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**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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MARK

The Gospel according to Mark has a character that differs in certain respects from all the others. Each Gospel, as we have seen, has its own character; each is occupied with the Person of the Lord in a different point of view: as a divine Person, the Son of God; as the Son of man; as the Son of David, the Messiah presented to the Jews, Emmanuel. But Mark is occupied with none of these titles. It is the Servant we find here — and in particular His service as bearing the word — the active service of Christ in the gospel. The glory of His divine Person shows itself, it is true, in a remarkable manner through His service, and, as it were, in spite of Himself, so that He avoids its consequences. But still service is the subject of the book. Doubtless we shall find the character of His teaching developing itself (and truth consequently shaking off the Jewish forms under which it had been held), as well as the account of His death, on which all depended for the establishment of faith. But that which distinguishes this Gospel is the character of service and of Servant that is attached to the life of Jesus — the work that He came to accomplish personally as living on the earth. On this account the history of His birth is not found in Mark. It opens with the announcement of the beginning of the gospel. John the Baptist is the herald, the forerunner, of Him who brought this good news to man.

The message is new — at least in the absolute and complete character it assumes, and in its direct and immediate application. It was not the Jewish privileges which should be obtained by repenting and returning to the Lord. The Lord was coming according to His promise. To prepare His way before Him, John was preaching repentance for the remission of sins. It was this they needed: remission of sins for the repentant was the great thing, the formal object of John's mission.

Repentance and remission of sins refer clearly to the responsibility of man, here of Israel, in his natural standing with God; and clearing that as to man's state relatively to God, morally and responsibly qualify him for the reception of purposed blessing — morally in that he judges the sins in principle as God does, and responsibly by God's forgiving them all. Hence

also remission is necessarily a present actual thing. There is a governmental forgiveness as well as a justifying one, but the principle is the same, and the latter is the basis of the former. Only where it is governmental it may be accompanied by various accompanying dealings of God, only the sin is no longer imputed as to present relationship with God, as in justifying, this is eternally true. In justifying forgiveness as in Romans 4, showing by its use of Psalm 32, the common character of non-imputation — it is founded on the work of Christ, and hence is absolute and unchangeable. Sin is not imputed and never can be, because the work is done and finished which puts it away out of God's sight: that — eternal, absolute, and immutable in itself — is the basis of all God's dealings with man in grace. Grace reigns through righteousness. Hebrews 9, 10 unfolds this, where the conscience and coming to God, and that in the holiest, are concerned. So Romans 3-5, where the question is judicial, a matter of judgment, wrath, and justifying. It is the basis of blessings, not the end, great as it is in itself — peace with God and reconciliation. Here it was the ground of all the blessings Israel will have by the new covenant (founded on Christ's death), but being rejected, those who believed entered into better and heavenly blessings. In Exodus 32:14, 34, we get governmental forgiveness, not justifying. In the case of David's great sin, it was pardoned when owned, the iniquity of it put away, but severe chastisement connected with it because he had given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. God's glory in righteousness had to be maintained before the world (2 Samuel 12:13, 14).

Here it was a proposal of present forgiveness to Israel, which will be accomplished in the last days; and then, as their long rejection will have closed in governmental forgiveness, they will also through the death and blood-shedding of Christ at least the remnant, be forgiven and justified for the enjoyment of the promises under the new covenant (compare Acts 3).

The prophets had indeed announced pardon if the people returned to the Lord; but here it was the present object of the address. The people go out in a body to avail themselves of it. Conscience at least was stirred; and whatever might be the pride of their leaders, the sense of Israel's condition was felt by the people, as soon as anything outside the routine of religion acted on the heart and conscience — that is to say, when God spoke. They confess their sins. With some perhaps it was only natural conscience, that

is, not a really quickening work; but at any rate it was wrought upon by the testimony of God.

But John, rigidly separate from the people, and living apart from human society, proclaims another, mightier than he, whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose: He would not merely preach repentance accepted by the baptism of water; He would bestow the Holy Ghost, power, on those who received His testimony. Here our Gospel passes on rapidly to the service of Him whom John thus declared. It only sets forth summarily that which introduces Him into this service.

The Lord takes His place among the repentant of His people, and, submitting to John's baptism, He sees heaven open to Him, and the Holy Ghost descending upon Him like a dove. The Father acknowledges Him as His Son on earth, in whom He is well pleased. He is then led by the Holy Ghost into the wilderness, where He undergoes the temptation of Satan for forty days; He is with the wild beasts, and angels exercise their ministry towards Him. Here we see His whole position — the character which the Lord takes on earth — all its features and relations with that which surrounded Him, gathered into these two or three verses. It has been treated of in its details in Matthew.

After this John disappears from the scene, giving place to the public ministry of Christ, of whom he was only the herald; and Christ Himself appears in the place of testimony, declaring that the time was fulfilled; that it was now no question of prophecies or of days to come; that God was going to set up His kingdom, and that they ought to repent and receive the good news which at that very moment was proclaimed to them.

Our evangelist passes* rapidly on to every branch of the service of Christ. Having presented the Lord as undertaking the public ministry which called on men to receive the good news as a present thing (the time of the fulfillment of the ways of God being come), he exhibits Him as calling others to accomplish this same work in His name by following Him. His word does not fail in its effect. those whom He calls forsake all and follow Him.** He goes into the city to teach on the sabbath-day. His word does not consist of arguments which evidence the uncertainty of man, but comes with the authority of One who knows the truth which He proclaims — authority which in fact was that of God, who can communicate truth.

He speaks also as One who possesses it; and He gives proof that He does. The word, which thus presents itself to men, has power over demons. A man possessed by an evil spirit was there. The evil spirit bore testimony, in spite of himself, to Him who spake, and whose presence was insupportable to him; but the word that aroused him had power to cast him out. Jesus rebukes him — commands him to hold his peace and to come out of the man; and the evil spirit, after manifesting the reality of his presence and his malice, submits, and departs from the man. Such was the power of the word of Christ. It is not surprising that the fame of this act should spread through all the country; but the Lord continues His path of service wherever work presented itself. He goes into the house of Peter, whose wife's mother lay sick of a fever. He heals her immediately; and when the sabbath was ended, they bring Him all the sick. He, ever ready to serve, (precious Lord!) heals them all.

[* This rapidity characterises Mark, as does the word "immediately."

[** It is the fact in itself which is given here, as also in Matthew. Luke's account will give occasion to enter more into detail as to the call of the disciples. From John the Baptist's days they had been more or less associated with the Lord — at least these had.]

But it was not to surround Himself with a crowd that the Lord labored; and in the morning, long before day, He departs into the wilderness to pray. Such was the character of His service — wrought in communion with His God and Father, and in dependence upon Him. He goes alone into a solitary place. The disciples find Him, and tell Him that all are seeking Him; but His heart is in His work. The general desire does not bring Him back. He goes on His way to fulfill the work which was given Him to do — preaching the truth among the people; for this was the service to which He devoted Himself.

But, however devoted to this service, His heart was not made rigid by pre-occupation; He was always Himself with God. A poor leper comes to Him, acknowledging His power, but uncertain as to His will, as to the love that wielded that power. Now this dreadful disease not only shut the man himself out, but defiled every one who even touched the sufferer. But nothing stops Jesus in the service to which His love calls Him. The leper was wretched, an outcast from his fellow-creatures and from society, and excluded from Jehovah's house. But the power of God was present. The

leper must be re-assured as to the goodwill on which his dejected heart could not reckon. Who would care for such a wretch as he? He had faith as to the power that was in Christ; but his thoughts of himself concealed from him the extent of the love that had visited him. Jesus puts forth His hand and touches him.

The lowliest of men approaches sin, and that which was the token of sin, and dispels it; the Man, who in the might of His love touched the leper without being defiled, was the God who alone could remove the leprosy which made one afflicted with it miserable and outcast.

The Lord speaks with an authority that declares at once His love and His divinity: "I will, be thou clean." I will — here was the love of which the leper doubted, the authority of God who alone has the right to say I WILL. The effect followed the expression of His will. This is the case when God speaks. And who healed leprosy except Jehovah only? Was He the One who had come down low enough to touch this defiled being that defiled every other that had to do with him? Yes, the only One; but it was God who had come down, love which had reached so low, and which, in thus doing, showed itself mighty for every one that trusted in it. It was undefilable purity in power, and which could therefore minister in love to the vilest and delights to do so. He came to defiled man, not to be defiled by the contact, but to remove the defilement. He touched the leper in grace, but the leprosy was gone.

He hides Himself from human acclamations, and bids the man who had been healed to go and show himself to the priests according to the law of Moses. But this submission to the law, bore testimony in fact to His being Jehovah, for Jehovah alone, under the law, sovereignly cleansed the leper. The priest was but the witness that it had been done. This miracle being noised abroad, by attracting the multitude, sends Jesus away into the wilderness. Afterwards (chap. 2) He goes again into the city, and immediately the multitude gather together. What a living picture of the Lord's life of service! He preaches to them. This was His object and His service (see chap. 1:38). But again, in devoting Himself to the humble accomplishment of it as committed to Him, His service itself, His love — for who serves like God when He deigns to do it? — bring out His divine rights. He knew the real source of all these evils, and He could bring in its

remedy. "Thy sins," said He to the poor paralytic man, who was brought to Him with a faith that overcame difficulties, persevering in spite of them — that perseverance of faith which is fed by the sense of want, and certainty that power is to be found in Him who is sought — "thy sins are forgiven thee." To the reasoning of the scribes He gives an answer that silenced every gainsayer. He exercises the power that authorised Him to pronounce the pardon of the poor sufferer.* The murmuring of the scribes brought out doctrinally who was there; as the verdict of the priests, who pronounce the leper clean, put the seal of their authority upon the truth that Jehovah, the healer of Israel, was there. That which Jesus carries on is His work, His testimony. The effect is to make it manifest that Jehovah is there, and has visited His people. It is Psalm 103 which is fulfilled, with respect to the rights and the revelation of the Person of Him who wrought.

[* We must distinguish between governmental forgiveness, and absolute pardon of sins. Only, such as man is, there could not have been the former without the latter. But till Christ was rejected and had died this was not fully brought out.]

Jesus leaves the city; the people flock around Him; and again He teaches them. The call of Levi gives occasion for a new development of His ministry. He was come to call sinners, and not the righteous. After this He tells them that He could not put the new divine energy, unfolded in Himself, into the old forms of Pharisaism. And there was another reason for it the presence of the Bridegroom. How could the children of the bridechamber fast while the Bridegroom was with them? He should be taken from them, and then would be the time to fast. He proceeds to insist on the incompatibility between the old Jewish vessels and the power of the gospel. The latter would but subvert Judaism, to which they sought to attach it. That which took place when the disciples went through the cornfields confirms this doctrine.

Ordinances lost their authority in the presence of the King ordained of God, rejected and a pilgrim on the earth. Moreover the sabbath — a sign of the covenant between God and the Jews — was made for man, and not man for the sabbath; therefore He, the Son of man, was Lord of the sabbath. As Son of David rejected, the ordinances lost their force, and were subordinate to Him. As Son of man possessor (in the sight of God) of all the rights which God had bestowed on man, He was Lord of the sabbath,

which was made for man. In principle the old things were passed away. But this was not all. It was in fact the new things of grace and power, which did not admit of the old order of things. But the question was, whether God could act in grace, and bestow blessing, in sovereignty, on His people — whether He must submit to the authority of men availing themselves of His ordinances against His goodness, or do good according to His own power and love as being above all. Was man to limit the operation of God's goodness? And this, in truth, was the new wine which the Lord brought to man.

Such was the question raised in the synagogue (chap. 3) on the occasion of the man with the withered hand. The Lord sets it publicly before their conscience; but neither heart nor conscience answered Him; and He acts in His service according to the goodness and rights of God, and heals the man.* The Pharisees and their enemies, the Herodians — for all were against God and united in this — consult together how they might destroy Christ. Jesus departs to the sea-coast of the sea of Tiberias. There the multitude follow Him, because of all that He had done; so that He is obliged to have a boat, that He may be outside the crowd. Spirits are subject to Him, compelled to own that He is the Son of God; but He forbids them to make Him known.

[* One cannot but see how the old system, based on what man ought to be for God, is being set aside for what God is for man. But, the former having been established by God, nothing but the words and works of Jesus would have justified the Jews in giving it up. As it was, it was clearly opposition and hatred to the full revelation of Him who had ordained the other. Compare John 15:22, 24.]

Service in preaching, and in seeking souls, in devoting Himself to all, showing Himself by His acts to be the possessor of divine power, hiding Himself from the notice of men, in order to fulfill, apart from their applause, the service He had undertaken — such was His human life on earth. Love and divine power were disclosed in the service which that love impelled Him to accomplish, and in the accomplishment of which that power was exercised. But this could not be circumscribed by Judaism, however subject the Lord was to the ordinances of God given to the Jews.

But, God being thus manifested, the carnal opposition of man soon shows itself.* Here, then, the description of Christ's service ends, and its effect is

manifested. This effect is developed in that which soon follows, with respect both to the iniquity of man and to the counsels of God. Meanwhile the Lord appoints twelve of His disciples to accompany Him, and to go forth preaching in His name. He could, not merely work miracles but, communicate to others the power to work them, and that by way of authority. He goes back into the house, and the multitude re-assemble. And here the thoughts of man display themselves at the same time as those of God. His friends search for Him as one who was beside Himself. The scribes, possessing influence as learned men, attribute to Satan a power which they could not deny. The Lord answers them by showing that in general all sin could be pardoned; but that to acknowledge the power, and attribute it to the enemy, rather than own Him who wielded it, was taking the place not of ignorant unbelief but of adversaries, thus blaspheming against the Holy Ghost — was a sin that could never be pardoned. The “strong man” was there; but Jesus was stronger than he, for He cast out the devils. Would Satan endeavor to overthrow his own house? The fact that the power of Jesus manifested itself in this manner left them without excuse. God’s “strong man” was then come: Israel rejected Him; and, as regards their leaders, by blaspheming against the Holy Ghost, they brought themselves under hopeless condemnation. The Lord therefore immediately distinguishes the remnant who received His word from all natural connection He had with Israel. His mother or His “brethren” are the disciples who stand around Him, and those who do the will of God. This really sets aside Israel at that time.

[* This is the secret of all the history of Jesus, Son of David. All the promises being in Him for the Jews, the servant of every want too and every sorrow, yet being God and God manifested in Him, man could not bear it. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God.]

CHAPTER 4. This introduces the true character and result of His own service, and all the history of the service that should be accomplished unto a far distant future; as well as the responsibility of His disciples, with regard to the share they would have in it, and the quietness of one who trusted in God while thus laboring; the storms also that should occur, that should exercise faith while Jesus apparently took no notice of them; and the just confidence of faith, as well as the power that sustained it.

The whole character of the work at that moment, and until the Lord's return, is described in this fourth chapter.

The Lord resumes in it His habitual work of instruction, but in connection with the development that had just taken place of His relationship with the Jews. He sows. Fruit He no longer sought in His vineyard. In verse 11 we see that the distinction between the Jews and His disciples is marked. To the latter it was given to know the mystery of the kingdom, but to those that were without all these things were done in parables. I do not repeat the remarks I made in speaking of the contents of this parable in Matthew. But that which follows in verse 21 belongs essentially to the Gospel by Mark. We have seen that the Lord was occupied in preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and He committed the preaching of this gospel to others also. He was a sower, and He sowed the word. That was His service, and it was theirs likewise. But is a candle lit to be hidden? Moreover nothing should be hidden. If man did not manifest the truth he had received, God would manifest all things. Let every one take heed to it.

In verse 24 He applies this principle to His disciples. They must take heed to what they heard, for God would act towards them according to their fidelity in the administration of the word committed to them. The love of God sent the word of grace and of the kingdom unto men. That it should reach their conscience was the object of the service committed to the disciples. Christ communicated it to them; they were to make it known to others in all its fullness. According to the measure with which they gave free course to this testimony of love (conformably to the gift they had received), so should it be measured unto them in the government of God. If they hearkened unto that which He communicated to them, they should receive more; for, as a general principle, he who made that which reached him his own should have yet more, and from him who did not truly make it his own it should be taken away.

The Lord then shows them how it should be with regard to Himself. He had sown, and, even as the seed springs up and grows without any act on the sower's part, so would Christ allow the gospel to spread in the world without interposing in any apparent way, it being the peculiar character of the kingdom that the King was not there. But, when harvest time comes, the sower has again to-do with it. So should it be with Jesus: He would

return to look after the harvest. He was personally engaged in the sowing and in the harvest. In the interval, all went on apparently as if left to itself, really without the interference of the Lord in Person.

The Lord makes use of another similitude to describe the character of the kingdom. The small seed that He sowed should become a great system, highly exalted in the earth, capable of affording temporal protection to those that took shelter in it. Thus we have the work of preaching the word; the responsibility of the laborers to whom the Lord would entrust it during His absence; His own action at the beginning and at the end, at seed-time and at harvest, Himself remaining at a distance during the interval; and the formation of a great earthly power as the result of the truth which He preached, and which created a little nucleus around Himself. One part of the history of His followers was yet to be shown. They should find most serious difficulties in their way. The enemy would raise up a storm against them. Apparently Christ took no notice of their situation. They call upon Him, and awake Him by cries, which He answers in grace. He speaks to the wind and the sea, and there is a great calm. At the same time He rebukes their unbelief. They should have counted on Him and on His divine power, and not have thought that He was going to be swallowed up by the waves. They should have remembered their own connection with Him — that, by grace, they were associated with Him. What tranquillity was His! the storm does not disturb Him. Devoted to His work, He took His rest at the moment when service did not require His activity. He rested during the passage. His service only afforded Him those moments snatched by circumstances from labor. His divine tranquillity, which knew no distrust, allowed Him to sleep during the storm. It was not so with the disciples; and, forgetful of His power, unaware of the glory of Him who was with them, they think only of themselves, as though Jesus had forgotten them. One word on His part displays in Him the Lord of creation. This is the real state of the disciples when Israel is set aside. The storm arises. Jesus appears to take no heed. Now faith would have recognised that they were in the same ship with Him. That is to say, if Jesus leaves the seed He has sown to grow until the harvest, He is, none the less, in the same vessel; He shares, not the less truly, the lot of His followers, or rather they share His. The dangers are the danger He and His work are in. That is, there is really none. And how great is the foolishness

of unbelief. Think of their supposing, when the Son of God is come into the world to accomplish redemption and the settled purposes of God, that by, to man's eye, an accidental storm, He and all His work should be unexpectedly sunk in the lake! We are, blessed be His name, in the same boat with Him. If the Son of God does not sink, neither shall we.

But, in another sense, they are not with Him. They are called to serve, when He quits the scene of His labor. We learn this from the demoniac Legion (chap. 5), delivered from his miserable condition. Man — and Israel in particular — was completely under the power of the enemy. Christ, as to the work of His power, completely delivered the one in whose behalf this power was exercised. He is clothed — not naked — in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus to hear His words. But the people of the place are afraid, and send Jesus away — what the world has done with Christ; and in the history of the herd of swine we have the picture of Israel after the remnant has been healed. They are unclean, and Satan drives them to destruction. Now, when Jesus departs, he who had personally experienced the mighty effects of His love would have liked to be with Him; but he was to go home and bear testimony to those around him of all that Jesus had done. He was to serve in the absence of Jesus. In all these narratives we see the work and the devotedness of the Servant, but at the same time the divine power of Jesus manifested in this service.

In the circumstances that follow the cure of the demoniac, we find the true position of Jesus portrayed in His work. He is called upon to heal the daughter of Jairus — even as He came to heal the Jews, had that been possible. As He went toward the house of Jairus to perform this work, a poor incurable woman touches the hem of His garment with faith, and is instantly healed. This was the case with Jesus during His passage among the Jews. In the multitude that surrounded Him, some souls through grace touched Him by faith. In truth, their disease was in itself incurable; but Jesus had life in Himself according to the power of God, and faith drew out its virtue by touching Him. Such are brought to acknowledge their condition, but they are healed. Outwardly He was in the midst of all Israel — faith reaped the benefit in the sense of its own need and of the glory of His Person. Now, with respect to the one who was the object of His journey, remedy was unavailing. Jesus finds her dead, but does not miss the object of His journey. He raises her again, for He can give life. Thus

too with respect to Israel. On the way, those who had faith in Jesus were healed, incurable as they were in themselves; but in fact, as to Israel, the nation was dead in trespasses and sins. Apparently this put a stop to the work of Jesus. But grace will restore life to Israel in the end. We see the perfect grace of Jesus intercepting the effect of the bad tidings brought from the ruler's house. He says to Jairus, as soon as the messenger has told him of his daughter's death, and the inutility of troubling the Master any farther, "Be not afraid, only believe." In effect, although the Lord restores life to a dead Israel in the end of the ages, nevertheless it is by faith that it takes place. The case of the poor woman, although in its direct application it does not go beyond the Jews, yet applies in principle to the healing of every Gentile who, through grace, is brought to touch Jesus by faith.

This history then gives the character of His service, the manner in which — on account of man's condition — it had to be accomplished.

In that which follows, the history (properly so called) of His service is resumed (chap. 6). Only we see Him already rejected by a blinded people, in spite of the power which He had manifested, and which bore testimony to the glory of His Person. Nevertheless He pursues His service, and sends forth His disciples in order that no effort might be wanting; but with the testimony of the judgment that awaited those who should be guilty of the rejection of His mission — a rejection that was already taking place. The Lord however continues to give proof in mercy and in goodness that Jehovah, who had compassion on His people, was there; until at length He had to prepare His disciples for the certain result of His work, namely, His death by the hand of the Gentiles, to whom the chief priests would deliver Him.

To the Jews He was the carpenter, the son of Mary. Their unbelief stopped the beneficent hand of God with regard to themselves. Jesus carries on His work elsewhere, and sends forth His disciples — an act which implied the possession of divine power. It was still to Israel that the mission they received from Him directed them, and they were to pronounce judgment upon the land of Emmanuel, the land of Israel, as a polluted land, wherever their testimony should be rejected. They were to go forth resting on the mighty protection of Him who sent them, and they

should lack nothing. He was sovereign Lord: all things were at His disposal. Christ can not only communicate blessings as the channel of blessing Himself, but can also confer on His disciples the power of casting out devils. The disciples fulfill their task. This passage shows forth in a remarkable manner the position and glory of Christ. He is the servant — for men, the carpenter's son. In His new service, He takes no place but the filling up of that which God had given Him to do. He could do no mighty works there, because of their unbelief — ever ready to serve, but shut up, straitened in the exercise of His love, where no door opened to receive its influence; and nature judging according to sight never does. Only where a need was, His love, never tired, works — must work. The few sick folk profit by a love that despises none, because it never seeks itself.

But, in the following verse, He who could not work mighty works (because His service was dependent on divine conditions, on which God could found and carry on His intercourse with men, in order to reveal Himself) now gives power to others over all unclean spirits, a power which is divine. Any can work miracles, if God gives the power; but God alone can give it. They are to lack nothing, for Emmanuel was there; and to announce judgment if their message was rejected. Divine love had made Him entirely a dependent Servant; but the dependent Servant was God present in grace and righteousness.

But the effect of all these manifestations of power is, that the conscience of the king who then reigned in Israel is awakened; and the evangelist opens to us the history of the murderous opposition of the authorities in Israel to the witnesses for the truth. Herod had put John to death, in order to gratify the iniquity of a woman who pleased him — iniquity that he shared with her. A dance was worth the life of the prophet of God. Such was the ruler of Israel.

The apostles return. Jesus withdraws them from the inquisitive and needy crowd, by going into a desert place; but the multitude follow Him. Jesus, rejected as He is by the land He loved, has compassion on the poor of the flock, and manifests in their behalf the power of Jehovah to bless them according to Psalm 132. He satisfies the poor with bread. Having sent the people away, He crosses the sea on foot; and, rejoining His disciples, the wind ceases — a figure, of which we have spoken when meditating on

Matthew. Their work was finished. As to themselves, in spite of all His miracles, their hearts at that time were still hard, and forgot the miracles, one after the other. The Lord pursues His work of blessing. It was but to touch Him and be healed.

CHAPTER 7. The ruling power in exercise among the Jews had shown itself hostile to the testimony of God, and had put to death the one whom He had sent in the way of righteousness. The scribes, and those who pretended to follow righteousness, had corrupted the people by their teaching, and had broken the law of God.

They washed cups and pots, but not their hearts; and, provided that the priests — religion — gained by it, set aside the duties of children to their parents. But God looked at the heart, and from the heart of man proceeded every kind of impurity, iniquity, and violence. It was that which defiled the man, not having his hands unwashed. Such is the judgment on religiousness without conscience and without fear of God, and the true discernment of what the heart of man is in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

But God must also show His own heart; and if Jesus judged that of man with the eye of God — if He manifested His ways and His faithfulness to Israel; He displayed nevertheless through it all, what God was to those who felt their need of Him and came to Him in faith, owning and resting upon His pure goodness. From the land of Tyre and Sidon comes a woman of the condemned race, a Gentile and a Syrophenician. The Lord replies to her, on her request that He would heal her daughter, that the children (the Jews) must first be filled; that it was not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs: an overwhelming answer, if the sense she had of her need and of the goodness of God had not gone beyond, and set aside, every other thought. These two things made her humble of heart, and ready to own the sovereign favor of God towards the people of His choice in this world. Had He not a right to choose a people? And she was not one of them. But that did not destroy His goodness and His love. She was but a Gentile dog, yet such was the goodness of God that He had bread even for dogs. Christ, the perfect expression of God, the manifestation of God Himself in the flesh, could not deny His goodness and His grace, could not say that faith had higher thoughts of God than were true, for He was

Himself that love. The sovereignty of God was acknowledged — no pretension made to any right whatsoever. The poor woman rested only upon grace. Her faith, with an intelligence given of God, laid hold of the grace which went beyond the promises made to Israel. She penetrates into the heart of the God of love, as He is revealed in Jesus, even as He penetrates into ours, and she enjoys the fruit of it. For this was brought in now: God Himself directly in presence of and connection with man, and man as he was before God — not a rule or system for man to prepare himself for God.

In the next miracle, we see the Lord, by the same grace, bestowing hearing and speech upon a man who was deaf and unable even to express his thoughts. He could have received no fruit from the word, from God, and could give no praise to Him. The Lord is returned into the place where He arose as light on Israel; and here He deals with the remnant alone. He takes the man apart from the multitude. It is the same grace that takes the place of all pretensions to righteousness in man, and that manifests itself to the destitute. Its form, though exercised now in favor of the remnant of Israel, is suited to the condition of Jew or Gentile — it is grace. But as to these too it is the same: He takes the man apart from the crowd, that the work of God may be wrought: the crowd of this world had no real part therein. We see Jesus here, His heart moved at the condition of man, and more especially at the state of His ever-loved Israel, of which this poor sufferer was a striking picture. He causes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. So was it individually, and so will it be with the whole remnant of Israel in the latter days. He acts Himself, and He does all things well. The power of the enemy is destroyed, the man's deafness, his inability to use his tongue as God gave it him, are taken away by His love who acts with the power of God.

The miracle of the loaves bore witness to the presence of the God of Israel, according to His promises; this, to the grace that went beyond the limits of these promises, on the part of God, who judged the condition of those who asserted a claim to them according to righteousness, and that of man, evil in himself; and who delivered man and blessed him in love, withdrawing him from the power of Satan, and enabling him to hear the voice of God, and to praise Him.

There are yet some remarkable features in this part of the history of Christ, which I desire to point out. They manifest the spirit in which Jesus labored at this moment. He departs from the Jews, having shown the emptiness and hypocrisy of their worship, and the iniquity of every human heart as a source of corruption and sin.

The Lord — at this solemn moment, which displayed the rejection of Israel — goes far away from the people to a place where there was no opportunity for service among them, to the borders of the stranger and Canaanite cities of Tyre and Sidon (chap. 7:24), and (His heart oppressed) would have no one know where He was. But God had been too plainly manifested in His goodness and His power, to allow Him to be hidden whenever there was need. The report of what He was had gone abroad, and the quick eye of faith discovered that which alone could meet its need. It is this that finds Jesus (when all, that had outwardly a right to the promises, are deceived by this pretension itself and by their privileges). Faith it is that knows its need, and knows that only, and that Jesus alone can meet it. That which God is to faith is manifested to the one that needs it, according to the grace and power that are in Jesus. Hidden from the Jews, He is grace to the sinner. Thus, also (chap. 7:33), when He heals the deaf man of his deafness and of the impediment in his speech, He takes him aside from the multitude, and looks up to heaven and sighs. Oppressed in His heart by the unbelief of the people, He takes the object of the exercise of His power aside, looks up to the sovereign Source of all goodness, of all help for man, and grieves at the thought of the condition in which man is found. This case then exemplifies more particularly, the remnant according to the election of grace from among the Jews, who are separated by divine grace from the mass of the nation, faith, in these few, being in exercise. The heart of Christ is far from repulsing His (earthly) people. His soul is overwhelmed by the sense of the unbelief that separates them from Him and from deliverance; nevertheless He takes away from some the deaf heart, and looses their tongue, in order that the God of Israel may be glorified.

Thus also on the death of Lazarus, Christ grieves at the sorrow which death brings upon the heart of man. There, however, it was a public testimony.

We shall find in chapter 8 another example of that which we have been noticing. Jesus leads the blind man out of the town. He does not forsake Israel wherever there is faith; but He separates the one who possesses it from the mass, and brings him into connection with the power, the grace, the heaven, whence blessing flowed — blessing consequently which extended to the Gentiles. Power was not exercised in the midst of manifest unbelief. This clearly marks out the position of Christ with regard to the people. He pursues His service, but He retires to God because of Israel's unbelief: but it is to the God of all grace. There His heart found refuge till the great hour of atonement.

It is on this account, as it appears to me, that we have (chap. 8) the second miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. The Lord acts again in favor of Israel, no longer as administering Messianic power in the midst of the people (which was implied, as we have seen, in the number twelve), but in spite of His rejection by Israel, continuing to exercise His power in a divine manner and apart from man. The number seven* has always the force of superhuman perfection — that which is complete: this however applied to what is complete in the power of evil as well as good, when it is not human and subordinate to God. Here it is divine. It is that intervention of God which is unwearied, and which is according to His own power, which it is the principal object of the repetition of the miracle to display.

[* It may be remarked that seven is the highest prime, that is indivisible, number; twelve, the most divisible there is.]

Afterwards the condition both of the heads of Israel and of the remnant is displayed. The Pharisees require a sign; but no sign should be given to that generation. It was simply unbelief when abundant proofs of who He was were before them; they were the very things which had led to the demand. The Lord departs from them. But the blind and unintelligent condition of the remnant is also manifested. The Lord warns them to beware of the spirit and the teaching of the Pharisees, the false pretenders to a holy zeal for God; and of the Herodians, the servile votaries of the spirit of the world, who, to please the emperor, set God entirely aside.

In using the word “leaven,” the Lord gives the disciples occasion to show their deficiency in spiritual intelligence. If the Jews learnt nothing from the Lord's miracles, but still asked for signs, even the disciples did not realise

the divine power manifested in them. I do not doubt that this condition is set forth in the blind man of Bethsaida.

Jesus takes him by the hand and leads him out of the town, away from the multitude, and uses that which was of Himself, that which possessed the efficacy of His own Person, to perform the cure.* The first effect well depicts the condition of the disciples. They saw, doubtless, but in a confused manner, “men, as trees, walking.” But the Lord’s love is not wearied by their unbelieving dullness of intelligence; He acts according to the power of His own intention towards them, and causes them to see clearly. Afterwards — away from Israel — the uncertainty of unbelief is seen in juxtaposition with the certainty of faith (however obscure its intelligence may be), and Jesus, forbidding the disciples to speak of that which they certainly believed (the time was gone by for convincing Israel of Christ’s rights as Messiah), announces to them that which should happen to Himself, for the accomplishment of God’s purposes in grace as Son of man, after His rejection by Israel.** So that everything is now, as we may say, in its place. Israel does not recognise the Messiah in Jesus; consequently He no longer addresses the people in that character. His disciples believe Him to be the Messiah, and He tells them of His death and resurrection.

[* Spittle, in connection with the sanctity of the Rabbis, was highly esteemed by the Jews in this respect; but here its efficacy is connected with the Person of Him who used it.]

[** We have nothing here of the church, nor of the keys of the kingdom These depend on what is not introduced here as a part of Peter’s confession — the Son of the living God. We have the glory of the kingdom coming in power, in contrast with the rejected Christ the prophet-servant in Israel.]

Now there may be (and it is a most important practical truth) true faith, without the heart being formed according to the full revelation of Christ, and without the flesh being practically crucified in proportion to the measure of knowledge one has of the object of faith. Peter acknowledged indeed, by the teaching of God, that Jesus was the Christ; but he was far from having his heart pure according to the mind of God in Christ. And when the Lord announces His rejection, humiliation and death, and that before all the world, the flesh of Peter — wounded by the idea of a Master thus despised and rejected — shews its energy by daring to rebuke the Lord Himself. This attempt of Satan’s to discourage the disciples by the

dishonor of the cross stirs up the Lord's heart. All His affection for His disciples, and the sight of those poor sheep before whom the enemy was putting a stumbling block, bring a vehement censure upon Peter, as being the instrument of Satan and speaking on his part. Alas for us! the reason was plain — he savored the things of men, and not those of God; for the cross comprises in itself all the glory of God. Man prefers the glory of man, and thus Satan governs him. The Lord calls the people and His disciples, and explains distinctly to them that if they would follow Him, they must take part with Him, and bear their cross. For thus, in losing their life, they would save it, and the soul was worth all beside. Moreover, if any one was ashamed of Jesus and of His words, the Son of man would be ashamed of him, when He should come in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. For glory belonged to Him, whatever might be His humiliation. He then sets this before His chief disciples, in order to strengthen their faith.

CHAPTER 9. In Matthew we saw the transfiguration announced in terms that related to the subject of that Gospel — the rejected Christ taking His glorious position as Son of man. In each of the Gospels it is in connection with the moment when this transition is clearly set forth; but in each case with a particular character. In Mark we have seen the humble and devoted service of Christ in proclaiming the kingdom, whatever might be the divine glory that shone through His humiliation. Accordingly the manifestation of the transition to glory is here announced as the coming of the kingdom in power. There is nothing that very particularly distinguishes the recital here from that in Matthew, excepting that the isolation of Jesus and the three disciples at this moment is more strongly marked in verse 2, and that the facts are related without addition. The Lord afterwards charges them to tell no one what they had seen, until after His resurrection from among the dead.

We may remark here, that it is indeed the kingdom in power that is manifested. It is not the power of the Holy Ghost bringing the sinner as a holy member of the body into connection with Christ the Head, revealing to it the heavenly glory of Christ as He is at the right hand of the Father. Christ is on earth. He is there in connection with the great witnesses of the Jewish economy (the law and prophecy), but witnesses who give place entirely to Him, while participating with Him in the glory of the kingdom.

But Christ is manifested in glory on the earth — the man in glory is recognised as Son of God, as He is known in the cloud. It was the glory as it shall be manifested on the earth, the glory of the kingdom, and God is still in the cloud, though revealing His glory in it. This is not our position as yet without a veil; only that the veil as to our relationship with God is rent from top to bottom, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Christ. But this is spiritual privilege, not public display our veil as to that, our body, is not rent; but Christ's, as the title of entrance, is.*

[* The entrance into the cloud does not form part of the revelation here. We find it in Luke. The cloud for Israel was the place where God dwelt; it was (Matthew 17) a bright cloud.]

But this position of glory could not be taken by the Lord, nor the glorious reign be established, excepting in a new order of things. Christ must rise from the dead to establish it. It did not accord with His presentation as Messiah, as He then was. Therefore He commands His disciples not to make it known till after His resurrection. It would then be a powerful confirmation of the doctrine of the kingdom in glory. This manifestation of the glory confirmed the faith of the disciples at that time (as Gethsemane taught them the reality of His sufferings, and of His conflicts with the prince of darkness); and would afterwards form a subject of their testimony, and its confirmation, when Christ should have taken His new position.

We may see the character of this manifestation, and its relation to the earthly kingdom of glory of which the prophets had spoken, in 2 Peter 1:19. Read there, “We have the word of prophecy confirmed.”

The disciples had stopped at the threshold. In fact, although their eyes were opened, they saw “men as trees walking.” What, they questioned between themselves, could this “rising from among the dead” mean? Resurrection was known to them; all the sect of the Pharisees believed in it. But this power which delivered from the condition in which man and even the saints were found, implying too that others were still left in it when that power was exercised, of this they were totally ignorant. That there was a resurrection in which God would raise up all the dead at the last day, they had no doubt. But that the Son of man was the resurrection and the life — the absolute triumph over death of the last Adam, the Son

of God having life in Himself, manifested by His resurrection from among the dead (a deliverance that shall be accomplished in the saints also in due time), of this they understood nothing. Doubtless they received the Lord's words as true, as having authority; but His meaning was incomprehensible to them.

Now unbelief never fails to find out difficulties that justify it in its own eyes which refuse to perceive the divine proofs of the truth — difficulties great enough in appearance, and which may trouble the minds of those who, through grace, are inclined to believe, or who have believed, but are still weak in the faith.

The prophets had said that Elias must first come. The scribes insisted on this. Struck with the glory that undeniably confirmed the pretensions of Christ, the disciples speak to Him of this difficulty. The conviction which the sight of the glory brought to their mind, made them confess the difficulty with regard to which they had previously been silent, not daring to bring it forward. But now the proof is strong enough to embolden them to face the difficulty.

In fact, the word spoke of it, and Jesus accepts it as the truth; Elias was to come and restore all things. And he shall indeed come before the manifestation of the glory of the Son of man; but first of all the Son of man must suffer and be rejected. This also was written, as well as the mission of Elias. Moreover, before this manifestation of Christ, which tested the Jews as to their responsibility, God had not failed to supply them with a testimony according to the spirit and power of Elias; and they had ill-treated him as they listed. It was written that the Son of man should suffer before His glory, as truly as that Elias should come. However, as we have said, in point of testimony to the Jews, he who took morally the place of Elias had come. They had treated him as they were going to treat the Lord. Thus also John had said that he was not Elias, and he quotes Isaiah 40, which speaks of the testimony; but he never quotes Malachi 4, which relates to Elias personally. The Lord (Matthew 11:10) applies Malachi 3:1; but John, Isaiah.

Come down from the mountain, the people rush towards Him, astonished apparently at this mysterious absence from His disciples, and salute Him with the reverence with which His whole life had inspired them. But that

which had taken place in His absence only confirmed the solemn truth that He must depart, which had just been demonstrated by a more glorious testimony. The remnant even, they who believed, knew not how to profit by the power which was now on earth. The faith of those even who believed did not realise the presence of the Messiah — the power of Jehovah, the Healer of Israel: wherefore then still remain among the people and the disciples? The poor father expresses his affliction in a touching manner, in words that show a heart brought by the sense of its need to a right condition, but very weak in faith. The miserable state of his child is related, and his heart presents a true picture of the condition of the remnant — faith that required support on account of the unbelief under which it was buried. Israel was in no better condition than the poor child. But power was present, capable of all things. That was not the difficulty. Is there faith to profit by it? was the question. “If thou canst,” said the afflicted father to Jesus. “If thou canst (replied the Lord) applies to thy faith; “if thou canst believe, all things are possible.” The poor father, true of heart, confesses his own state with grief, and seeks, in the goodness of Christ, help for his failure. Thus the position of Israel was plainly shown forth. Almighty power was present to heal them to deliver them from the power of Satan. It was to be done through faith, for the soul was to return to God. And there was faith in those who, touched by the testimony of His power, and moved by the grace of God, sought in Jesus the remedy for their woes and the foundation for their hopes. Their faith was weak and wavering; but wherever it existed, Jesus acted with the sovereign power of His own grace, and of the goodness of God that finds its measure in itself. However far unbelief may have gone in those who should profit by the grace of a dispensation, wherever there is a need to meet, Jesus answers to it when He is looked to. And this is a great mercy and encouragement for us.

Nevertheless, for this power to be exercised by man himself (to which God called him), it was needful that he should draw very near to God — that he to whom it was committed should accustom himself to communion with God, by withdrawing from all that connected him with the world and the flesh.

Let us here recapitulate the principles of this narrative with respect to their general application. The Lord, who was going away, to be seen no

more of the world until He came in glory, finds, on coming down from the mount of transfiguration, a case of the power of Satan over man, over the Jewish people. It had continued from almost the commencement of the child's existence. The faith that recognises the intervention of God in Christ, and takes shelter in it from present evil, is weak and wavering, pre-occupied with the evil, the sight of which conceals in great measure the power that masters and takes it away. Still the sense of need is deep enough to make it have recourse to that power.

It is the unbelief which knows not how to count on the power that is present, which puts an end to the relations of Christ with man. It is not man's misery that does so — it was this that brought Him down to earth. But the almighty power is present — it only needs faith to profit by it. But if the heart, on account of the enemy's power, turns to Jesus, it can (thank God) bring its unbelief to Him as well as all the rest. There is love and power in Him for every kind of weakness. The people crowd around, attracted by the sight of the enemy's power. Can the Lord heal him? But can he allow the testimony of Satan's power to invade their hearts? This is the curiosity of men whose imagination is filled with the effect of the enemy's presence. But, whatever might be the unbelief of man, Christ was present, the testimony of a power that, in love to men, destroyed the effects of the power of the enemy. The people gather round — Jesus sees it, and with a word casts out the enemy. He acts according to the necessity of His power, and the purposes of the love of God. Thus the effort of the enemy occasioned the intervention of Jesus, which the weakness of the father's faith tended to arrest. Nevertheless, if we lay all our infirmity, as well as our misery, before Christ, He answers according to the fullness of His power. On the other hand, if the flesh meddles with the thoughts of faith, it hinders intelligence in the ways of God. While journeying, Christ explained His death and His new condition in resurrection. Why blame the lack of intelligence which hid all this from them, and filled their minds with ideas of earthly and Messianic glory? The secret of their want of intelligence lay here. He had told them plainly; but on the way they disputed among themselves which should have the first place in the kingdom. The thoughts of the flesh filled their heart, in regard to Jesus, with exactly the opposite of that which engaged the mind of God respecting Him. Infirmity, presented to Jesus, finds an answer in power

and in sovereign grace; the flesh and its desires hide from us, even when thinking of Him, all the import of the thoughts of God. It was their own glory they were seeking in the kingdom; the cross — the true path to glory — was unintelligible to them.

After this the Lord resumes with His disciples the great subject before Him at this moment; and which was, in every way, that which now must be decided. He was to be rejected; and He separates Himself from the multitude, with His disciples, to instruct them on this point. Pre-occupied with His glory, with His rights as Messiah, they do not understand it. Their faith even, such as it was, blinds them to all beyond that; because, while rightly attaching itself to the Person of Christ, it connected — or rather, their own hearts, in which the faith existed, connected — with Christ the accomplishment of that which their flesh desired and sought in Him for themselves. How subtle is the heart! This betrays itself in their dispute for pre-eminence. Their faith is too weak to bear elucidations that contradicted their ideas (v. 32). These ideas are manifested without disguise among themselves. Jesus reproves them, and gives them a little child for an example, as He had so often done before. He that would follow Christ must have a spirit quite opposite to that of the world — a spirit belonging to that which was weak and despised by the pride of the world. In receiving such a one, they would receive Christ; in receiving Christ, they would receive the Father. It was eternal things that were in question, and the spirit of a man must then be the spirit of a child.

The world was so contrary to Christ, that he who was not against Him was for Him.* The Son of man was to be rejected. Faith in His Person was the thing, not now individual service to Him. Alas! the disciples were still thinking of themselves: "He followeth not us." They must share His rejection; and if any one gave them a cup of cold water, God would remember it. Whatever would cause them to stumble in their walk, were it even their own right eye or hand, they would do well to cut off; for it was not the things of an earthly Messiah that were in question, but the things of eternity. And all should be tested by the perfect holiness of God, and that in judgment by one means or another. Every one should be salted with fire — the good and the bad. Where there was life, the fire would only consume the flesh; for when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. If the judgment reaches

the wicked (and assuredly it shall reach them), it is condemnation — a fire that is not quenched. But, for the good, there was also something else: they should be salted with salt. Those who were consecrated to God, whose life was an offering to Him, should not lack the power of holy grace, which binds the soul to God and inwardly preserves it from evil. Salt is not the gentleness that pleases (which grace produces without doubt), but that energy of God within us which connects everything in us with God, and dedicates the heart to Him, binding it to Him in the sense of obligation and of desire, rejecting all in oneself that is contrary to Him (obligation that flows from grace, but which acts all the more powerfully on that account). Thus, practically, it was distinctive grace, the energy of holiness, which separates from all evil; but by setting apart for God. Salt was good: here the effect produced in the soul, the condition of the soul, is so called, as well as the grace that produces this condition. Thus they who offered themselves to God were set apart for Him; they were the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savor, wherewith can it be salted? It is used for seasoning other things; but if the salt needs it for itself, there is nothing left that can salt it. So would it be with Christians; if they who were of Christ did not render this testimony, where should anything be found, apart from Christians, to render it to them and produce it in them?

[* Some have difficulty in reconciling this with: “Forbid him not, he that is not with me is against me.” But they coalesce when the main point is seen; Christ was a divine criterion of man’s state, and brought things to an issue. The world was wholly, absolutely, against Him. If a man was not, there was no middle state, he was for Him. But things being brought to an issue, if a man was not for Him, he was of the world, and so against Him.]

Now this sense of obligation to God which separates from evil, this judgment of all evil in the heart, must be in oneself. It is not a question of judging others, but of placing oneself before God, thus becoming the salt, having it in oneself. With regard to others, one must seek peace; and real separation from all evil is that which enables us to walk in peace together. In a word, Christians were to keep themselves separate from evil and near to God in themselves; and to walk with God in peace among one another. No instruction could be more plain, more important, more valuable. It judges, it directs, the whole christian life in a few words.

But the end of the Lord’s service drew near. Having described in these principles the exigencies of eternity and the character of christian life, He

brings back all the relations of God with man to their original elements, setting aside the world and its glory, and Jewish glory also, as to its immediate accomplishment, and pointing out the path of eternal life in the cross, and in the saving power of God. Nevertheless He takes the place of obedience Himself, and of service — the true place of man — in the midst of all this: God Himself being introduced on the other hand, in His proper character as God, in His nature and in His divine rights; the special glory that belongs to dispensations, and the relationships proper to them, being left out.

CHAPTER 10. It is a striking principle which meets us here — the relationships of nature (as God has Himself created them at the beginning) re-established in their original authority, while the heart is judged, and the cross the sole means of drawing nigh to the God who was their creative source. On earth Christ could offer nothing but the cross to those who followed Him. The glory to which the cross would lead has been shown to some of them; but as to Himself He took the place of servant. It was the knowledge of God by Him that should form them for this glory and lead them to it; for in fact that was life eternal. All other intermediate ways had, in the hands of men, become hostile to the God who had granted them, and therefore to His manifestation in the Person of Christ.

We find then (v. 1-12), the original relationship of man and wife as formed by the creative hand of God; in verses 13-16 the interest which Jesus took in young children, their place in the compassionate eye of God, the moral value of that which they represented before men. In verse 17 we come to the law, to the world, and to the heart of man in presence of the two. But at the same time we see that Jesus takes pleasure in that which is amiable in the creature as a creature — a principle of deep interest unfolded in this chapter — while still applying the touchstone morally to his heart. With respect to the law, as the natural heart can see it (that is, the outward action it requires), the young man had kept it; and with a natural sincerity, and uprightness, that Jesus could appreciate as a creature quality, and which we ought always to recognise where it exists. It is important to remember, that He who as man was perfectly separated unto God — and that, because He had the thoughts of God — could recognise the unchangeable obligations of the relationships established by God Himself; and also, whatever there was amiable and attractive in the creature of God

as such. Having the thoughts of God — being God manifest in the flesh, how could He but recognise that which was of God in His creature? And while doing this, He must establish the obligations of the relationships in which He has placed him, and exhibit the tenderness He felt for the infant representatives of the spirit which He prized. He must love the natural uprightness that may be developed in the creature. But He must judge the true condition of man fully brought out, and the affections that rested on objects raised up by Satan, and the will that rejected and turned away from the manifestation of God that called him to forsake these vanities and follow Him, thus putting his heart morally to the proof.

Jesus exhibits the absolute perfection of God in yet another manner. The young man saw the exterior of Christ's perfection, and, trusting to the power of man to perform that which is good, and seeing its practical fulfillment in Jesus, applies to Him — and, humanly speaking, with sincerity — to learn, from One in whom he saw so much perfection, though viewing Him merely as a Rabbi, the rule of eternal life. This thought is expressed in his sincere and cordial salutation. He runs, he kneels, to the Teacher who, morally, stood so high in his estimation, saying, "Good Master." The human limit of his ideas of this goodness, and his confidence in the powers of man, are manifested by the words, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The Lord, taking up the whole import of his word, replies, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God." What God has created he who knows God will respect, when it presents itself as such in its true place. But God alone is good. Man, if intelligent, will not make himself out good before God, nor dream of human goodness. This young man had at least the hope of becoming good by the law,* and he believed that Jesus was so as a man. But the greatest advantages which the flesh could recognise, and which answered to its nature, did but the more effectually shut the door of life and heaven to man. The flesh used the law for self-righteousness, man being not good but a sinner. And, in fact, if we have to seek for righteousness, it is because we have it not (that is to say, because we are sinners and cannot attain this righteousness in ourselves). Moreover worldly advantages, which appeared to render man more capable of doing good, bound his heart to perishing things, and strengthened selfishness, and made him attach little value to the image of God.

[* He does not ask, What must I do to be saved? He assumed that by the law he was to get life.]

But the instructions of this chapter carry on still farther the subject of man's condition before God. The ideas of the flesh accompany and give their form to the heart's affections, in one who is already quickened by the Spirit of grace acting through the attraction of Christ, until the Holy Ghost Himself communicates to those affections the strength of His presence, by giving them the glory of Christ in heaven for their object; and at the same time causing the light of that glory to shine (for the believer's heart) upon the cross, investing it with all the value of the redemption it accomplished, and of the divine grace that was its source, and producing conformity to Christ in every one that bears it with Him. Peter did not understand how any one could be saved, if such advantages as the Jews possessed in their relationship to God (and which were specially present in the case of this young man) only barred up the way to the kingdom of God. The Lord meets him upon this very ground; for man in the presence of God was now the question As far as man was concerned, it was impossible — a second profound truth — with respect to his condition. Not only was there none good excepting God, but no one could be saved, according to what man was. Whatever advantages he might have as means, they would avail him nothing in his state of sin. But the Lord introduces another source of hope — "with God all things are possible." The whole of this, indeed all this part of the Gospel, while it sets aside the Jewish system, does so, because, while that was founded on testing the possibility by the possession of divinely given ordinances of acquiring righteousness, and a standing before God as yet unrevealed, this revealed God and brought man and man's heart face to face, as a present thing, with Him; in grace, but still face to face as he was. The disciples, not having yet received the Holy Ghost, are still under the influence of the old system, and only see men as trees walking; and this is fully developed in this chapter. The kingdom indeed they could think of, but still with fleshly thoughts.

But the flesh, the carnal mind, enters yet farther into the career of the life of grace. Peter reminds the Lord that the disciples had forsaken all to follow Him. The Lord replies, that every one* who had done so should have everything that would make him happy in his social affections, as God had formed him, and all this world could give as to the real enjoyment

of it and a hundredfold, together with the opposition that He Himself met with in this world; but in the world to come (Peter was not thinking of that) not some private individual advantage, but everlasting life. He went beyond the sphere of promise connected with the Messiah on earth, to enter, and to make others enter, into that which was eternal. As to individual reward, that could not be judged of according to appearances.

[* This went beyond even the disciples' connection with the Jews, and in principle admitted the Gentiles.]

But further, they followed indeed Jesus, and thought of the reward, but thought little of the cross which led to it; they were amazed therefore at seeing Jesus deliberately going up to Jerusalem, where people sought to kill Him, and they were afraid. Although following Him, they were far from the height of realising all that the path implied. Jesus sedulously explains it to them — His rejection, and His entrance into the new world by resurrection. John and James, little affected by the Lord's communications, use their faith in the royalty of Christ to present the carnal desires of their heart, namely, to be on His right and left hand in the glory. Again the Lord assures them that they should participate in the cross with Him, and takes the place Himself of the accomplishment of His service and of bringing others into fellowship with His sufferings. As for the glory of the kingdom, it would be theirs for whom the Father had prepared it: the disposal of it was not in His hands save to them. This is the place of service, of humiliation, and of obedience, in which this Gospel always presents Him. Such should be the place of His disciples.

We have seen what the flesh was in an upright young man whom Jesus loved, and in His disciples who knew not how to take the true position of Christ. The contrast of this with the full triumph of the Holy Ghost is remarkable, as we find it in the comparison of this chapter with Philippians 3.

We have in Saul a man outwardly blameless, according to the law, like the young man in the gospel; but he has seen Christ in glory, and, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the righteousness according to which Christ entered into the glory in which He revealed Himself to Saul. All that had been gain to him was loss for Christ. Would he have a carnal righteousness, a human righteousness, even if he could have accomplished it, when he had

seen a righteousness bright with the glory of Christ? He possessed the righteousness which was of God by faith. What was that righteousness worth for which he had labored, now that he possessed the all-perfect righteousness which God gave by faith? Not sins alone were put away: human righteousness was made worthless by it. But his eyes had been opened to this by the Holy Ghost, and by seeing Christ. The things that engaged the heart of the young man and retained him in the world which Christ forsook, and which in Him had rejected God — could these things retain one who had seen Christ in the other world? They were but as dung to him. He had forsaken everything in order to possess this Christ. He considered them as utterly worthless. The Holy Ghost, in revealing Christ, had completely delivered him.

But this manifestation to the heart of Christ glorified goes yet farther. He who thus breaks with the world must follow the One whose glory he would reach; and this is to put himself under the cross. The disciples had forsaken all to follow Him. Grace had attached them to Christ that they might follow Him. The Holy Ghost had not yet linked them with His glory. He goes up to Jerusalem. They are amazed at it; and, in following Him (although He goes before them, and they have His guidance and His presence), they are afraid. Paul seeks to know the power of His resurrection: he desires to have fellowship with His sufferings, and to be conformed unto His death. Instead of amazement and fear, there is full spiritual intelligence and the desire of conformity to that death which the disciples feared; because he found Christ morally in it, and it was the pathway to the glory he had seen.

Moreover this sight of Christ purifies the desires of the heart with respect even to the glory. John and James desire for themselves the best place in the kingdom — a desire that availed itself (with a carnal and selfish object) of the intelligence of faith — a half-sighted intelligence that sought the kingdom at once, and not the glory and the world to come. Paul had seen Christ: his only desire in the glory was to possess Him — "that I may win Christ," and a new state conformed to it; not a good place near Him in the kingdom, but Himself. This is deliverance — the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost revealing a glorified Christ.

We may remark, that in every case the Lord brings in the cross. It was the only passage from this world of nature, to the world of glory and of eternal life.* To the young man He exhibits the cross; to the disciples that follow Him He exhibits the cross; to John and James, who sought a good place in the kingdom, He exhibits the cup they would have to drink in following Him. Eternal life, although received now, was, in possession and enjoyment according to God's purpose, on the other side of the cross.

[* From the transfiguration until His rights as Son of David are in question, it is the cross that is presented. Prophet and preacher until then, that ministry ended with the transfiguration, in which His future glory shone in this world upon the cross that was to close His service here below. But before He reached the cross, He presented Himself as King. Matthew begins with the King, but Mark is essentially the Prophet.]

Observe also, that the Lord was so perfectly, divinely, above the sin in which nature lay, that He could recognise all that was of God in nature, and show at the same time the impossibility of any relation between God and man on the ground of what man is. Advantages were but hindrances. That which is death to the flesh must be gone through: we must have divine righteousness, and enter in spirit (hereafter in fact) into another world, in order to follow Him and to be with Him — to “win Christ.” Solemn lesson!

In result, God alone is good, and — sin having come in — it is impossible, if He be manifested, that man can be in relationship with God; but with Him all is possible. The cross is the only path to God. Christ leads to it, and we must follow Him in this path, which is that of eternal life. A child-like spirit enters into it by grace; the spirit of service and of self-renunciation walks in it. Christ walked in it, giving His life a ransom for many. This part of the Lord's instruction ends here. Lowliness of service is the place into which Christ brings us; in such He had walked. This chapter is worthy of all the attention which the Christian through grace can devote to it. It speaks of the ground man can stand upon, how far God owns what is natural, and the disciples' path down here.

At verse 46 another subject begins. The Lord enters on the path of His final relationship with Israel, presenting Himself as King, Emmanuel, rather than as the prophet who was to be sent. As the Prophet, His ministry had been accomplished. He had been sent (He told His disciples)

to preach. This had led Him to the cross, as we have seen. He must needs announce it as the result to those that followed Him. He now resumes His connection with Israel, but as the Son of David. He draws near to Jerusalem, from which He had departed and where He was to be rejected, and the power of God manifests itself in Him. By the way of Jericho, the city of the curse, enters the One who brings blessing at the price of the gift of Himself. The poor blind man* (and such indeed was the nation of itself) acknowledges Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of David. The grace of Jesus replies in power to the need of His people, that expressed itself by faith, and that persevered in, in spite of the obstacles put in its way by the multitude who did not feel this need, and who followed Jesus, attracted by the manifestation of His power, without being attached to Him by the faith of the heart. That faith has the sense of need. Jesus stands still and calls him, and before all the people manifests the divine power which responded in the midst of Israel to the faith that recognised in Jesus of Nazareth the true Son of David, the Messiah. The poor man's faith had healed him, and he followed Jesus in the way without dissimulation or fear. For the faith which then confessed Jesus to be the Christ was divine faith, although it might perhaps know nothing of the cross which He had just announced to His disciples as the result of His faithfulness and service, and in which faith must follow when genuine.

[* I have already noticed that the blind man of Jericho is, in all the first three Gospels, the point where the history of the last dealings of Christ with the Jews and His final sufferings begin, His general ministry and service being closed.]

In that which follows (chap. 11) Jesus presents Himself to Jerusalem as King. His reception shows the extent to which the testimony He had rendered had acted on the hearts of the simple. God ordained therefore that it should take place. There is little difference between the narrative here and in Matthew. Only the kingdom is more simply presented as such: "The kingdom of our father David."

With what dignity, as the Judge of all things, Jesus now takes knowledge of all that was being done in the temple, and goes out without saying anything! The Lord had visited His temple, as also He had entered the city riding on the ass's colt, whereon never man sat. Israel is judged in the condemned fig-tree.* The glory of the Lord, of the house of Jehovah, is

vindicated with authority — an authority which He claims, and which He exercises in His own Person. The scribes and chief priests draw back before the ascendancy that His word had given Him over the people, and He goes out of the city without being molested, notwithstanding their malice. The next day He assures His disciples, who were astonished at seeing the fig-tree withered away, that whatsoever they asked in faith should be accomplished; but that they must act in grace, if they would enjoy this privilege. The scribes and priests and elders are confounded, and demand His authority. He addresses their conscience, but in such a manner as to demonstrate their incompetency to ask Him such a question, exposing at the same time their insincerity. They could not decide with respect to the baptism of John: by what right then could they subject Him to their questions respecting His own claims? They could not decide when the case was before them. On the other hand, they must either sanction His work by their reply, or lose their authority with the people by denying the baptism of John who had born testimony to Christ. It was no longer a question of winning these men; but what an empty thing is the wisdom of man in the presence of God and His wisdom!

[* That is man under the old covenant, flesh under divine requirement, and no fruit to grow on it for ever.]

The change of dispensation has a more definite place in Matthew, and the sin which rejected the King. In Mark, it is more the service of Christ as the Prophet. Afterwards, as we have seen, He presents Himself as King. And, in both Gospels, we see that it is Jehovah who fills the office which He has deigned to undertake.

Consequently we find in Matthew more personal accusations, as in the parable of the two sons (chap. 21:28-32), and the detail of the change of dispensation in the parable of the marriage feast (chap. 22:1-14); neither of which is in Mark. In our Gospel, the unchangeable dignity of His Person, and the simple fact that the Prophet and King were rejected (rejection that led to Israel's judgment) are set before us by the Spirit of God. Otherwise it is the same general testimony we have reviewed in Matthew.

The Lord afterwards gives the substance of the whole law, as the principle of blessing between the creature and God, and that which formed the touchstone for the heart in the rejection of Christ. I say for the heart,

because the trial was really there, although it was in the understanding that it appeared. Even when there were really orthodox principles (Christ being rejected), the heart that was not attached to His Person could not follow Him in the path to which His rejection led. The system of God's counsels which depended on that rejection was a difficulty. Those who were attached to His Person followed Him, and found themselves in it, without having well understood it beforehand. Thus the Lord gives the pith of the law — the whole law as essentially divine instruction — and the point at which the counsels of God are transplanted into the new scene, where they will be fulfilled apart from the wickedness or ill will of man. So that in these few verses (chap. 12:28-37) the law and the Son of David are presented, and the latter taking His place as Son of man — the Lord — at the right hand of God. This was the secret of all that was going on. The union of His body, the assembly, with Himself was all that remained behind. Only in Mark the Prophet recognises the moral condition, under the law, that tends towards entrance into the kingdom (v. 34). This scribe had the spirit of understanding.

The picture of the condition that would bring in judgment, which we find in Matthew 23, is not given here (see Synopsis about Matthew 23). It was not His subject. Jesus, still as the Prophet; warns His disciples morally; but the judgment of Israel, for rejecting the Son of David, is not here before His eyes in the same manner (that is to say, it is not the subject of which the Holy Ghost is here speaking). The real character of the scribes' devoutness is pointed out, and the disciples are warned against them. The Lord makes them feel also what it is that, in the eyes of God, gives true value to the offerings that were brought to the temple.

In **CHAPTER 13** the Lord takes up much more the service of the apostles in the circumstances that would surround them, than the development of the dispensations and the ways of God with respect to the kingdom — a point of view more presented in Matthew, who treats of this subject.

It will be observed, that the disciples' question takes only a general view of the subject which pre-occupied them. They ask when the judgment upon the temple and all these things shall be fulfilled. And from verses 9-13, although some circumstances found in Matthew 24 are included, the passage relates even more to that which is said in Matthew 10. It speaks

of the service which the disciples would accomplish in the midst of Israel, and in testimony against persecuting authorities, the gospel being preached in all nations before the end came. They were, as preachers, to fill the place which Jesus had occupied among the people, only that the testimony was to extend much farther. It would be in the face of all possible suffering and most trying persecutions.

But there would be a moment when this service should end. The well-known sign of the abomination that maketh desolate would point it out. They were then to flee. These would be the days of unparalleled distress, and of signs and wonders, which, if it were possible, would deceive the very elect. But they were forewarned. Everything should be shaken after that time, and the Son of man should come. Power should take the place of testimony, and the Son of man should gather together His elect (of Israel) from all parts of the earth.

It appears to me that in this Gospel, more than in any other, the Lord brings together the judgment on Jerusalem then at hand, and that which is yet to come, carrying the mind on to the latter, because He is here more occupied with the conduct of His disciples during those events. Israel, the whole system into which the Lord had come, was to be set aside provisionally, in order to bring in the assembly and the kingdom in its heavenly character, and afterwards the millennium — that is, the assembly in its glory and the kingdom established in power — when the legal system and Israel under the first covenant should be finally set aside. At these two periods the general position of the disciples would be the same; but the events of the latter period would be definitive and important, and the Lord speaks especially of them. Nevertheless that which was the most imminent, and which, for the present, set aside Israel and the testimony, required that a warning should be addressed to the disciples on account of their immediate danger; and they receive it accordingly.

The effort of the Jews to re-establish their system at the end, in despite of God, will but lead to open apostasy and definitive judgment. This will be the time of unequalled affliction, of which the Lord speaks. But from the time of the first destruction of Jerusalem by Titus until the coming of the Lord, the Jews are considered as set aside and under this judgment, in what degree soever it may have been accomplished.

The disciples are commanded to watch, for they know not the hour. It is the conduct of the disciples in this respect which is here especially before the eyes of the Lord. It is of this great day, and the hour of its arrival, that the angels and even the Son, as Prophet, know not. For Jesus must sit at the right hand of God until His enemies are made His footstool, and the time of His rising up is not revealed. The Father has kept it, says Jesus, in His own power. See Acts 3, where Peter proposes to the Jews the Lord's return. They rejected his testimony; and now they wait for the full accomplishment of all that has been spoken. Meantime the servants are left to serve during the Master's absence. He commanded the porter in particular to watch. They knew not at what hour the Master would come. This applies to the disciples in their connection with Israel, but at the same time it is a general principle. The Lord addresses it to all.

CHAPTER 14 resumes the thread of the history, but with the solemn circumstances that belong to the close of the Lord's life.

The scribes and Pharisees were already consulting how they might take Him by craft and put Him to death. They feared the influence of the people, who admired the works and goodness and meekness of Jesus. Therefore they wished to avoid taking Him at the time of the feast, when the multitude flocked to Jerusalem: but God had other purposes. Jesus was to be our Paschal Lamb, blessed Lord! and He offers Himself as the victim of propitiation. Now the counsels of God and the love of Christ being such, Satan was not wanting in suitable agents to perform all that he could do against the Lord. Jesus offering Himself for it, the people would soon be induced to give up, even to the Gentiles, the One who had so much attracted them; and treachery would not be wanting to throw Him without difficulty into the hands of the priests. Still God's own arrangements, which owned Him and displayed Him in His grace, should have the first place; and the supper at Bethany and the supper at Jerusalem should precede — the one, the proposal, and the other, the act of Judas. For, let the wickedness of man be what it may, God always takes the place He chooses, and never allows the enemy power to hide His ways from faith, nor leaves His people without the testimony of His love.

This portion of the history is very remarkable. God brings forward the thoughts and fears of the leaders of the people, in order that we may know

them; but everything is absolutely in His own hands; and the malice of man, treachery, and the power of Satan when working in the most energetic manner (never had they been so active), only accomplish the purposes of God for the glory of Christ. Before the treachery of Judas He has the testimony of Mary's affection. God puts the seal of this affection upon Him who was to be betrayed. And, on the other hand, before being forsaken and delivered up, He can testify all His affection for His own, in the institution of the Lord's supper, and at His own last supper with them. What a beautiful testimony to the interest with which God cares for and comforts His children in the darkest moment of their distress!

Remark also, in what manner love to Christ finds, amid the darkness that gathers round His path, the light that directs its conduct, and directs it precisely to that which was suitable to the moment. Mary had no prophetic knowledge; but the imminent danger in which the Lord Christ was placed by the hatred of the Jews, stimulates her affection to perform an act which was to be made known wherever the death of Christ and His love for us should be proclaimed in the whole world. This is true intelligence — true guidance in things moral. Her act becomes an occasion of darkness to Judas; it is clothed with the light of divine intelligence by the Lord's own testimony. This love for Christ discerns that which is suitable — apprehends the good and the evil in a just and seasonable manner. It is a good thing to care for the poor. But at that moment the whole mind of God was centered on the sacrifice of Christ. They had always opportunity to relieve the poor, and it was right to do so. To put them in comparison with Jesus, at the moment of His sacrifice, was to put them out of their place, and to forget all that was precious to God. Judas, who cared only for money, seized the position according to his own interest. He saw, not the preciousness of Christ, but the desires of the scribes. His sagacity was of the enemy, as that of Mary was of God. Things advance: Judas arranges with them his plan to deliver up Jesus for money. The thing in fact is settled according to his thoughts and theirs. Nevertheless it is very remarkable to see here the way in which — if I may so speak — God Himself governs the position. Although it is the moment when the malice of man is at its height, and when the power of Satan is exerted to the utmost, yet all is accomplished exactly at the moment, in the manner, by the instruments, chosen of God. Nothing, not the least thing,

escapes Him. Nothing is accomplished but that which He wills, and as He wills, and when He wills. What consolation for us! and, in the circumstances which we are considering, what a striking testimony! The Holy Ghost has therefore reported the desire (easy to be understood) of the chief priests and scribes to avoid the occasion of the feast. Useless desire! This sacrifice was to be accomplished at that time; and it is accomplished.

But the time drew near for the last feast of the Passover that took place during the life of Jesus — the one in which He was Himself to be the Lamb, and leave no memorial to faith except that of Himself and of His work. He therefore sends His disciples to prepare all that was needed to keep the feast. In the evening He sits with His disciples, to converse with them, and to testify His love for them as their companion, for the last time. But it is to tell them (for He must suffer everything) that one of them should betray Him. The heart at least of each one of the eleven answered, full of grief at the thought.* So should one have done who was eating from the same dish with Him; but woe to that man! Yet neither the thought of such iniquity, nor the sorrow of His own heart, could stop the outflowing of the love of Christ. He gives them pledges of this love in the Lord's supper. It was Himself, His sacrifice, and not a temporal deliverance, that they were henceforth to remember. All was now absorbed in Him, and in Him dying on the cross. Afterwards, in giving them the cup, He lays the foundation of the new covenant in His blood (in a figure), giving it to them as participation in His death — true draught of life. When they had all drunk of it, He announces to them that it is the seal of the new covenant — a thing well known to the Jews, according to Jeremiah; adding that it was shed for many. Death was to come in for the establishment of the new covenant, and for the ransom of many. For this, death was necessary, and the bonds of earthly association between Jesus and His disciples were dissolved. He would drink no more of the fruit of the vine (the token of that connection) until, in another way, He should renew this association with them in the kingdom of God. When the kingdom should be established, He would again be with them, and would renew these bonds of association (in another form, and in a more excellent way, no doubt, yet really). But now all was changing. They sing, and go out, repairing to the accustomed place in the Mount of Olives.

[* There is something very beautiful and touching in this inquiry Their hearts were solemnized, and Jesus' words have all the weight of a divine testimony in their hearts. They had not a thought of betraying Him, save Judas; but His word was surely true, their souls owned it, and there was distrust of themselves in presence of Christ's words. No boasting certainty that they would not, but a bowing of heart before the solemn and terrible words of Jesus. Judas avoided the question, but afterwards, not to seem to be but as the rest, asks it, only to be personally marked out by the Lord, a sure relief to the rest (Matthew 26:25).]

The connection of Jesus with His disciples here below should indeed be broken, but it would not be by His forsaking them. He strengthened, or, at least, He manifested, the sentiments of His heart, and the strength (on His part) of these bonds, in His last supper with them. But they would be offended at His position, and would forsake Him. Nevertheless the hand of God was in all this. He would smite the Shepherd. But when once raised from the dead, Jesus would resume His relationship with His disciples — with the poor of the flock. He would go before them to the place where this relationship commenced, to Galilee, afar from the pride of the nation, and where the light had appeared among them according to the word of God.

Death was before Him. He must pass through it, in order that any relationship whatsoever between God and man might be established. The Shepherd should be smitten by the Lord of hosts. Death was the judgment of God: could man sustain it? There was but One who could. Peter, loving Christ too well to forsake Him in heart, enters so far into the path of death as to draw back again, thus giving a testimony all the more striking to his own inability to traverse the abyss that opened before his eyes in the Person of his disowned Master. After all, to Peter it was but the outside of what death is. The weakness that his fears occasioned made him unable to look into the abyss which sin has opened before our feet. At the moment when Jesus announces it Peter undertakes to face all that was coming. Sincere in his affection, he knew not what man was, laid bare before God, and in the presence of the power of the enemy who has death for his weapon. He had trembled already; but the sight of Jesus, which inspires affection, does not say that the flesh which prevents our glorifying Him is, in a practical sense, dead. Moreover he knew nothing of this truth. It is the death of Christ which has brought our condition out into full light, while ministering its only remedy — death, and life in resurrection. Like the ark

in Jordan, He went down into it alone, that His redeemed people might pass through dryshod. They had not passed this way before.

Jesus approaches the end of His trial — a trial which only brought out His perfection and His glory, and at the same time glorified God His Father, but a trial which spared Him nothing that would have had power to stop Him, if anything could have done so, and which went on even unto death, and unto the burden of wrath of God in that death, a burden beyond all our thoughts.

He approaches the conflict and the suffering, not with the lightness of Peter who plunged into it because he was ignorant of its nature, but with full knowledge; placing Himself in the presence of His Father, where all is weighed, and where the will of Him who laid this task upon Him is clearly stated in His communion with Him; so that Jesus accomplishes it, even as God Himself looked upon it, according to the extent and the intention of His thoughts and of His nature, and in perfect obedience to His will.

Jesus goes forward alone to pray. And, morally, He passes through the whole compass of His sufferings, realising all their bitterness, in communion with His Father. Having them before His own eyes, He brings them before His Father's heart, in order that, if it were possible, this cup might pass from Him. If not, it should at least be from His Father's hand that He received it. This was the piety on account of which He was heard and His prayers ascended up on high. He is there as a man — glad to have His disciples watch with Him, glad to isolate Himself and pour out His heart into the bosom of His Father, in the dependent condition of a man who prays. What a spectacle!

Peter, who would die for his Master, is not able even to watch with Him. The Lord meekly sets his inconsistency before him, acknowledging that his spirit indeed was full of goodwill, but that the flesh was worthless in conflict with the enemy and in spiritual trial.

The narrative of Mark, which passes so rapidly from one circumstance (that displays the whole moral condition of the men with whom Jesus was associated) to another, in such a manner as to place all these events in connection with each other, is as touching as the development of the details found in the other Gospels. A moral character is imprinted on every

step we take in the history, giving it as a whole an interest that nothing could surpass (excepting that which is above all things, above all thoughts) save that only One, the Person of Him who is here before us. He at least watched with His Father; for after all, dependent as He was by grace, what could man do for Him? Completely man as He was, He had to lean on One alone, and thus was the perfect man. Going away again to pray, He returns to find them again sleeping, and again presents the case to His Father, and then awakens His disciples, for the hour was come in which they could do no more for Him. Judas comes with his kiss. Jesus submits. Peter, who slept during the earnest prayer of his Master, awakes to strike when his Master yields Himself as a lamb to the slaughter. He smites one of the assistants, and cuts off his ear. Jesus reasons with those who were come to take Him, reminding them that, when He was constantly exposed, humanly speaking, to their power, they had laid no hands upon Him; but there was a very different reason for its now taking place — the counsels of God and the word of God must be fulfilled. It was the faithful accomplishment of the service committed to Him. All forsake Him and flee; for who beside Himself could follow this path to the end?

One young man indeed sought to go farther; but as soon as the officers of justice laid hold of him, seizing his linen garment, he fled and left it in their hands. Apart from the power of the Holy Ghost, the farther one ventures into the path in which the power of the world and of death is found, the greater the shame with which one escapes, if God permits escape. He fled from them naked.

The witnesses fail, not in malice, but in certainty of testimony, even as force could do nothing against Him until the moment God had appointed. The confession of Christ, His faithfulness in declaring the truth in the congregation, is the means of His condemnation. Man can do nothing, although he did everything as regards his will and his guilt. The testimony of His enemies, the affection of His disciples — everything fails: this is man. It is Jesus who bears witness to the truth; it is Jesus who watches with the Father — Jesus who yields Himself to those who were never able to take Him until the hour came that God had appointed. Poor Peter! He went farther than the young man in the garden; and we find him here, the flesh in the place of testimony, in the place where this testimony is to be rendered before the power of its opposer and of his instruments. Alas! he

will not escape. The word of Christ shall be true, if that of Peter be false — His heart faithful and full of love, if that of Peter (alas! like all ours) is unfaithful and cowardly. He confesses the truth, and Peter denies it. Nevertheless the grace of our blessed Lord does not fail him; and, touched by it, he hides his face and weeps.

The word of the prophet has now again to be fulfilled. He shall be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. There He is accused of being a king, the confession of which must assuredly cause His death. But it was the truth.

The confession that Jesus had made before the priests relates, as we have seen in other cases in this Gospel, to His connection with Israel. His service was to preach in the congregation of Israel. He had indeed presented Himself as King, as Emmanuel. He now confesses that He is to Israel the hope of the people, and which hereafter He will be. “Art thou,” had the high priest said, “the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” That was the title, the glorious position, of Him who was the hope of Israel, according to Psalm 2. But He adds that which He shall be (that is to say, the character He would assume, being rejected by this people, that in which He would present Himself to the rebellious people); it should be that of Psalm 8, 110, and also Daniel 7, with its results — that is to say, the Son of man at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Psalm 8 only presents Him in a general manner; it is Psalm 110 and Daniel 7 which speak of the Messiah in that particular manner, according to which Christ here announces Himself. The blasphemy which the high priest attributed to Him was only the rejection of His Person. For that which He said was written in the word.

Before Pilate (chap. 15), He only witnesses a good confession, a testimony to the truth where the glory of God required it, and where this testimony stood opposed to the power of the adversary. To all the rest He answers nothing. He lets them go on; and the evangelist enters into no details. To render this testimony was the last service and duty He had to perform. It is rendered. The Jews make choice of the seditious murderer Barabbas; and Pilate, hearkening to the voice of the multitude, won over by the chief priests, delivers Jesus to be crucified. The Lord submits to the insults of the soldiers, who mingle the pride and insolence of their class with the

hard-heartedness of the executioner whose function they performed. Sad specimens of our nature! The Christ who came to save them was, for the moment, under their power. He used His own power, not to save Himself, but to deliver others from that of the enemy. At length they lead Him away to Golgotha to crucify Him. There they offer Him a soporific mixture, which He refuses; and they crucify Him with two thieves, one on His right hand and the other on His left, thus accomplishing (for it was all they did or could do) everything that was written concerning the Lord. It was now the Jews' and the priests' hour; they had, alas for them! the desire of their heart. And they make manifest, without knowing it, the glory and perfection of Jesus. The temple could not rise again without being thus cast down; and, as instruments, they established the fact which He had then announced. Farther, He saved others and not Himself. These are the two parts of the perfection of the death of Christ with reference to man.

But, whatever might be the thoughts of Christ and His sufferings with regard to men (those dogs, those bulls of Bashan), the work which He had to accomplish contained depths far beyond those outward things. Darkness covered the earth — divine and sympathetic testimony of that which, with far deeper gloom, covered the soul of Jesus, forsaken of God for sin, but thus displaying incomparably more than at any other time, His absolute perfection; while the darkness marked, in an external sign, His entire separation from outward things, the whole work being between Him and God alone, according to the perfectness of both. All passed between Him and His God. Little understood by others, all is between Himself and God: and crying again with a loud voice, He gives up the ghost. His service was completed. What more had He to do in a world wherein He only lived to accomplish the will of God? All was finished, and He necessarily departs. I do not speak of physical necessity, for He still retained His strength; but, morally rejected by the world, there was no longer room in it for His mercy towards it: the will of God was by Himself entirely fulfilled. He had drunk in His soul the cup of death and of judgment for sin. There was nothing left Him but the act of dying; and He expires, obedient to the end, in order to commence in another world (whether for His soul separate from the body, or in glory) a life where evil could never enter, and where the new man will be perfectly happy in the presence of God.

His service was completed. His obedience had its term in death — His obedience, and therefore His life, as carried on in the midst of sinners. What would a life have meant in which there was no more obedience to be fulfilled? In dying now His obedience was perfected, and He dies. The way into the holiest is now opened — the veil is rent from top to bottom. The Gentile centurion confesses, in the death of Jesus, the Person of the Son of God. Until then, the Messiah and Judaism went together. In His death Judaism rejects Him, and He is the Savior of the world. The veil no longer conceals God. In this respect it was all Judaism could do. The manifestation of perfect grace is there for the Gentile, who acknowledged — because Jesus gave up His life with a cry that proved the existence of so much strength — that the Prince of life, the Son of God, was there. Pilate also is astonished that He is already dead. He only believes it when certified of its truth by the centurion. As to faith — far from grace, and even from human justice — he did not trouble himself at all on that point.

The death of Jesus did not tear Him from the hearts of those feeble ones who loved Him (who perhaps had not been in the conflict, but whom grace had now brought out from their retreat): those pious women who had followed Him and had often ministered to His wants, and Joseph, who, although touched in conscience, had not followed Him, until now, strengthened at the last by the testimony of the grace and perfection of Jesus (the integrity of the counsellor finding in the circumstances, not an occasion of fear, but that which induced him to declare himself) these women and Joseph are alike occupied about the body of Jesus. This tabernacle of the Son of God is not left without those services which were due from man to Him who had just quitted it. Moreover the providence of God, as well as His operation in their hearts, had prepared for all this. The body of Jesus is laid in the tomb, and they all wait for the end of the sabbath to perform their service to it. The women had taken knowledge of the place.

CHAPTER 16. The last chapter is divided into two parts — a fact that has even given rise to questions as to the authenticity of verses 9-20. The first part of the chapter, verses 1-8, relates the end of the history in connection with the re-establishment of that which has always been before us in this Gospel the relationship of the Prophet of Israel, and of the kingdom with the people (or at least with the remnant of the chosen people). The

disciples, and Peter, whom the Lord individually acknowledges in spite (yea, in grace, because) of his denial of his Master, were to go and meet Him in Galilee, as He said unto them. There the connection was re-established between Jesus in resurrection and the poor of the flock, who waited for Him (they alone being recognised as the people before God). The women say nothing to any others. The testimony of Christ risen was committed only to His disciples, to these despised Galileans. Fear was the means employed by the providence of God to prevent the women speaking of it, as they would naturally have done.

Verses 9-20. This is another testimony. The disciples do not appear here as an elect remnant, but in the unbelief natural to man. The message is sent to the whole world. Mary Magdalene, formerly possessed by seven demons — the absolute slave of that dreadful power — is employed to communicate the knowledge of His resurrection to the companions of Jesus. Afterwards Jesus Himself appears to them, and gives them their commission. He tells them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. It is no longer specifically the gospel of the kingdom. Whosoever throughout the world believed and joined Christ by baptism should be saved: he who believed not should be condemned. It was a question of salvation or condemnation — the believer saved, he who refused the message condemned. Moreover, if any one was convinced of the truth but refused to unite with the disciples confessing the Lord, his case would be so much the worse. Therefore it is said, “he who believeth and is baptised.” Signs of power should accompany believers, and they should be preserved from that of the enemy.

The first sign should be their dominion over evil spirits, the second, the proof of that grace which went beyond the narrow limits of Israel, addressing itself to all the world. They should speak divers languages.

Besides this, with respect to the power of the enemy, manifested in doing harm, the venom of serpents and poisons should have no effect upon them, and diseases should yield to their authority.

In a word, it should be the overthrow of the power of the enemy over man, and the proclamation of grace unto all men.

Having thus given them their commission, Jesus ascends to heaven, and sits at the right hand of God — the place from which thus power shall come forth to bless, and from which He will return to put the poor of the flock in possession of the kingdom. Meanwhile, the disciples occupy His place, extending their sphere of service unto the ends of the earth; and the Lord confirms their word by the signs that follow them.

It may perhaps be thought that I have dwelt little on the sufferings of Christ in that which I have written on Mark. Never will this subject be exhausted; it is as vast as the Person and the work of Christ must be. Blessed be God for it! In Luke we have more details. And I follow the order of thought which the Gospel sets before me; and it appears to me that, with regard to the crucifixion of Christ, it is the accomplishment of His service that the evangelist has in view. His great subject was the Prophet. He must needs relate His history unto the end; and we possess in a brief narrative, a very complete picture of the events that mark the end of the Lord's life — of that which He had to fulfill as the servant of His Father. I have followed this order of the Gospel.