their cities. Workers of iniquity should not enter into the kingdom. The Lord is speaking here entirely of the Jews. They shall see the patriarchs, the prophets — Gentiles even from all parts — in the kingdom, and themselves outside. Nevertheless the accomplishment of the rejection of Christ did not depend on the will of man, of the false king who sought, by the Pharisees' account, to get rid of Him. The purposes of God, and alas! the iniquity of man, were

fulfilled together. Jerusalem was to fill up the measure of her iniquity. It could not be that a prophet should perish except at Jerusalem. But then the putting man to the proof in his responsibility closes in the rejection of Jesus. He speaks, in touching and magnificent language, as Jehovah Himself. How many times this God of goodness would have gathered the children of Zion under His wings, and they would not! As far as depended on the will of man, it was complete separation and desolation. And in fact it was so. All was over now for Israel with Jehovah, but not for Jehovah with Israel. It was the prophet's part to reckon on the faithfulness of his God and — assured that this could not fail, and that, if judgments came, it would only be for a time — to say, "How long?" (Isaiah 6:11; Psalm 79:5). Distress is complete when there is no faith, no one to say, "How long?" (Psalm 74:9). But here the great Prophet Himself is rejected. Nevertheless asserting His rights of grace, as Jehovah, He declares to them, unasked, the end of their desolation. "Ye shall not see me until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." This sudden manifestation of the rights of His divinity, and of His divinity itself, in grace, when as to their responsibility all was lost in spite of His gracious culture, is surpassingly beautiful. It is God Himself who appears at the end of all His dealings. We see from this recapitulation that chapter 12 gives us the heavenly portion of the church, heaven, and the life to come; chapter 13 adding to it (with verses 54-59 of chapter 17) the government of Israel and of the earth, with the outward form of that which should replace it here below.]

Now, at this moment (chap. 13) they reminded Him of a terrible judgment that had fallen upon some among them. He declares to them that neither this case, nor another which He recalls to their minds, is exceptional: that except they repent, the same thing should happen to them all. And He adds a parable in order to make them understand their position. Israel was the fig-tree in the vineyard of God. For three years He had been threatening to cut it down; it did but spoil His vineyard — did but encumber and uselessly cover the ground. But Jesus was trying for the last time all that could be done to make it bear fruit; if this did not succeed, grace could but make way for the just judgment of the Master of the vineyard. Why cultivate that which only did harm?

Nevertheless He acts in grace and in power towards the daughter of Abraham, according to the promises made to that people, and demonstrates that their resistance, pretending to oppose the law to grace, was but hypocrisy.

However (v. 18-21) the kingdom of God was to take an unexpected form in consequence of His rejection. Sown by the word, and not introduced in power, it would grow on the earth until it became a worldly power; and, as

an outward profession and doctrine, would penetrate the whole sphere prepared for it in the sovereign counsels of God. Now this was not the kingdom established in power acting in righteousness, but as left to the responsibility of man, although the counsels of God were being accomplished.

At last, the Lord takes up, in a direct manner, the question of the position of the remnant and of the fate of Jerusalem (v. 22-35).

As He went through the cities and villages, fulfilling the work of grace, in spite of the contempt of the people, some one asked Him whether the remnant, those that would escape the judgment of Israel, should be many. He does not reply as to the number; but addresses Himself to the conscience of the inquirer, urging him to put forth all his energy that he might enter in at the strait gate. Not only would the multitude not enter in, but many, neglecting that gate, would desire to enter into the kingdom and not be able. And moreover, when once the master of the house was risen up, and the door was shut, it would be too late. He would say unto them, "I know you not, whence ye are." They would plead that He had been in their city. He would declare that He knew them not, workers of iniquity: there was "no peace for the wicked." The gate of the kingdom was moral, real before God — conversion. The multitude of Israel would not go in at it; and outside, in tears and anguish, they should see the Gentiles sitting with the depositaries of the promises; while they, the children of the kingdom, according to the flesh, were shut out, and so much the more miserable that they had been nigh unto it. And those who had appeared to be first should be the last, and the last first.

The Pharisees, under pretense of consideration for the Lord, advise Him to go away. Thereupon He refers finally to the will of God as to the fulfillment of His work. It was no question of the power of man over Him. He should accomplish His work, and then go away; because Jerusalem had not known the time of her visitation. Himself, her true Lord, Jehovah, how often would He have gathered the children of this rebellious city under His wings, and they would not! Now His last effort in grace was accomplished, and their house left desolate, until they should repent, and, returning to the Lord, say according to Psalm 111, "Blessed is he that

cometh in the name of the Lord.” Then He would appear, and they should see Him.

Nothing can be plainer than the connection and the force of these conversations. For Israel it was the last message, the last visitation of God. They rejected it. They were forsaken of God (though still beloved) until they should call upon Him whom they had rejected. Then this same Jesus would appear again, and Israel should see Him. This would be the day that the Lord had made.

His rejection — admitting the establishment of the kingdom as a tree and as leaven, during His absence — bore its fruit among the Jews until the end; and the revival amid that nation in the last days, and the return of Jesus on their repentance, will have reference to that great act of sin and rebellion. But this gives rise to further important instructions with regard to the kingdom.

Some moral details are unfolded in the next chapter (14).* The Lord, being invited to eat with a Pharisee, vindicates the rights of grace over that which was the seal of the old covenant, judging the hypocrisy which at any rate broke the sabbath when their own interest was in question. He then shows the spirit of humility and lowliness that became man in the presence of God, and the union of this spirit with love when there was the possession of worldly advantages. By such a walk, which was indeed His own, in opposition to the spirit of the world, one’s place there would be lost; the reciprocations of society would not exist: but another hour was beginning to dawn through His rejection, and which in fact was its necessary consequence — the resurrection of the just. Cast out by the world from its bosom, they should have their place apart in that which the power of God should effect. There would be a resurrection of the just. Then should they have the reward of all that they had done through love to the Lord and for His name’s sake. We see the force with which this allusion applies to the Lord’s position at that moment, ready to be put to death in this world.

[* Chapters 15 and 16 present the sovereign energy of grace, its fruits, and its consequences, in contrast with all apparent earthly blessing, and God’s government on earth in Israel, and the old covenant. The fourteenth, before entering on that full revelation, shows us the place to be taken in such a world as this, in view of the distributive justice of God, of the judgment He will execute when He comes. Self-exaltation in this world leads to humiliation. Self-humiliation — taking the lowest place according to what

we are, on the one side, and, on the other, to act in love — leads to exaltation on the part of Him who judges morally. After this we have set before us, the responsibility that flows from the presentation of grace; and that which it costs in a world like this. In a word, sin existing there, to exalt oneself is ministering to it; it is selfishness, and the love of the world in which it unfolds itself. One sinks morally. It is being far from God morally. When love acts, It is representing God to the men of this world. Nevertheless it is at the cost of all things that we become His disciples.]

And the kingdom, what would then become of it? With reference to it at that moment, the Lord gives its picture in the parable of the great supper of grace (v. 16-24). Despised by the chief part of the Jews, when God invited them to come in, He then sought out the poor of the flock. But there was room in His house, and He sends out to seek the Gentiles, and bring them in by His call that went forth in efficacious power when they sought Him not. It was the activity of His grace. The Jews, as such, should have no part in it. But those who entered in must count the cost (v. 25-33). All must be forsaken in this world; every link with this world must be broken. The nearer anything was to the heart, the more dangerous, the more it must be abhorred. Not that the affections are evil things; but, Christ being rejected by this world, everything that binds us to earth must be sacrificed for Him. Cost what it may, He must be followed; and one must know how to hate one's own life, and even to lose it, rather than grow lax in following the Lord. All was lost here in this life of nature. Salvation, the Savior, eternal life, were in question. To take up one's cross, therefore, and follow Him, was the only way to be His disciples. Without this faith, it were better not to begin building; and, being conscious that the enemy is outwardly much stronger than we are, it must be ascertained whether, come what may, we dare, with settled purpose, go out to meet him by faith in Christ. Everything connected with the flesh as such must be broken with.

Moreover (v. 34, 35), they were called to bear a peculiar testimony, to witness to the character of God Himself, as He was rejected in Christ, of which the cross was the true measure. If the disciples were not this, they were nothing worth. They were disciples in this world for no other purpose. Has the church maintained this character? A solemn question for us all!

Having thus unfolded the difference in character between the two dispensations, and the circumstances of the transition from the one to the other, the Lord turns (chap. 15) to higher principles — the sources of the one that was brought in by grace.

It is indeed a contrast between the two, as well as the chapters we have been going through. But this contrast rises to its glorious source in God's own grace, contrasted with the miserable self-righteousness of man.

The publicans and sinners draw near to hear Jesus. Grace had its true dignity to those who needed it. Self-righteousness repulsed that which was not as contemptible as itself, and God Himself at the same time in His nature of love. The Pharisees and the scribes murmured against Him who was a witness of this grace in fulfilling it.

I cannot meditate on this chapter, which has been the joy of so many souls, and the subject of so many testimonies to grace, from the time that the Lord pronounced it, without enlarging upon grace, perfect in its application to the heart. Nevertheless I must confine myself here to great principles, leaving their application to those who preach the word. This is a difficulty that constantly presents itself in this portion of the word.

First, the great principle which the Lord exhibits, and on which He founds the justification of God's dealings (sad state of heart that requires it! marvelous grace and patience that gives it!) the great principle, I repeat, is that God finds His own joy in showing grace. What an answer to the horrid spirit of the Pharisees who made it an objection!

It is the Shepherd who rejoices when the sheep is found, the woman when the piece of money is in her hand, the Father when His child is in His arms. What an expression of that which God is! How truly is Jesus the one to make it known! It is on this that all the blessing of man can alone be founded. It is in this that God is glorified in His grace.

But there are two distinct parts in this grace — the love that seeks, and the love with which one is received. The first two parables describe the former character of this grace. The shepherd seeks his sheep, the woman her piece of money: the sheep and the piece of silver are passive. The shepherd seeks (and the woman also) until he finds, because he has an interest in the matter. The sheep, wearied with its wanderings, has not to take one step in

returning. The shepherd lays it on his shoulders and carries it home. He takes the whole charge, happy to recover his sheep. This is the mind of heaven, whatever the heart of man on earth may be. It is the work of Christ, the Good Shepherd. The woman sets before us the pains which God takes in His love; so that it is more the work of the Spirit, which is represented by that of the woman. The light is brought — she sweeps the house until she finds the piece she had lost. Thus God acts in the world, seeking sinners. The hateful and hating jealousy of self-righteousness finds no place in the mind of heaven, where God dwells, and produces, in the happiness that surrounds Him, the reflex of His own perfections.

But although neither the sheep nor the piece of silver does anything towards its own recovery, there is a real work wrought in the heart of one who is brought back; but this work, necessary as it is for the finding or even the seeking of peace, is not that on which the peace is grounded. The return and the reception of the sinner are therefore described in the third parable. The work of grace, accomplished solely by the power of God, and complete in its effects, is presented to us in the first two. Here the sinner returns, with sentiments which we will now examine — sentiments produced by grace, but which never rise to the height of the grace manifested in his reception until he has returned.

First his estrangement from God is depicted. While as guilty at the moment that he crosses the paternal threshold, in turning his back upon his father, as when he eats husks with the swine, man, deceived by sin, is here presented in the last state of degradation to which sin conducts him. Having expended all that fell to him according to nature, the destitution in which he finds himself (and many a soul feels the famine which it has brought itself into, the emptiness of all around without a desire after God or holiness, and often into what is degrading in sin) does not incline him towards God, but leads him to seek a resource in that which Satan's country (where nothing is given) can supply; and he finds himself among the swine. But grace operates; and the thought of the happiness of his father's house, and of the goodness that blessed all around it, awakes in his heart. Where the Spirit of God works, there are always two things found, conviction in the conscience and the attraction of the heart. It is really the revelation of God to the soul, and God is light and He is love; as light, conviction is produced in the soul, but as love there is the attraction of

goodness, and truthful confession is produced. It is not merely that we have sinned, but that we have to do with God and desire to have, but fear because of what He is, yet are led to go. So the woman in chapter 7.* So Peter in the boat. This produces the conviction that we are perishing, and a sense, feeble it may be, yet true, of the goodness of God and the happiness to be found in His presence, although we may not feel sure of being received; and we do not remain in the place where we are perishing. There is the sense of sin, there is humiliation; the sense that there is goodness in God; but not the sense of what the grace of God really is. Grace attracts — one goes towards God, but one would be satisfied to be received as a servant — a proof that, though the heart be wrought in by grace, it has not yet met God. Progress, moreover, although real, never gives peace. There is a certain rest of heart in going; but one does not know what reception to expect, after having been guilty of forsaking God. The nearer the prodigal son drew to the house, the more would his heart beat at the thought of meeting his father. But the father anticipates his coming, and acts towards him, not according to his son's deserts, but according to his own heart as a father — the only measure of the ways of God towards us. He is on his son's neck while the latter is still in rags, before he has had time to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." It was no longer time to say it. It belonged to a heart anticipating how it would be received, not to one who had met God. Such an one knows how it has been received. The prodigal arranges to say it (as people speak of an humble hope, and a low place); but though the confession is complete when he arrives, he does not then say, Make me a hired servant. How could he? The father's heart had decided his position by its own sentiments, by its love towards him, by the place his heart had given him towards himself. The father's position decided that of the son. This was between himself and his son; but this was not all. He loved his son, even as he was, but he did not introduce him into the house in that condition. The same love that received him as a son will have him enter the house as a son, and as the son of such a father should be. The servants are ordered to bring the best robe and put it on him. Thus loved, and received by love, in our wretchedness, we are clothed with Christ to enter the house. We do not bring the robe: God supplies us with it. It is an entirely new thing; and we become the righteousness of God in Him. This is heaven's best robe. All the rest have part in the joy, except the self righteous man, the true Jew. The joy is the joy of the

father, but all the house shares it. The elder son is not in the house. He is near it, but he will not come in. He will have nothing to do with the grace that makes the poor prodigal the subject of the joy of love. Nevertheless, grace acts; the father goes out and entreats him to come in. It is thus that God acted, in the Gospel, towards the Jew. Yet man's righteousness, which is but selfishness and sin, rejects grace. But God will not give up His grace. It becomes Him. God will be God; and God is love.

[* See page 240.]

It is this which takes the place of the pretensions of the Jews, who rejected the Lord, and the accomplishment of the promises in Him.

That which gives peace, and characterises our position, is not the sentiments wrought in our hearts, although they indeed exist, but those of God Himself.

In **CHAPTER 16**, the effect of grace on conduct is presented, and the contrast that exists (the dispensation being changed) between the conduct that Christianity requires with regard to the things of the world, and the position of the Jews in that respect. Now this position was only the expression of that of man made evident by the law. The doctrine thus embodied by the parable is confirmed by the parabolic history of the rich man and Lazarus, lifting up the veil that hides the other world in which the result of men's conduct is manifested.

Man is the steward of God (that is, God has committed His goods to man). Israel stands especially in this position.

But man has been unfaithful; Israel had indeed been so. God has taken away his stewardship; but man is still in possession of the goods to administer them, at least, in fact (as Israel was at that moment). These goods are the things of earth — that which man can possess according to the flesh. Having lost his stewardship by his unfaithfulness, and being still in possession of the goods, he uses them to make friends of his master's debtors by doing them good. This is what Christians should do with earthly possessions, using them for others, having the future in view. The steward might have appropriated the money due to his master; he preferred gaining friends with it (that is, he sacrifices present to future advantage). We may turn the miserable riches of this world into means of

fulfilling love. The spirit of grace which fills our hearts (ourselves the objects of grace) exercises itself with regard to temporal things, which we use for others. For us it is in view of the everlasting habitations. "That they may receive you" is equivalent to "that you may be received" — a common form of expression in Luke, to designate the fact without speaking of the individuals that perform it, although using the word they.

Observe that earthly riches are not our own things; heavenly riches, in the case of a true Christian, are his own.

These riches are unrighteous, in that they belong to fallen man, and not to the heavenly man, nor had any place when Adam was innocent.

Now, when the veil is lifted from the other world, the truth is fully brought to light. And the contrast between the Jewish dispensation and the Christian, is clearly unfolded; for Christianity reveals that world, and, as to its principle, belongs to heaven.

Judaism, according to God's government on earth, promised temporal blessing to the righteous; but all was in disorder: even the Messiah, the head of the system, was rejected. In a word, Israel, looked at as set under responsibility, and to enjoy earthly blessing on obedience, had entirely failed. Man, in this world, could no longer, on that footing, be the means of bearing testimony to the ways of God in government. There will be a time of earthly judgment, but it was not yet come. Meanwhile, the possession of riches was anything rather than a proof of God's favor. Personal selfishness, and alas! indifference to a brother in distress at his door, was, instead, the characteristic of its possession among the Jews. Revelation opens the other world to our view. Man, in this world, is fallen, wicked man. If he has received his good things here, he has the portion of sinful man; he will be tormented, while the other one whom he had despised will find happiness in the other world.

It is not a question here of that which gives title to enter heaven, but of character, and of the contrast between the principles of this world and the invisible world. The Jew made choice of this world; he has lost this and the other also. The poor man whom he had thought contemptible is found in Abraham's bosom. The whole tenor of this parable shows its connection with the question of Israel's hopes, and the idea that riches were a proof of

the favor of God (an idea which, false as it may be in every case, is intelligible enough if this world is the scene of blessing under the government of God). The subject of the parable is shown also by that which is found at the end of it. The miserable rich man desires that his brethren might be warned by some one who had risen from the dead. Abraham declares to him the uselessness of this means. It was all over with Israel. God has not again presented His Son to the nation who rejected Him, despising the law and the prophets. The testimony of His resurrection met with the same unbelief that had rejected Him when living, as well as the prophets before Him. There is no consolation in the other world if the testimony of the word to the conscience is rejected in this. The gulf cannot be crossed. A returning Lord would not convince those who had despised the word. All is in connection with the judgment of the Jews, which would close the dispensation; as the preceding parable shows what the conduct of Christians should be with regard to things temporal. All flows from the grace which, in love on God's part, accomplished the salvation of man, and set aside the legal dispensation and its principles by bringing in the heavenly things.

Grace is the spring of the Christian's walk, and furnishes directions for it. He cannot with impunity (chap. 17) despise the weak. He must not be weary of pardoning his brother. If he have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, the power of God is, so to speak, at his disposal. Nevertheless, when he has done all, he has but done his duty (v. 5-10). The Lord then shows (v. 11-37) the deliverance from Judaism, which He still recognised; and, after that, its judgment. He was passing through Samaria and Galilee: ten lepers come towards Him, entreating Him, from a distance, to heal them. He sends them to the priests. This was, in fact, as much as to say, You are clean. It would have been useless to have them pronounced unclean; and they knew it. They take Christ's word, go away with this conviction, and are immediately healed on their way. Nine of them, satisfied with reaping the benefit of His power, pursue their journey to the priests, and remain Jews, not coming out of the old sheepfold. Jesus, indeed, still acknowledged it; but they only acknowledge Him so far as to profit by His presence, and remain where they were. They saw nothing in His Person, nor in the power of God in Him, to attract them. They remain Jews. But this poor stranger — the tenth — recognises the good hand of God. He

falls at the feet of Jesus, giving Him glory. The Lord bids him depart in the liberty of faith” — Go thy way; thy faith hath saved thee.” He has no longer need to go to the priests. He had found God and the source of blessing in Christ, and goes away freed from the yoke which was soon to be judicially broken for all.

For the kingdom of God was among them. To those who could discern it, the King was there in their midst. The kingdom did not come in such a manner as to attract the attention of the world. It was there, so that the disciples would soon desire to see one of those days which they had enjoyed during the time of the Lord’s presence on earth, but would not see it. He then announces the pretensions of false Christs, the true having been rejected, so that the people would be left a prey to the wiles of the enemy. His disciples were not to follow them. In connection with Jerusalem they would be exposed to these temptations, but they had the Lord’s directions for guidance through them.

Now the Son of man, in His day, would be like the lightning: but, before that, He must suffer many things from the unbelieving Jews. The day would be like that of Lot, and that of Noe: men would be at ease, following their carnal occupations, like the world overtaken by the flood, and Sodom by the fire from heaven. It will be the revelation of the Son of man — His public revelation — sudden and vivid. This referred to Jerusalem. Being thus warned, their concern was to escape the judgment of the Son of man which, at the time of His coming, would fall upon the city that had rejected Him; for this Son of man, whom they had disowned, would come again in His glory. There must be no looking back; that would be to have the heart in the place of judgment. Better lose all, life itself, rather than be associated with that which was going to be judged. If they should escape and have their lives spared through unfaithfulness, the judgment was the judgment of God; He would know how to reach them in their bed, and to distinguish between two that were in one bed, and between two women who ground the corn of the household at the same mill.

This character of the judgment shows that it is not the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus that is meant. It was the judgment of God that could discern, take away, and spare. Neither is it the judgment of the dead, but a judgment on earth: they are in bed, they are at the mill, they are on the

housetops and in the fields. Warned by the Lord, they were to forsake all, and to care only for Him who came to judge. If they asked where this should be — wherever the dead body lay, there would be the judgment that would come down like a vulture, which they could not see, but from which the prey would not escape.

But, in the presence of all the power of their enemies and oppressors (for there would be such, as we have seen, so that they might even lose their lives), there was a resource for the afflicted remnant. They were (chap. 18) to persevere in prayer, the resource, moreover, at all times, of the faithful — of man, if he understand it. God would avenge His elect, although, as to the exercise of their faith, He would, indeed, try it. But when He came, would the Son of man find this faith that waited for His intervention? That was the solemn question, the answer to which is left to the responsibility of man, a question which implies that it could hardly be expected, although it ought to exist. Nevertheless, should there be any faith acceptable to Him who seeks it, it will not be disappointed or confounded.

It will be observed, that the kingdom (and that is the subject) is presented in two ways among the Jews at that time — in the Person of Jesus then present (chap. 17:21), and in the execution of the judgment, in which the elect ones should be spared, and the vengeance of God be executed in their behalf. On this account, they were only to think of pleasing Him, however oppressive and at ease the world might be. It is the day of the judgment of the wicked, and not that in which the righteous will be caught up to heaven. Enoch and Abraham are more the types of the latter; Noe and Lot, of those who will be spared to live on the earth; only there are oppressors of whom the remnant are to be avenged. Verse 31 shows that they must think only of the judgment and connect themselves with nothing as men. Detached from everything, their only hope would be in God at such a moment.

The Lord then resumes, in verse 9 of chapter 18, the description of those characters which were suitable to the kingdom, to enter it now by following Him. From verse 35* the great transition draws near historically.

[* The case of the blind man at Jericho is, as already noted, the beginning (in all the synoptical Gospels) of the last events of Christ's life.]

Verse 8, then, of chapter 18, ends the prophetic warning with respect to the last days. The Lord afterwards resumes the consideration of the characters which befit the state of things introduced by grace.

Self-righteousness is far from being a recommendation for entrance into the kingdom. The most miserable sinner, confessing his sin, is justified before God rather than the self-righteous. He that exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. What a pattern and witness of this truth was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

The spirit of a little child — simple, believing all that he is told, confiding, of little importance in his own eyes, who must give way to all — this was meet for the kingdom of God. What else would He admit?

Again, the principles of the kingdom, as established by the rejection of Christ, were in full contrast with the temporal blessings attached to obedience to the law, excellent as that law was in its place. Goodness in man there was none: God only is good. The young man who had fulfilled the law in his outward walk is called to leave everything that he may follow the Lord. Jesus knew his circumstances and his heart, and put His finger on the covetousness that ruled him and was fed by the riches he possessed. He was to sell all that he had and follow Jesus; he should have treasure in heaven. The young man went away sorrowful. The riches that, in the eyes of men, appeared to be a sign of God's favor, were but a hindrance when the heart and heaven came in question. The Lord announces at the same time, that whosoever should forsake anything that he prized for the sake of the kingdom of heaven should receive much more in this world, and, in the next, life everlasting. We may remark that it is only the principle which is here laid down in reference to the kingdom.

At last the Lord, on His way to Jerusalem, plainly tells His disciples in private that He was going to be delivered up, to be ill-treated and put to death, and then to rise again. It was the fulfillment of all that the prophets had written. But the disciples understood none of those things.

If the Lord was to make those who followed Him take up the cross, He could not but bear it Himself. He went before His sheep, in this path of self-denial and devotedness, to prepare the way. He went alone. It was a path which His people had not yet trodden, nor indeed could they till after He had done so.

The history of His last approach to Jerusalem and intercourse with it now commences (v. 35). Here then He presents Himself anew as the Son of David, and for the last time; laying on the conscience of the nation His pretensions to that title, while displaying the consequences of His rejection. Near Jericho,* the place of malediction, He gives sight to a blind man who believes in His title of Son of David. So indeed those who possessed that faith did receive their sight to follow Him, and they saw yet greater things than these. In Jericho (chap. 19) He sets forth grace, in spite of the pharisaic spirit. Nevertheless it is as a son of Abraham that He points out Zacchaeus, who — in a false position indeed as such — had a tender conscience and a generous heart** by grace. His position did not, in the eyes of Jesus, take from him the character of son of Abraham (if it had that effect, who could have been blessed?) and did not bar the way to that salvation which was come to save the lost. It entered with Jesus into the house of this son of Abraham. He brought salvation, whoever might be heir to it.

[* In Luke the coming to Jericho is stated as a general fact, in contrast with His general journey which is in view from chapter 9:51. In point of fact it was on going out of Jericho He saw the blind man. The general fact is all we have here, to give the whole history, Zacchaeus and all, Its moral place.]

[** I doubt not that Zacchaeus sets before Jesus that which he did habitually, before the Lord came to him. Nevertheless salvation came that day to his house.]

Nevertheless He does not conceal from them His departure, and the character which the kingdom would assume, owing to His absence. As for them, Jerusalem, and the expectation of the coming kingdom, filled their minds. The Lord therefore explains to them what would take place. He goes away to receive a kingdom and to return. Meanwhile He commits some of His goods (the gifts of the Spirit) to His servants to trade with during His absence. The difference between this parable and that in the Gospel by Matthew is this: Matthew presents the sovereignty and the wisdom of the giver, who varies His gifts according to the aptitude of His servants; in Luke it is more particularly the responsibility of the servants, who each receive the same sum, and the one gains by it, in his master's interest, more than the other. Accordingly it is not said, as in Matthew, "Enter into the joy of your Lord," the same thing to all, and the more excellent thing; but to the one it is authority over ten cities that is given; to

the other, over five (that is to say, a share in the kingdom according to their labor). The servant does not lose that which he has gained, although it was for his master. He enjoys it. Not so with the servant who made no use of his talent; that which had been committed to him is given to the one who had gained ten.

That which we gain spiritually here, in spiritual intelligence and in the knowledge of God in power, is not lost in the other world. On the contrary we receive more, and the glory of the inheritance is given us in proportion to our work. All is grace.

But there was yet another element in the history of the kingdom. The citizens (the Jews) not only reject the king, but, when he is gone away to receive the kingdom, send a messenger after him to say that they will not have him to reign over them. Thus the Jews, when Peter sets their sin before them, and declares to them that if they repent, Jesus would return, and with Him the times of refreshing, reject the testimony, and, so to say, send Stephen after Jesus to testify that they would have nothing to do with Him. When He returns in glory, the perverse nation is judged before His eyes. The avowed enemies of Christ, they receive the reward of their rebellion.

He had declared that which the kingdom was — that which it should be. He now comes to present it for the last time in His own Person to the inhabitants of Jerusalem according to the prophecy of Zechariah. This remarkable scene has been considered in its general aspect when studying Matthew and Mark; but some particular circumstances require notice here. All is gathered round His entrance. The disciples and the Pharisees are in contrast. Jerusalem is in the day of her visitation, and she knows it not.

Some remarkable expressions are uttered by His disciples, moved by the Spirit of God, on this occasion. Had they been silent, the stones would have broken out in proclamation of the glory of the rejected One. The kingdom, in their triumphant acclamations, is not simply the kingdom in its earthly aspect. In Matthew it was, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” and “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.” That was indeed true; but here we have something more. The Son of David disappears. He is indeed the King, who comes in the name of the Lord; but it is no longer the remnant of Israel who seek salvation in the

name of the Son of David, acknowledging His title. It is “peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” The kingdom depends on peace being established in the heavenly places. The Son of man, exalted on high, and victorious over Satan, has reconciled the heavens. The glory of grace in His Person is established for the everlasting and supreme glory of the God of love. The kingdom on earth is but a consequence of this glory which grace has established. The power that cast out Satan has established peace in heaven. At the beginning, in Luke 2:14, we have, in the manifested grace, Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; the good pleasure of God] in men. To establish the kingdom, peace is made in heaven; the glory of God is fully established in the highest.

It will be remarked here that, as He draws nigh to Jerusalem, the Lord weeps over the city. It is not now as in Matthew, where, while discoursing with the Jews, He points it out to them as that which having rejected and slain the prophets — Emmanuel also, the Lord, who would so often have gathered her children under His wings, having been ignominiously rejected — was now given up to desolation until His return. It is the hour of her visitation, and she has not known it. If only she had, even now, hearkened to the call of the testimony of her God! She is given up into the hands of the Gentiles, her enemies, who will not leave her one stone upon another. That is to say, not having known this visitation of God in grace in the Person of Jesus, she is set aside — the testimony goes no farther — she gives place to a new order of things. Thus the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus is here prominent. It is the moral character of the temple also of which the Lord here speaks. The Spirit does not notice here that it is to be the temple of God for all nations. It is simply (chap. 20:16) the vineyard is given to others. They fell upon the stone of stumbling then: when it falls on them — when Jesus comes in judgment — it will grind them to powder.

In His reply to the Sadducees, three important things are added to that which is said in Matthew. 1st, It is not only the condition of those who are raised, and the certainty of the resurrection; it is an age, which a certain class only, who are accounted worthy of it, shall obtain, a separate resurrection of the just (v. 35). 2nd, This class is composed of the children of God, as being the children of the resurrection (v. 36). 3rd While waiting for this resurrection, their souls survive death, all live unto God, although they may be hidden from the eyes of men (v. 38).

The parable of the wedding feast is omitted here. In chapter 14 of this Gospel we find it with characteristic elements, a mission to the lanes of the city, to the despised of the nations, which is not in Matthew, who gives us the judgment of Jerusalem instead, before announcing the evangelisation of the Gentiles. All this is characteristic. In Luke it is grace, a moral condition of man before God, and the new order of things founded on the rejection of Christ. I will not dwell upon those points which Luke relates in common with Matthew. They naturally meet in the great facts that relate to the Lord's rejection by the Jews, and its consequences.

If we compare Matthew 23 and Luke 20:45-47, we shall see at once the difference. In Luke the Spirit gives us in three verses that which morally puts the scribes aside. In Matthew their whole position with respect to the dispensation is developed; whether as having a place, so long as Moses continued, or with reference to their guiltiness before God in that place.

The Lord's discourse in chapter 21 displays the character of the Gospel in a peculiar manner. The spirit of grace, in contrast with the Judaic spirit, is seen in the account of the poor widow's offering. But the Lord's prophecy requires more detailed notice. Verse 6, as we saw at the end of chapter 19, speaks only of the destruction of Jerusalem as she then stood. This is true also of the disciples' question. They say nothing of the end of the age. The Lord afterwards enters upon the duties and the circumstances of His disciples previous to that hour. In verse 8 it is said, "The time draweth near," which is not found in Matthew. He goes much more into detail with regard to their ministry during that period, encourages them, promises them necessary help. Persecution should turn to them for a testimony. From the middle of verse 11 to the end of verse 19 we have details relative to His disciples, that are not found in the corresponding passage of Matthew. They present the general state of things in the same sense, adding the condition of the Jews, of those especially who, more or less, professedly received the word. The whole stream of testimony, as rendered in connection with Israel, but extending to the nations, is found in Matthew to the end of verse 14. In Luke it is the coming service of the disciples, until the moment when the judgment of God should put an end to that which was virtually terminated by the rejection of Christ. Consequently the Lord says nothing in verse 20 of the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, but gives the fact of the siege of

Jerusalem, and its then approaching desolation — not the end of the age, as in Matthew. These were the days of vengeance on the Jews, who had crowned their rebellion by rejecting the Lord. Therefore Jerusalem should be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled, that is, the times destined to the sovereignty of the Gentile empires according to the counsel of God revealed in the prophecies of Daniel. This is the period in which we now live. There is a break here in the discourse. Its principal subject is ended; but there are still some events of the last scene to be revealed, which close the history of this Gentile supremacy.

We shall see also that, although it is the commencement of the judgment, from which Jerusalem will not arise until all is accomplished and the song of Isaiah 40 is addressed to her, nevertheless, the great tribulation is not mentioned here. There is great distress, and wrath upon the people, as was indeed the case in the siege of Jerusalem by Titus; and the Jews were also led away captive. Neither is it said, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days.” Nevertheless, without designating the epoch, but after having spoken of the times of the Gentiles, the end of the age comes. There are signs in heaven, distress on earth, a mighty movement in the waves of human population. The heart of man, moved by a prophetic alarm, foresees the calamities which, still unknown, are threatening him; for all the influences that govern men are shaken. Then shall they see the Son of man, once rejected from the earth, coming from heaven with the ensigns of Jehovah, with power and great glory — the Son of man, of whom this Gospel has always spoken. There the prophecy ends. We have not here the gathering together of the elect Israelites, who had been dispersed, of which Matthew speaks.

That which follows consists of exhortations, in order that the day of distress may be a token of deliverance to the faith of those who, trusting in the Lord, obey the voice of His servant. The “generation” (a word already explained when considering Matthew) should not pass away till all was fulfilled. The length of the time that has elapsed since then, and that must elapse until the end, is left in darkness. Heavenly things are not measured by dates. Moreover that moment is hidden in the knowledge of the Father. Still heaven and earth should pass away, but not the words of Jesus. He then tells them that, as dwelling on earth, they must be watchful, lest their

own hearts should be overcharged with things that would sink them into this world, in the midst of which they were to be witnesses. For that day would come as a snare upon all those who had their dwelling here, who were rooted here. They were to watch and pray, in order to escape all those things, and to stand in the presence of the Son of man. This is still the great subject of our Gospel. To be with Him, as those who have escaped from the earth, to be among the 144,000 on Mount Zion, will be an accomplishment of this blessing, but the place is not named; so that, supposing the faithfulness of those whom He was personally addressing, the hope awakened by His words would be fulfilled in a more excellent manner in His heavenly presence in the day of glory.

In **CHAPTER 22** commence the details of the end of our Lord's life. The chief priests, fearing the people, seek how they may kill Him. Judas, under the influence of Satan, offers himself as an instrument, that they might take Him in the absence of the multitude. The day of Passover comes, and the Lord pursues that which belonged to His work of love in these immediate circumstances. I will notice the points that appertain to the character of this Gospel, the change that took place in immediate and direct connection with the Lord's death. Thus He desired to eat this last Passover with His disciples, because He would eat thereof no more until it was fulfilled in the kingdom of God, that is, by His death. He drinks wine no more until the kingdom of God shall come. He does not say, until He shall drink it new in the kingdom of His Father, but only that He will not drink it till the kingdom shall come: just as the times of the Gentiles are in view as a present thing, so here Christianity, the kingdom as it is now, not the millennium. Observe also what a touching expression of love we have here: His heart needed this last testimony of affection before leaving them.

The new covenant is founded on the blood here drunk in figure. The old was done away. Blood was required to establish the new. At the same time the covenant itself was not established; but everything was done on God's part. The blood was not shed to give force to a covenant of judgment like the first; it was shed for those who received Jesus, while waiting for the time when the covenant itself should be established with Israel in grace.

The disciples, believing the words of Christ, do not themselves know, and they ask one another, which of them it could be that should betray Him, a

striking expression of faith in all he uttered — for none, save Judas, had a bad conscience — and marked their innocence. And at the same time, thinking of the kingdom in a carnal way, they dispute for the first place in it; and this, in the presence of the cross, at the table where the Lord was giving them the last pledges of His love. Truth of heart there was, but what a heart to have truth in! As for Himself, He had taken the lowest place, and that — as the most excellent for love — was His alone. They had to follow Him as closely as they could. His grace recognises their having done so, as if He were their debtor for their care during His time of sorrow on earth. He remembered it. In the day of His kingdom they should have twelve thrones, as heads of Israel, among whom they had followed Him.

But now it was a question of passing through death; and, having followed Him thus far, what an opportunity for the enemy to sift them since they could no longer follow Him as men living on the earth! All that belonged to a living Messiah was completely overthrown, and death was there. Who could pass through it? Satan would profit by this, and desired to have them that he might sift them. Jesus does not seek to spare His disciples this sifting. It was not possible, for He must pass through death, and their hope was in Him. They cannot escape it: the flesh must be put to the test of death. But He prays for them, that the faith of the one, whom He especially names, may not fail. Simon, ardent in the flesh, was exposed more than all to the danger into which a false confidence in the flesh might lead him, but in which it could not sustain him. Being however the object of this grace on the Lord's part, his fall would be the means of his strength. Knowing what the flesh was, and also the perfection of grace; he would be able to strengthen his brethren. Peter asserts that he could do anything — the very things he should entirely fail in. The Lord briefly warns him of what he would really do.

Jesus then takes occasion to forewarn them that all was about to change. During His presence here below, the true Messiah, Emmanuel, He had sheltered them from all difficulties; when He sent them throughout Israel, they had lacked nothing. But now (for the kingdom was not yet coming in power) they would be, like Himself, exposed to contempt and violence. Humanly speaking, they would have to take care of themselves. Peter, ever forward, taking the words of Christ literally, was permitted to lay bare his thoughts by exhibiting two swords. The Lord stops him by a word that

showed him it was of no use to go farther. They were not capable of it at that time. As to Himself, He pursues with perfect tranquillity His daily habits.

Pressed in spirit by that which was coming, He exhorts His disciples to pray, that they enter not into temptation; that is to say, that when the time came that they should be put to the test, walking with God, it should be for them obedience to God, and not a means of departure from Him. There are such moments, if God permits them to come, in which everything is put to the proof by the enemy's power.

The Lord's dependence as man is then displayed in the most striking manner. The whole scene of Gethsemane and the cross, in Luke, is the perfect dependent man. He prays: He submits to His Father's will. An angel strengthens Him: this was their service to the Son of man.* Afterwards, in deep conflict, He prays more earnestly: dependent man, He is perfect in His dependence. The deepness of the conflict deepens His intercourse with His Father. The disciples were overwhelmed by the shadow only of that which caused Jesus to pray. They take refuge in the forgetfulness of sleep. The Lord, with the patience of grace, repeats His warning, and the multitude arrive. Peter, confident when warned, sleeping at the approach of temptation when the Lord was praying, strikes when Jesus allows Himself to be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and then alas! denies when Jesus confesses the truth. But, submissive as the Lord was to His Father's will, He plainly shows that His power had not departed from Him. He heals the wound that Peter inflicted on the high priest's servant, and then permits Himself to be led away, with the remark that it was their hour and the power of darkness. Sad and terrible association!

[* There are elements of the profoundest interest which appear in comparing this Gospel with others in this place; and elements which bring out the character of this Gospel in the most striking way. In Gethsemane we have the Lord's conflict brought out more fully in Luke than anywhere; but on the cross we have His superiority to the sufferings He was in. There is no expression of them: He is above them. It is not, as in John, the divine side of the picture. There in Gethsemane we have no agony, but when He names Himself, they go backward and fall to the ground. On the cross, no "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" but He delivers up His own spirit to God. This is not so in Luke. In Gethsemane we have the Man of sorrows, a man feeling in all its depths what was before Him, and looking to His Father. "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly." On the cross we have One who as man has bowed to His Father's will, and is in the

calmness of One who, in whatever sorrow and suffering, is above it all. He tells the weeping women to weep for themselves, not for Him, the green tree, for judgment was coming. He prays for those who were crucifying Him; He speaks peace and heavenly joy to the poor thief who was converted; He was going into Paradise before the kingdom came. The same is seen specially in the fact of His death. It is not, as in John, He gave up His spirit; but, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." He trusts His spirit in death, as a man who knows and believes in God His Father, to Him whom He thus knew. In Matthew we have the forsaking of God and His sense of it. This character of the Gospel, revealing Christ distinctively as perfect Man, and the perfect Man, is full of the deepest interest. He passed through His sorrows with God, and then in perfect peacefulness was above them all; His trust in His Father perfect, even in death — a path not trodden by man hitherto, and never to be trodden by the saints. If Jordan overflowed all its banks at the time of harvest, the ark in the depths of it made it a passage dryshod into the inheritance of God's people.]

In all this scene we behold the complete dependence of the man, the power of death felt as a trial in all its force; but, apart from that which was going on in His soul and before His Father, in which we see the reality of these two things, there was the most perfect tranquillity, the most gentle calmness towards men* grace that never belies itself. Thus, when Peter denied Him as He had foretold, He looks upon him at the fitting moment. All the parade of His iniquitous trial does not distract His thoughts, and Peter is broken down by that look. When questioned, He has little to say. His hour was come Subject to His Father's will, He accepted the cup from His hand. His judges did but accomplish that will, and bring Him the cup. He makes no answer to the question whether He is the Christ. It was no longer the time to do so. They would not believe it — would not answer Him if He had put questions to them that would have brought out the truth; neither would they have let Him go. But He bears the plainest testimony to the place which, from that hour, the Son of man took. This we have repeatedly seen in reading this Gospel. He would sit on the right hand of the power of God. We see also it is the place He takes at present.** They immediately draw the right conclusion — "Thou art, then, the Son of God?" He bears testimony to this truth, and all is ended; that is to say, He waives the question, whether He was the Messiah — that was gone by for Israel — He was going to suffer; He is the Son of man, but thenceforth only as entering into glory; and He is the Son of God. It was all over with Israel as to their responsibility; the heavenly glory of the Son of man, the personal glory of the Son of God was about to shine

forth; and Jesus (chap. 23) is led away to the Gentiles, that all may be accomplished.

[* It is most striking to see how Christ met, according to divine perfectness, every circumstance He was in. They only drew out the perfectness. He felt them all, was governed by none, but met them always Himself. This which was always true was wonderfully shown here. He prays with the fullest sense of what was coming upon Him — the cup He had to drink — turns and warns them, and gently rebukes and excuses Peter, as if walking in Galilee, the flesh was weak; and then returns into yet deeper agony with His Father. Grace suited Him with Peter, agony in the presence of God; and He was grace with Peter — in agony at the thought of the cup.]

[** The word “hereafter,” in the Authorised Version, should be “henceforth.” That is, from this hour they would see Him no longer in humiliation, but as Son of man in power.]

The Gentiles, however, are not presented in this Gospel as being voluntarily guilty. We see, no doubt, an indifference which is flagrant injustice in a case like this, and an insolence which nothing could excuse; but Pilate does what he can to deliver Christ, and Herod, disappointed, sends Him back unjudged. The will is altogether on the side of the Jews. That is the characteristic of this part of the history in Luke’s Gospel. Pilate would rather not have burdened himself with this useless crime, and he despised the Jews; but they were resolved on the crucifixion of Jesus, and require Barabbas to be released — a seditious man and a murderer (see v. 20-25).*

[* This willful guilt of the Jews is strongly brought out in John’s Gospel also, that is, their national guilt. Pilate treats them with contempt; and there it is they say, “We have no king but Caesar.”

Jesus, therefore, as He was led to Calvary, announced to the women, who with natural feeling lamented for Him, that it was all over with Jerusalem, that they had to bewail their own fate and not His; for days were coming upon Jerusalem which would make them call those happy who had never been mothers — days in which they would in vain seek refuge from terror and judgment. For if in Him, the true green tree, these things were done, what would become of the dry tree of Judaism without God? Nevertheless, at the moment of His crucifixion, the Lord intercedes for the unhappy people: they knew not what they did — intercession, to which Peter’s discourse to the Jews (Acts 3) is the remarkable answer by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. The rulers among the Jews,

completely blinded, as well as the people, taunt Him with being unable to save Himself from the cross — not knowing that it was impossible if He was a Savior, and that all was taken from them, and that God was establishing another order of things, founded on atonement, in the power of eternal life by the resurrection. Dreadful blindness, of which the poor soldiers were but imitators, according to the malignity of human nature! But the judgment of Israel was in their mouth, and (on God's part) upon the cross. It was the King of the Jews who hung there — abased indeed, for a thief hung by His side could rail on Him — but in the place to which love had brought Him for the everlasting and present salvation of souls. This was manifested at the very moment. The insults that reproached Him for not saving Himself from the cross, had His answer in the fate of the converted thief, who rejoined Him the same day in Paradise.

This history is a striking demonstration of the change to which this Gospel leads us. The King of the Jews, by their own confession, is not delivered — He is crucified. What an end to the hopes of this people! But at the same time a gross sinner, converted by grace on the very gibbet, goes straight to Paradise. A soul is eternally saved. It is not the kingdom, but a soul — out of the body — in happiness with Christ. And remark here how the presentation of Christ brings out the wickedness of the human heart. No thief would mock at or reproach another thief on the gibbet. But the moment it is Christ who is there, this takes place.

But I would say a few words on the condition of the other thief, and on the reply of Christ. We see every mark of conversion, and of the most remarkable faith. The fear of God, the beginning of wisdom, is there; conscience upright and vigorous. It is not “and justly” to his fellow, but “we indeed justly”; knowledge of the perfect sinless righteousness of Christ as man; the acknowledgment of Him as the Lord, when His own disciples had forsaken and denied Him, and when there was no sign of His glory or of the dignity of His Person. He was accounted by man as one like himself. His kingdom was but a subject of scorn to all. But the poor thief is taught of God; and all is plain. He is as sure that Christ will have the kingdom as if He was reigning in glory. All his desire is that Christ should remember him then; and what confidence in Christ is here shown through the knowledge of Him in spite of his acknowledged guilt! It shows how Christ filled his heart, and how his confiding in grace by its brightness shut

out human shame, for who would like to be remembered in the shame of a gibbet! Divine teaching is singularly manifested here. Do not we know by divine teaching that Christ was sinless, and to be assured of His kingdom there was a faith above all circumstances? He alone is a comfort to Jesus upon the cross, and makes Him think (in answering his faith) of the Paradise that awaited Him when He should have finished the work that His Father had given Him to do. Observe the state of sanctification this poor man was in by faith. In all the agonies of the cross, and while believing Jesus to be the Lord, he seeks no relief at His hands, but asks that He will remember him in His kingdom. He is filled with one thought — to have his portion with Jesus. He believes that the Lord will return; he believes in the kingdom, while the King is rejected and crucified, and when, as to man, there was no longer any hope. But the reply of Jesus goes farther in the revelation of that proper to this Gospel, and adds that which brings in, not the kingdom, but everlasting life, the happiness of the soul. The thief had asked Jesus to remember him when He returned in His kingdom. The Lord replies that he should not wait for that day of manifested glory which would be visible to the world, but that this very day he should be with Him in Paradise. Precious testimony, and perfect grace! Jesus crucified was more than King — He was Savior. The poor malefactor was a testimony to it, and the joy and consolation of the Lord's heart — the first-fruits of the love which had placed them side by side, where, if the poor thief bore the fruit of his sins from man, the Lord of glory at his side was bearing the fruit of them from God, treated as Himself a malefactor in the same condemnation. Through a work unknown to man save by faith the sins of His companion were for ever put away, they no longer existed, their remembrance was only that of the grace which had taken them away, and which had for ever cleansed his soul from them, making him that moment as fit to enter Paradise as Christ Himself his companion there!

The Lord then, having fulfilled all things, and still full of strength, commends His spirit to His Father. He commits it to Him, the last act of that which composed His whole life — the perfect energy of the Holy Ghost acting in a perfect confidence in His Father, and dependence upon Him. He commits His spirit to His Father, and expires. For it was death that He had before Him — but death in absolute faith which trusted in His

Father — death with God by faith; and not the death that separated from God. Meantime nature veiled itself — acknowledged the departure from this world of Him who had created it. All is darkness. But on the other hand God reveals Himself — the veil of the temple is rent in twain from the top to the bottom. God had hidden Himself in thick darkness — the way into the holiest had not yet been manifested. But now there is no longer a veil; that which has put sin away through perfect love now shines forth, while the holiness of God's presence is joy to the heart, and not torment. What brings us into the presence of perfect holiness without a veil, put away the sin which forbade us to be there. Our communion is with Him through Christ, holy and unblameable before Him in love.

The poor centurion, struck with all that had taken place, confesses — such is the power of the cross upon the conscience — that this Jesus whom he has crucified was certainly the righteous man. I say conscience, because I do not pretend to say that it went any farther than that in the case of the centurion. We see the same effect on the spectators: they went away smiting their breasts. They perceived that something solemn had happened — that they had fatally compromised themselves with God.

But the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, had prepared everything for the burial of His Son, who had glorified Him by giving Himself up to death. He is with the rich in His death. Joseph, a just man, who had not consented to the sin of his people, lays the Lord's body in a tomb that had never yet been used. It was the preparation before the sabbath; but the sabbath was near. At the time of His death the women — faithful (though ignorant) to their affection for Him while living — see where the body is laid, and go to prepare all that was needed for its embalming. Luke only speaks in general terms of these women: we shall therefore enter on the details elsewhere, following our Gospel as it presents itself. The women (chap. 24) come, find the stone rolled away, and the sepulchre no longer containing the body of Him whom they had loved. While perplexed at this, they see two angels near them, who ask why they came to seek the living among the dead, and remind them of the plain words which Jesus had spoken to them in Galilee. They go and tell these things to all the disciples, who cannot believe their account; but Peter runs to the sepulchre, sees everything in order, and departs, wondering at that which had come to pass. In all this there was no faith in the words of

Jesus, nor in that which the scriptures had spoken. In the journey to Emmaus the Lord connects the scriptures with all that happened to Himself, showing to their minds still lingering round the thought of an earthly kingdom, that according to these scriptures God's revealed counsels, the Christ ought to suffer and enter into His glory, a rejected and heavenly Christ. He awakens that ardent attention which the heart feels whenever it is touched. He then reveals Himself in breaking bread — the sign of His death: not that this was the Eucharist, but this particular act was linked with that event. Then their eyes were opened, and He disappears. It was the true Jesus; but in resurrection. Here He Himself explained all that the scriptures had spoken, and presented Himself in life with the symbol of His death. The two disciples return to Jerusalem.

The Lord had already shown Himself to Simon — an appearance, of which we have no details. Paul also mentions it as the first with reference to the apostles. While the two disciples related that which had happened to them, Jesus Himself stood in their midst. But their minds were not yet formed to this truth, and His presence alarms them. They cannot realise the idea of the resurrection of the body. The Lord uses their confusion (very natural, humanly speaking) for our blessing, by giving them the most sensible proofs that it was Himself risen; but Himself, body and soul, the same as before His death. He bids them touch Him, and He eats before their eyes.* It was indeed Himself.

[* Nothing can be more touching than the way in which He cultivates their confidence as that One they had known, the man, still a true man (though with a spiritual body) as He had been before! Handle me and see that it is I myself. Blessed be God, for ever a man, the same who has been known in living love in the midst of our weakness.]

An important thing remained — the basis of true faith: the words of Christ, and the testimony of scripture. This He sets before them. But two things were yet required. First, they needed capacity to understand the word. He opens their understanding therefore, that they might understand the scriptures, and establishes them as witnesses that were not only able to say, "Thus it is, for we have seen it"; but "Thus it must needs have been, for so hath God said in his word"; and the testimony of Christ Himself was fulfilled in His resurrection.

But now grace was to be preached — Jesus rejected by the Jews, slain and risen again for the salvation of souls, having made peace, and bestowing life according to the power of resurrection, the work which cleansed from sin being accomplished, and pardon already granted in thus bestowing it. Grace was to be preached among all nations, that is to say, repentance and pardon to sinners; beginning at that place, with which indeed the patient grace of God still owned a link, through the intercession of Jesus, but which could only be reached by sovereign grace, and in which sin the most aggravated rendered pardon the most necessary, by a testimony which, coming from heaven, must deal with Jerusalem as it dealt with all. They were to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The Jew, a child of wrath, even as others, must come in on the same ground. The testimony had a higher source, although it was said “to the Jew first.”

But, secondly, something more therefore was needed for the accomplishment of this mission, that is, power. They were to tarry at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. Jesus would send the Holy Ghost whom He had promised, of whom the prophets also had spoken.

While blessing His disciples, heaven and heavenly grace characterising His relationship with them, Jesus was parted from them, and carried up into heaven; and they returned to Jerusalem with joy.

It will have been remarked that the narrative of Luke is very general here, and contains the great principles on which the doctrines and proofs of the resurrection are founded; the unbelief of the natural heart so graphically painted in the most simple and touching accounts; the disciples' attachment to their own hopes of the kingdom, and the difficulty with which the doctrine of the word took possession of their hearts, although, in proportion to their realisation, their hearts opened to it with joy; the Person of Jesus risen, still a man, the gracious One they knew; the doctrine of the word; the understanding of the word bestowed; the power of the Holy Ghost given — all that belonged to the truth and to the eternal order of things made manifest. Nevertheless, Jerusalem was still recognised as the first object of grace on earth according to God's dispensations towards her; yet she was not, even as a place, the point of contact and connection

between Jesus and His disciples. He does not bless them from Jerusalem, although, in the dealings of God with the earth, they were to tarry there for the gift of the Holy Ghost; for themselves and their relationship with Him He leads them out to Bethany. From thence He had set out to present Himself as King to Jerusalem. It was there that the resurrection of Lazarus took place; there that the family, which present the character of the remnant — attached to His Person, now rejected, with better hopes — in the most striking manner received Jesus. It was thither He retired when His testimony to the Jews was ended, that His heart might rest for a few moments among those whom He loved, who, through grace, loved Him. It was there that He established the link (as to circumstances) between the remnant attached to His Person and heaven. From thence He ascends.

Jerusalem is but the public starting-point of their ministry, as it had been the last scene of His witness. For themselves it was Bethany and heaven which were connected in the Person of Jesus. From thence was the testimony to come for Jerusalem herself. This is the more striking when we compare it with Matthew. There He goes to Galilee, the place of association with the Jewish remnant, and there is no ascension, and the mission is exclusively to the nations. It is a carrying out to them, what was then confined to the Jews and forbidden to be carried further.

NOTE. In the text I have strictly followed the passage; I add some developments here, connecting this Gospel with the others.

There are two distinct parts in the sufferings of Christ: 1st, that which He suffered from the efforts of Satan — as man in conflict with the power of the enemy who has dominion over death, but with the sense of what it was from God in view, and this in communion with His Father, presenting His requests to Him; and 2ndly, that which He suffered to accomplish expiation for sin, when actually bearing our sins, made sin for us, drinking the cup which the will of His Father had given Him to drink.

When speaking on the Gospel of John, I shall enter more on the character of the temptations; but I would notice here, that at the commencement of His public life the tempter endeavored to turn Jesus aside by setting before Him the attractiveness of all that which, as privilege, belonged to Him, all that might be agreeable to Christ as man, as to which His own will might work. He was defeated by the perfect obedience of Christ. He would have

Christ, being Son, go out of the place He had taken as servant. Blessed be God he failed. Christ by simple obedience bound the strong man as to this life, and then returning in the power of the Spirit into Galilee spoiled his goods. Putting away sin and bearing our sins was another matter. Satan then departed from Him for a season. In Gethsemane he returns, using the fear of death to throw anguish into the heart of the Lord. And He must needs go through death; and death was not only Satan's power but God's judgment on man, if man was to be delivered from it, for it was man's portion; and He alone, by going down into it, could break its chains. He had become man, that man might be delivered and even glorified. The distress of His soul was complete. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Thus His soul was that which the soul of a man ought to be in the presence of death, when Satan puts forth all his power in it, with the cup of God's judgment as yet unemptied in it: only He was perfect in it; it was a part of His perfection put to the test in all that was possible to man. But with tears and supplications He makes His request to Him who had power to save Him from death. For the moment, His agony increases: presenting it to God makes it more acute. This is the case in our own little conflicts. But thus the thing is settled according to perfection before God. His soul enters into it with God; He prays more fervently. It is now evident that this cup — which He puts before His Father's eyes when Satan presents it to Him as the power of death in His soul — must be drunk. As obedience to His Father, He takes it in peace. To drink it is but perfect obedience, instead of being the power of Satan. But it must be drunk in reality; and upon the cross Jesus, the Savior of our souls, enters into the second phase of His sufferings. He goes under death as the judgment of God, the separation of the soul from the light of His countenance. All that a soul which enjoyed nothing except communion with God could suffer in being deprived of it, the Lord suffered according to the perfect measure of the communion which was interrupted. Yet He gave glory to God — "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." The cup — for I pass over the outrages and insults of men: we may spare them — the cup was drunk. Who can tell the horrors of that suffering? The true pains of death, understood as God understands it, felt — according to the value of His presence — divinely, as by a man who depended on that presence as man. But all is accomplished; and that which God required in respect to sin is done — exhausted, and He is glorified as

to it: so that He has only to bless whosoever comes to Him through a Christ who is alive and was dead, and who lives for ever a man, for ever before God.

The sufferings of Christ in His body (real as they were), the insults and upbraidings of men, were but the preface of His affliction, which, by depriving Him as man of all consolation, left Him wholly in the place of judgment as made sin, to His sufferings* in connection with the judgment of sin, when the God who would have been His full comfort was, as forsaking Him, the source of sorrow which left all the rest as unfelt and forgotten.

- [* Psalm 22 is His appeal to God from the violence and wickedness of man to find Himself there forsaken and only sin in His sight, but perfect there. Christ suffered all from man — hostility, unrighteousness, desertion, denial, betrayal, and then, as trusting in God, forsaking. But what a spectacle, the one righteous Man who did put His trust in Him to have to declare, at the end of His life, openly to all, He was forsaken of God!