

CHAPTER 12

It was a melancholy account which we had in the close of the foregoing chapter of the dishonour done to our Lord Jesus, when the scribes and Pharisees proclaimed him a traitor to their church, and put upon him all the marks of ignominy they could: but the story of this chapter balances that, by giving us an account of the honour done to the Redeemer, notwithstanding all that reproach thrown upon him. Thus the one was set over against the other. Let us see what honours were heaped on the head of the Lord Jesus, even in the depths of his humiliation.

I. Mary did him honour, by anointing his feet at the supper in Bethany (v. 1-11).

II. The common people did him honour, with their acclamations of joy, when he rode in triumph into Jerusalem (v. 12-19).

III. The Greeks did him honour, by enquiring after him with a longing desire to see him (v. 20-26).

IV. God the Father did him honour, by a voice from heaven, bearing testimony to him (v. 27-36).

V. He had honour done him by the Old Testament prophets, who foretold the infidelity of those that heard the report of him (v. 37-41).

VI. He had honour done him by some of the chief rulers, whose consciences witnessed for him, though they had not courage to own it (v. 42, 43).

VII. He claimed honour to himself, by asserting his divine mission, and the account he gave of his errand into the world (v. 44-50).

◀▶ **JOHN 12:1-11**

MARY ANOINTS CHRIST'S FEET

In these verses we have,

I. The *kind visit* our Lord Jesus paid to his friends at Bethany, v. 1. He came up out of the country, *six days before the passover*, and took up at Bethany, a town which, according to the computation of our metropolis, lay so near Jerusalem as to be within the bills of mortality. He lodged here with his friend Lazarus, whom he had lately *raised from the dead*. His coming to Bethany now may be considered,

1. As a preface to the passover he intended to celebrate, to which reference is made in assigning the date of his coming: *Six days before the passover*. Devout men set time apart before, to prepare themselves for that solemnity, and thus it became our Lord Jesus to *fulfil all righteousness*. Thus he has set us an example of solemn self-sequestration, before the solemnities of the gospel passover; let us hear the voice crying, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*.

2. As a voluntary exposing of himself to the fury of his enemies; now that his hour was at hand he came within their reach, and freely offered himself to them, though he had shown them how easily he could evade all their snares. Note,

(1.) Our Lord Jesus was voluntary in his sufferings; his life was not *forced* from him, but *resigned*: *Lo, I come*. As the strength of his persecutors could not overpower him, so their subtlety could not surprise him, but he died because he would.

(2.) As there is a time when we are allowed to shift for our own preservation, so there is a time when we are called to hazard our lives in the cause of God, as St. Paul, when he *went bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem*.

3. As an instance of his kindness to his friends at Bethany, whom he loved, and from whom he was shortly to be taken away. This was a farewell visit; he came to take leave of them, and to leave with them words of comfort against the day of trial that was approaching. Note, Though Christ depart for a time from his people, he will give them intimations that he departs in love, and not in anger. Bethany is here described to be the town *where Lazarus was, whom he raised from the dead*. The miracle wrought here put a new honour upon the place, and made it remarkable. Christ came hither to observe what improvement was made of this miracle; for where Christ works wonders, and shows signal favours, he looks after them, to see whether the intention of them be

answered. Where he has sown plentifully, he observes whether it comes up again.

II. The *kind entertainment* which his friends there gave him: They *made him a supper* (v. 2), a great supper, a feast. It is queried whether this was the same with that which is recorded, ^{<1216}Matthew 24:6, etc., in the house of Simon. Most commentators think it was; for the substance of the story and many of the circumstances agree; but that comes in after what was said *two days* before the passover, whereas this was done *six days* before; nor is it likely that Martha should serve in any house but her own; and therefore I incline with Dr. Lightfoot to think them different: that in Matthew on the third day of the passover week, but this the seventh day of the week before, being the Jewish sabbath, the night before he rode in triumph into Jerusalem; that in the house of Simon; this of Lazarus. These two being the most public and solemn entertainments given him in Bethany, Mary probably graced them *both* with this token of her respect; and what she *left* of her ointment this first time, when she spent but a *pound* of it (v. 3), she used that second time, when she *poured it all out*, ^{<1413}Mark 14:3. Let us see the account of this entertainment.

1. They *made him a supper*; for with them, ordinarily, supper was the best meal. This they did in token of their respect and gratitude, for a feast is made for *friendship*; and that they might have an opportunity of free and pleasant conversation with him, for a feast is made for *fellowship*. Perhaps it is in allusion to this and the like entertainments given to Christ in the days of his flesh that he promises, to such as open the door of their hearts to him, that he will *sup with them*, ^{<630}Revelation 3:20.

2. Martha *served*; she herself waited at table, in token of her great respect to the Master. Though a person of some quality, she did not think it below her to *serve*, when Christ sat at meat; nor should we think it a dishonour or disparagement to us to stoop to any service whereby Christ may be honoured. Christ had formerly reprov'd Martha for being *troubled with much serving*. But she did not therefore leave off serving, as some, who, when they are reprov'd for one extreme, peevishly run into another; no, still she *served*; not as then at a distance, but *within hearing* of Christ's gracious words, reckoning those happy who, as the queen of Sheba said concerning Solomon's servants, stood continually before him, to hear his wisdom; better be a *waiter* at Christ's table than a *guest* at the table of a prince.

3. Lazarus was *one of those that sat at meat*. It proved the truth of his resurrection, as it did of Christ's, that there were those who did *eat and drink with him*, ^{<404>}Acts 10:41. Lazarus did not retire into a *wilderness* after his resurrection, as if, when he had made a visit to the other world, he must ever after be a hermit in this; no, he conversed familiarly with people, as others did. He *sat at meat*, as a monument of the miracle Christ had wrought. Those whom Christ has *raised up* to a spiritual life are made to *sit together with him*. See ^{<415>}Ephesians 2:5, 6.

III. The particular respect which Mary showed him, above the rest, in anointing his feet with sweet ointment, v. 3. She had a *pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly*, which probably she had by her for her own use; but the death and resurrection of her brother had quite weaned her from the use of all such things, and with this she *anointed the feet of Jesus*, and, as a further token of her reverence for him and negligence of herself, she *wiped them with her hair*, and this was taken notice of by all that were present, for *the house was filled with the odour of the ointment*. See ^{<176>}Proverbs 27:16.

1. Doubtless she intended this as a token of her love to Christ, who had given real tokens of his love to her and her family; and thus she studies what she shall render. Now by this her love to Christ appears to have been,

(1.) A *generous* love; so far from sparing necessary charges in his service, she is as ingenious to *create* an occasion of expense in religion as most are to avoid it. If she had any thing more valuable than another, that must be brought out for the honour of Christ. Note, Those who love Christ truly love him so much better than this world as to be willing to lay out the best they have for him.

(2.) A *condescending* love; she not only bestowed her ointment upon Christ, but with her own hands poured it upon him, which she might have ordered one of her servants to have done; nay, she did not, as usual, anoint his *head* with it, but his *feet*. True love, as it does not spare charges, so it does not spare pains, in honouring Christ. Considering what Christ has done and suffered for us, we are very ungrateful if we think any service too hard to do, or too mean to stoop to, whereby he may *really* be glorified.

(3.) A *believing* love; there was faith working by this love, faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed, who, being both priest and king,

was anointed as Aaron and David were. Note, *God's Anointed* should be *our Anointed*. Has God poured on him the oil of gladness above his fellows? Let us pour on him the ointment of our best affections above all competitors. By consenting to Christ as *our* king, we must comply with God's designs, appointing him *our head* whom he has appointed, ~~311~~ Hosea 1:11.

2. The *filling of the house* with the pleasant *odour of the ointment* may intimate to us,

(1.) That those who entertain Christ in their hearts and houses bring a sweet odour into them; Christ's presence brings with it an ointment and *perfume which rejoice the heart*.

(2.) Honours done to Christ are comforts to all his friends and followers; they are to God and good men an offering of a *sweet-smelling savour*.

IV. Judas's dislike of Mary's compliment, or token of her respect to Christ, v. 4, 5, where observe,

1. The person that carped at it was Judas, *one of his disciples*; not one of their nature, but only one of their number. It is possible for the worst of men to lurk under the disguise of the best profession; and there are many who pretend to stand in relation to Christ who really have no kindness for him. Judas was an apostle, a preacher of the gospel, and yet one that discouraged and checked this instance of pious affection and devotion. Note, It is sad to see the life of religion and holy zeal frowned upon and discountenanced by such as are bound by their office to assist and encourage it. But this was he that should *betray Christ*. Note, Coldness of love to Christ, and a secret contempt of serious piety, when they appear in professors of religion, are sad presages of a final apostasy. Hypocrites, by less instances of worldliness, discover themselves to be ready for a compliance with greater temptations.

2. The pretence with which he covered his dislike (v. 5): "*Why was not this ointment, since it was designed for a pious use, sold for three hundred pence*" (8l. 10s. of our money), "*and given to the poor?*"

(1.) Here is a foul iniquity gilded over with a specious and plausible pretence, for Satan transforms himself into an angel of light.

(2.) Here is worldly wisdom passing a censure upon pious zeal, as guilty of imprudence and mismanagement. Those who value themselves upon their *secular policy*, and undervalue others for their *serious piety*, have more in them of the spirit of Judas than they would be thought to have.

(3.) Here is charity to the poor made a colour for opposing a piece of piety to Christ, and secretly made a cloak for covetousness. Many excuse themselves from *laying out* in charity under pretence of *laying up* for charity: whereas, if the clouds be full of rain, they will *empty themselves*. Judas asked, *Why was it not given to the poor?* To which it is easy to answer, Because it was better bestowed upon the Lord Jesus. Note, We must not conclude that those do no acceptable piece of service who do not do it in our way, and just as we would have them; as if every thing must be adjudged imprudent and unfit which does not take its measures from us and our sentiments. Proud men think all ill-advised who do not advise with them.

3. The detection and discovery of Judas's hypocrisy herein, v. 6. Here is the evangelist's remark upon it, by the direction of him who *searches the heart*: *This he said, not that he cared for the poor, as he pretended, but because he was a thief, and had the bag.*

(1.) It did not come from a principle of charity: *Not that he cared for the poor.* He had no compassion towards them, no concern for them: what were the poor to him any further than he might serve his own ends by being overseer of the poor? Thus some warmly contend for the *power* of the church, as others for its *purity*, when perhaps it may be said, Not that they care for the church; it is all one to them whether its *true interest* sink or swim, but under the pretence of this they are advancing themselves. Simeon and Levi pretended zeal for circumcision, *not that they cared* for the seal of the covenant, any more than Jehu for the Lord of hosts, when he said, *Come see my zeal.*

(2.) It did come from a principle of covetousness. The truth of the matter was, this ointment being designed for his Master, he would rather have had it in money, to be put in the common stock with which he was entrusted, and then he knew what to do with it. Observe,

[1.] Judas was treasurer of Christ's household, whence some think he was called *Iscariot*, the *bag-bearer*. *First*, See what *estate* Jesus and his disciples had to live upon. It was but *little*; they had neither farms nor

merchandise, neither barns nor storehouses, only a *bag*; or, as some think the word signifies, a *box*, or *coffer*, wherein they kept just enough for their subsistence, giving the overplus, if any were, to the poor; this they carried about with them, wherever they went. *Omnia mea mecum porto* — *I carry all my property about me*. This bag was supplied by the contributions of good people, and the Master and his disciples had all *in common*; let this lessen our esteem of worldly wealth, and deaden us to the punctilios of state and ceremony, and reconcile us to a mean and despicable way of living, if this be our lot, that it was our Master's lot; for our sakes he *became poor*. *Secondly*, See who was the *steward* of the little they had; it was Judas, he was purse-bearer. It was his office to receive and pay, and we do not find that he gave any account what markets he made. He was appointed to this office, either,

1. Because he was the least and lowest of all the disciples; it was not Peter nor John that was made steward (though it was a place of trust and profit), but Judas, the meanest of them. Note, Secular employments, as they are a digression, so they are a degradation to a minister of the gospel; see ~~488~~ 1 Corinthians 6:4. The prime-ministers of state in Christ's kingdom refused to be concerned in the revenue, ~~489~~ Acts 6:2.

2. Because he was desirous of the place. He loved in his heart to be fingering money, and therefore had the moneybag committed to him, either,

(1.) As a kindness, to please him, and thereby oblige him to be true to his Master. Subjects are sometimes disaffected to the government because disappointed of their preferment; but Judas had no cause to complain of this; the bag he chose, and the bag he had. Or,

(2.) In judgment upon him, to punish him for his secret wickedness; that was put into his hands which would be a snare and trap to him. Note, Strong inclinations to sin within are often justly punished with strong temptations to sin without. We have little reason to be fond of the bag, or proud of it, for at the best we are but stewards of it; and it was Judas, one of an ill character, and born to be hanged (pardon the expression), that was steward of the bag. *The prosperity of fools destroys them*.

[2.] Being trusted with the bag, he was *a thief*, that is, he had a thievish disposition. The reigning love of money is *heart-theft* as much as anger and revenge are *heart-murder*. Or perhaps he had been really guilty of embezzling his Master's stores, and converting to his own use what was given to the public stock. And some conjecture that he was now contriving to fill his pockets, and then run away and leave his Master, having heard him speak so much of troubles approaching, to which he could by no means reconcile himself. Note, Those to whom the management and disposal of public money is committed have need to be governed by steady principles of justice and honesty, that no blot cleave to their hands; for though some make a jest of cheating the government, or the church, or the country, if cheating be *thieving*, and, communities being more considerable than particular persons, if robbing them be the greater sin, the guilt of theft and the portion of thieves will be found no jesting matter. Judas, who had betrayed his trust, soon after betrayed his Master.

V. Christ's justification of what Mary did (v. 7, 8): *Let her alone*. Hereby he intimated his acceptance of her kindness (though he was perfectly mortified to all the delights of sense, yet, as it was a token of her goodwill, he signified himself well-pleased with it), and his care that she should not be molested in it: *Pardon her*, so it may be read; "excuse her this once, if it be an error it is an error of her love." Note, Christ would not have those censured nor discouraged who sincerely design to please him, though in their honest endeavours there be not all the discretion that may be, ^{<54B>}Romans 14:3. Though we would not do as they do, yet *let them alone*. For Mary's justification,

1. Christ puts a favourable construction upon what she did, which those that condemned it were not aware of: *Against the day of my burying she has kept this*. Or, *She has reserved this for the day of my embalming*; so Dr. Hammond. "You do not grudge the ointment used for the embalming of your dead friends, nor say that it should be sold, and given to the poor. Now this anointing either was so *intended*, or at least may be so *interpreted*; for the day of my burying is now at hand, and she has anointed a body that is already *as good as dead*." Note,

(1.) Our Lord Jesus thought much and often of his own death and burial; it would be good for us to do so too.

(2.) Providence does often so open a door of opportunity to good Christians, and the Spirit of grace does so open their hearts, that the expressions of their pious zeal prove to be more *seasonable*, and more *beautiful*, than any foresight of their own could make them.

(3.) The grace of Christ puts kind comments upon the pious words and actions of good people, and not only makes the best of what is amiss, but makes the most of what is good.

2. He gives a sufficient answer to Judas's objection, v. 8.

(1.) It is so ordered in the kingdom of Providence that *the poor we have always with us*, some or other that are proper objects of charity (^(CHRIST)Deuteronomy 15:11); such there will be as long as there are in this lapsed state of mankind so much folly and so much affliction.

(2.) It is so ordered in the kingdom of grace that the church should not always have the bodily presence of Jesus Christ: "*Me you have not always, but only now for a little time.*" Note, We need wisdom, when two duties come in competition, to know which to give the preference to, which must be determined by the circumstances. Opportunities are to be improved, and those opportunities first and most vigorously which are likely to be of the shortest continuance, and which we see most speedily hastening away. That good duty which may be done *at any time* ought to give way to that which cannot be done but *just now*.

VI. The public notice which was taken of our Lord Jesus here at this supper in Bethany (v. 9): *Much people of the Jews knew that he was there*, for he was the talk of the town, and *they came* flocking thither; the more because he had lately absconded, and now broke out as the sun from behind a dark cloud.

1. They came to see Jesus, whose name was very much magnified, and made considerable by the late miracle he had wrought in raising Lazarus. They came, not to hear him, but to gratify their curiosity with a sight of him here at Bethany, fearing he would not appear publicly, as he used to do, this passover. They came, not to seize him, or inform against him, though the government had prosecuted him to an outlawry, but to see him and show him respect. Note, There are some in whose affections Christ will have an interest, in spite of all the attempts of his enemies to misrepresent him. It being known where Christ was, multitudes came to

him. Note, Where the king is there is the court; where Christ is there will the *gathering of the people be*, ⁴¹³Luke 17:37.

2. They came to see Lazarus and Christ together, which was a very inviting sight. Some came for the confirmation of their faith in Christ, to have the story perhaps from Lazarus's own mouth. Others came only for the gratifying of their curiosity, that they might say they had seen a man who had been dead and buried, and yet lived again; so that Lazarus served for a *show*, these holy-days, to those who, like the Athenians, spent their time in telling and hearing new things. Perhaps some came to put curious questions to Lazarus about the state of the dead, to ask what news from the other world; we ourselves have sometimes said, it may be, We would have gone a great way for one hour's discourse with Lazarus. But if any came on this errand it is probable that Lazarus was silent, and gave them no account of his voyage; at least, the scripture is silent, and gives us no account of it; and we must not covet to be wise above what is written. But our Lord Jesus was present, who was a much fitter person for them to apply to than Lazarus; Lazarus; for if we hear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, if we heed not what they tell us concerning another world, neither should we be persuaded though Lazarus rose from the dead. We have a more sure word of prophecy.

VII. The indignation of the chief priests at the growing interest of our Lord Jesus, and their plot to crush it (v. 10, 11): They *consulted* (or decreed) *how they might put Lazarus also to death*, because that *by reason of him* (of what was done to him, not of any thing he said or did) *many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus*. Here observe,

1. How vain and unsuccessful their attempts against Christ had hitherto been. They had done all they could to alienate the people from him, and exasperate them against him, and yet many of the Jews, their neighbours, their creatures, their admirers, were so overcome by the convincing evidence of Christ's miracles that they *went away* from the interest and party of the priests, went off from obedience to their tyranny, *and believed on Jesus*; and it was by reason of Lazarus; his resurrection put life into their faith, and convinced them that this Jesus was undoubtedly the Messiah, and had life in himself, and power to give life. This miracle confirmed them in the belief of his other miracles, which they had heard he wrought in Galilee: what was impossible to him that could raise the dead?

2. How absurd and unreasonable this day's vote was — that Lazarus must be put to death. This is an instance of the most brutish rage that could be; they were like a *wild bull in a net*, full of fury, and laying about them without any consideration. It was a sign that they *neither feared God nor regarded man*. For,

(1.) If they had feared God, they would not have done such an act of defiance to him. God will have Lazarus to live by miracle, and they will have him to die by malice. They cry, *Away with such a fellow, it is not fit he should live*, when God had so lately sent him back to the earth, declaring it highly fit he should live; what was this but *walking contrary to God*? They would put Lazarus to death, and challenge almighty power to raise him again, as if they could contend with God, and try titles with the King of kings. Who has the keys of death and the grave, he or they? *O caeca malitia! Christus qui suscitare potuit mortuum, non possit occisum.* — *Blind malice, to suppose that Christ, who could raise one that had died a natural death, could not raise one that had been slain!* — Augustine in loc. Lazarus is singled out to be the object of their special hatred, because God has distinguished him by the tokens of his peculiar love, as if they had made a league offensive and defensive with death and hell, and resolved to be severe upon all deserters. One would think that they should rather have consulted how they might have joined in friendship with Lazarus and his family, and by their mediation have reconciled themselves to this Jesus whom they had persecuted; but the god of this world had *blinded their minds*.

(2.) If they had regarded man, they would not have done such an act of injustice to Lazarus, an innocent man, to whose charge they could not pretend to lay any crime. What bands are strong enough to hold those who can so easily break through the most sacred ties of common justice, and violate the maxims which even nature itself teaches? But the support of their own tyranny and superstition was thought sufficient, as in the church of Rome, not only to justify, but to consecrate the greatest villanies, and make them meritorious.

JOHN 12:12-19

CHRIST'S ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM

This story of Christ's riding in triumph to Jerusalem is recorded by all the evangelists, as worthy of special remark; and in it we may observe,

I. The respect that was paid to our Lord Jesus by the common people, v. 12, 13, where we are told,

1. Who they were that paid him this respect: *much people, ochlos polys* — a great crowd of those that came up to the feast; not the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but the country people that came from remote parts to worship at the feast; the nearer the temple of the Lord, the further from the Lord of the temple. They were such as *came up to the feast*.

(1.) Perhaps they had been Christ's hearers in the country, and great admirers of him there, and therefore were forward to testify their respect to him at Jerusalem, where they knew he had many enemies. Note, Those that have a true value and veneration for Christ will neither be ashamed nor afraid to own him before men in any instance whereby they may do him honour.

(2.) Perhaps they were those more *devout Jews* that came up to the feast some time before, to purify themselves, that were more inclined to religion than their neighbours, and these were they that were so forward to honour Christ. Note, The more regard men have to God and religion in general, the better disposed they will be to entertain Christ and his religion, which is not destructive but perfective of all previous discoveries and institutions. They were not the rulers, nor the great men, that went out to meet Christ, but the commonalty; some would have called them a mob, a rabble: but Christ has chosen the weak and foolish things (~~412~~1 Corinthians 1:27), and is honoured more by the multitude than by the magnificence of his followers; for he values men by their souls, not their names and titles of honour.

2. On what occasion they did it: *They heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem*. They had enquired for him (~~415~~John 11:55, 56): *Will he not come up to the feast?* And now they hear he is coming; for none that seek Christ seek in vain. Now when they heard he was coming, they bestirred

themselves, to give him an agreeable reception. Note, Tidings of the approach of Christ and his kingdom should awaken us to consider what is the work of the day, that it may be done in the day. Israel must prepare to meet *their God* (^{<3012>}Amos 4:12), and the virgins to *meet the bridegroom*.

3. In what way they expressed their respect; they had not the keys of the city to present to him, nor the sword nor mace to carry before him, none of the city music to compliment him with, but such as they had they gave him; and even this despicable crowd was a faint resemblance of that glorious company which John saw *before the throne, and before the Lamb*, (^{<6070>}Revelation 7:9, 10. Though these were not before the throne, they were before the Lamb, the paschal Lamb, who now, according to the usual ceremony, four days before the feast, was set apart to be sacrificed for us. There it is said of that celestial choir,

(1.) That they had palms in their hands, and so had these *branches of palm-trees*. The palm-tree has ever been an emblem of victory and triumph; Cicero calls one that had won many prizes *plurimarum palmarum homo* — *a man of many palms*. Christ was now by his death to conquer principalities and powers, and therefore it was fit that he should have the victor's palm borne before him; though he was but girding on the harness, yet he could boast as though he had put it off. But this was not all; the carrying of palm-branches was part of the ceremony of the feast of tabernacles (^{<0230>}Leviticus 23:40; ^{<1085>}Nehemiah 8:15), and their using this expression of joy in the welcome given to our Lord Jesus intimates that all the feasts pointed at his gospel, had their accomplishment in it, and particularly that of the feast of tabernacles, (^{<3846>}Zechariah 14:16.

(2.) That they *cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God* (^{<6070>}Revelation 7:10); so did these here, they shouted before him, as is usual in popular welcomes, *Hosanna, blessed is the king of Israel, that comes in the name of the Lord*; and *hosanna* signifies *salvation*. It is quoted from (^{<1185>}Psalm 118:25, 26. See how well acquainted these common people were with the scripture, and how pertinently they apply it to the Messiah. High thoughts of Christ will be best expressed in scripture-words. Now in their acclamations,

[1.] They acknowledge our Lord Jesus to be the king of Israel, that comes *in the name of the Lord*. Though he went now in poverty and disgrace, yet, contrary to the notions their scribes had given them of the Messiah, they own him to be a king, which bespeaks both his dignity and honour, which

we must adore; and his dominion and power, to which we must submit. They own him to be, *First*, A rightful king, coming in *the name of the Lord* (^{<4006>}Psalm 2:6), sent of God, not only as a prophet, but as a king. *Secondly*, The promised and long-expected king, Messiah the prince, for he is *king of Israel*. According to the light they had, they proclaimed him king of Israel in the streets of Jerusalem; and, they themselves being Israelites, hereby they avouched him for their king.

[2.] They heartily wish well to his kingdom, which is the meaning of hosanna; let the king of Israel prosper, as when Solomon was crowned they cried, *God save king Solomon*, ^{<4039>}1 Kings 1:39. In crying hosanna they prayed for three things: — *First*, That his kingdom might come, in the light and knowledge of it, and in the power and efficacy of it. God speed the gospel plough. *Secondly*, That it might conquer, and be victorious over all opposition, ^{<4042>}Revelation 6:2. *Thirdly*, That it might continue. Hosanna is, *Let the king live for ever*; though his kingdom may be disturbed, let it never be destroyed, ^{<4077>}Psalm 72:17.

[3.] They bid him welcome into Jerusalem: “*Welcome is he that cometh*; we are heartily glad to see him; *come in thou blessed of the Lord*; and well may we attend with our blessings him who meets us with his.” This welcome is like that (^{<4207>}Psalm 24:7-9), *Lift up your heads, O ye gates*. Thus we must every one of us bid Christ welcome into our hearts, that is, we must praise him, and be well pleased in him. As we should be highly pleased with the being and attributes of God, and his relation to us, so we should be with the person and offices of the Lord Jesus, and his meditation between us and God. Faith saith, *Blessed is he that cometh*.

II. The posture Christ puts himself into for receiving the respect that was paid him (v. 14): *When he had found*, or procured, *a young ass*, he *sat thereon*. It was but a poor sort of figure he made, he alone upon an ass, and a crowd of people about him shouting *Hosanna*.

1. This was much more of state than he used to take; he used to travel on foot, but now was mounted. Though his followers should be willing to take up with mean things, and not affect any thing that looks like grandeur, yet they are allowed to use the service of the inferior creatures, according as God in his providence gives particular possession of those things over which, by his covenant with Noah and his sons, he has given to man a general dominion.

2. Yet it was much less of state than the great ones of the world usually take. If he would have made a public entry, according to the state of a man of high degree, he should have rode in a chariot like that of Solomon's (²⁸⁹Song of Solomon 3:9, 10), with *pillars of silver*, the *bottom of gold*, and the *covering of purple*; but, if we judge according to the fashion of this world, to be introduced thus was rather a disparagement than any honour to the king of Israel, for it seemed as if he would look great, and knew not how. His kingdom was not of this world, and therefore came not with outward pomp. He was now humbling himself, but in his exalted state John sees him in a vision *on a white horse, with a bow and a crown*.

III. The fulfilling of the scripture in this: *As it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion*, v. 15. This is quoted from ³⁰¹Zechariah 9:19. To him bore all the prophets witness, and particularly to this concerning him.

1. It was foretold that Zion's king should come, should come *thus, sitting on an ass's colt*; even this minute circumstance was foretold, and Christ took care it should be punctually fulfilled. Note,

(1.) Christ is Zion's king; the holy hill of Zion was of old destined to be the metropolis or royal city of the Messiah.

(2.) Zion's king does and will look after her, and come to her; though for a short time he retires, in due time he returns.

(3.) Though he comes but slowly (an ass is slow-paced), yet he comes surely, and with such expressions of humility and condescension as greatly encourage the addresses and expectations of his loyal subjects. Humble supplicants may reach to speak with him. If this be a discouragement to Zion, that her king appears in no greater state or strength, let her know that though he comes to her riding on an ass's colt, yet he goes forth against her enemies riding *on the heavens for her help*, ⁶⁵⁵Deuteronomy 33:26.

2. The daughter of Zion is therefore called upon to *behold her king*, to take notice of him and his approaches; behold and wonder, for he comes with observation, though not with outward show, ²⁹¹Song of Solomon 3:11. *Fear not*. In the prophecy, Zion is told to rejoice greatly, and to shout, but here it is rendered, *Fear not*. Unbelieving fears are enemies to spiritual joys; if they be cured, if they be conquered, joy will come of course; Christ comes to his people to *silence* their fears. If the case be so that we cannot

reach to the exultations of joy, yet we should labour to get from under the oppressions of fear. *Rejoice greatly; at least, fear not.*

IV. The remark made by the evangelist respecting the disciples (v. 16): *They understood not at first why Christ did this, and how the scripture was fulfilled; but when Jesus was glorified, and thereupon the Spirit poured out, then they remembered that these things were written of him in the Old Testament, and that they and others had, in pursuance thereof, done these things to him.*

1. See here the imperfection of the disciples in their infant state; even *they understood not these things at first.* They did not consider, when they fetched the ass and set him thereon, that they were performing the ceremony of the inauguration of Zion's king. Now observe,

(1.) The scripture is often fulfilled by the agency of those who have not themselves an eye to the scripture in what they do, ~~2854~~ Isaiah 45:4.

(2.) There are many excellent things, both in the word and providence of God, which the disciples themselves do not at first understand: not at their first acquaintance with the things of God, while they *see men as trees walking*; not at the first proposal of the things to their view and consideration. That which afterwards is clear was at first dark and doubtful.

(3.) It well becomes the disciples of Christ, when they are grown up to maturity in knowledge, frequently to reflect upon the follies and weaknesses of their first beginning, that free grace may have the glory of their proficiency, and they may have compassion on the ignorant. *When I was a child, I spoke as a child.*

2. See here the improvement of the disciples in their adult state. Though they had been children, they were not always so, but went on to perfection. Observe,

(1.) When they understood it: *When Jesus was glorified; for,*

[1.] Till then they did not rightly apprehend the nature of his kingdom, but expected it to appear in external pomp and power, and therefore knew not how to apply the scriptures which spoke of it to so mean an appearance. Note, The right understanding of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom,

of its powers, glories, and victories, would prevent our misinterpreting and misapplying the scriptures that speak of it.

[2.] Till then the Spirit was not poured out, who was to lead them into all truth. Note, The disciples of Christ are enabled to understand the scriptures by the same Spirit that indited the scriptures. *The spirit of revelation is to all the saints a spirit of wisdom,* Ephesians 1:17, 18.

(2.) How they understood it; they compared the prophecy with the event, and put them together, that they might mutually receive light from each other, and so they came to understand both: *Then remembered they that these things were written of him* by the prophets, consonant to which they were done to him. Note, Such an admirable harmony there is between the word and works of God that the remembrance of what is written will enable us to understand what is done, and the observation of what is done will help us to understand what is written. *As we have heard, so have we seen.* The scripture is every day fulfilling.

V. The reason which induced the people to pay this respect to our Lord Jesus upon his coming into Jerusalem, though the government was so much set against him. It was because of the illustrious miracle he had lately wrought in raising Lazarus.

1. See here what account and what assurance they had of this miracle; no doubt, the city rang of it, the report of it was in all people's mouths. But those who considered it as a proof of Christ's mission, and a ground of their faith in him, that they might be well satisfied of the matter of fact, traced the report to those who were eye-witnesses of it, that they might *know the certainty* of it by the utmost evidence the thing was capable of: *The people therefore that stood by when he called Lazarus out of his grave, being found out and examined, bore record,* v. 17. They unanimously averred the thing to be true, beyond dispute or contradiction, and were ready, if called to it, to depose it upon oath, for so much is implied in the word *Emartyrei*. Note, The truth of Christ's miracles was evidenced by incontestable proofs. It is probable that those who had seen this miracle did not only assert it to those who asked them, but published it unasked, that this might add to the triumphs of this solemn day; and Christ's coming in now from Bethany, where it was done, would put them in mind of it. Note, Those who wish well to Christ's kingdom should be forward to proclaim what they know that may redound to his honour.

2. What improvement they made of it, and what influence it had upon them (v. 18): *For this cause*, as much as any other, *the people met him*.

(1.) Some, out of curiosity, were desirous to see one that had done such a wonderful work. Many a good sermon he had preached in Jerusalem, which drew not such crowds after him as this one miracle did. But,

(2.) Others, out of conscience, studied to do him honour, as one sent of God. This miracle was reserved for one of the last, that it might confirm those which went before, and might gain him this honour just before his sufferings; Christ's works were all not only *well done* (⁴⁰⁰Mark 7:7) but *well timed*.

VI. The indignation of the Pharisees at all this; some of them, probably, saw, and they all soon heard of, Christ's public entry. The committee appointed to find out expedients to crush him thought they had gained their point when he had retired unto privacy, and that he would soon be forgotten in Jerusalem, but they now rage and fret when they see they imagined but a *vain thing*.

1. They own that they had got no ground against him; it was plainly to be perceived that they *prevailed nothing*. They could not, with all their insinuations, alienate the people's affections from him, nor with their menaces restrain them from showing their affection to him. Note, Those who oppose Christ, and fight against his kingdom, will be made to perceive that they prevail nothing. God will accomplish his own purposes in spite of them, and the little efforts of their impotent malice. *You prevail nothing, ouk ophelite* — *you profit nothing*. Note, There is nothing got by opposing Christ.

2. They own that he had got ground: *The world is gone after him*; there is a vast crowd attending him, a *world of people*: an hyperbole common in most languages. Yet here, like Caiaphas, ere they were aware, they prophesied that *the world would go after him*; some of all sorts, some from all parts; nations shall be discipled. But to what intent was this said?

(1.) Thus they *express* their own vexation at the growth of his interest; their envy makes them fret. If the *horn of the righteous be exalted with honour, the wicked see it, and are grieved* (⁴¹⁰Psalm 112:9, 10); considering how great these Pharisees were, and what abundance of respect was paid them, one would think they needed not grudge Christ so

inconsiderable a piece of honour as was now done him; but proud men would monopolize honour, and have none share with them, like Haman.

(2.) Thus they excite themselves and one another, to a more vigorous carrying on of the war against Christ. As if they should say, “Dallying and delaying thus will never do. We must take some other and more effectual course, to put a stop to this infection; it is time to try our utmost skill and force, before the grievance grows past redress.” Thus the enemies of religion are made more resolute and active by being baffled; and shall its friends be disheartened with every disappointment, who know its cause is righteous and will at last be victorious?

JOHN 12:20-26

CERTAIN GREEKS DESIRE TO SEE JESUS

Honour is here paid to Christ by certain Greeks that enquired of him with respect. We are not told what day of Christ's last week this was, probably not the same day he rode into Jerusalem (for that day was taken up in public work), but a day or two after.

I. We are told who they were that paid this honour to our Lord Jesus: *Certain Greeks among the people who came up to worship at the feast, v. 20.* Some think they were *Jews of the dispersion*, some of the twelve tribes that were scattered among the Gentiles, and were called *Greeks*, Hellenist Jews; but others think they were Gentiles, those whom they called *proselytes of the gate*, such as the eunuch and Cornelius. Pure natural religion met with the best assistance among the Jews, and therefore those among the Gentiles who were piously inclined joined with them in their solemn meetings, as far as was allowed them. There were devout worshippers of the true God even among those that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. It was in the latter ages of the Jewish church that there was this flocking of the Gentiles to the temple at Jerusalem, — a happy presage of the taking down of the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles. The forbidding of the priests to accept of any oblation or sacrifice from a Gentile (which was done by Eleazar the son of Ananias, the high priest), Josephus says, was one of those things that brought the Romans upon them, *War* 2.409-410. Though these Greeks, if uncircumcised, were not admitted to eat the passover, yet they came to

worship at the feast. We must thankfully use the privileges we have, though there may be others from which we are shut out.

II. What was the honour they paid him: they desired to be acquainted with him, v. 21. Having come to worship at the feast, they desired to make the best use they could of their time, and therefore applied to Philip, desiring that he would put them in a way to get some personal converse with the Lord Jesus.

1. Having a desire to see Christ, they were industrious in the use of proper means. They did not conclude it impossible, because he was so much crowded, to get to speak with him, nor rest in bare wishes, but resolved to try what could be done. Note, Those that would have the knowledge of Christ must seek it.

2. They made their application to Philip, one of his disciples. Some think that they had acquaintance with him formerly, and that they lived near Bethsaida in Galilee of the Gentiles; and then it teaches us that we should improve our acquaintance with good people, for our increase in the knowledge of Christ. It is good to know those who know the Lord. But if these Greeks had been near Galilee it is probable that they would have attended Christ there, where he mostly resided; therefore I think that they applied to him only because they saw him a close follower of Christ, and he was the first they could get to speak with. It was an instance of the veneration they had for Christ that they made an interest with one of his disciples for an opportunity to converse with him, a sign that they looked upon him as some great one, though he appeared mean. Those that would see Jesus by faith now that he is in heaven must apply to his ministers, whom he had appointed for this purpose, to guide poor souls in their enquiries after him. Paul must send for Ananias, and Cornelius for Peter. The bringing of these Greeks to the knowledge of Christ by the means of Philip signified the agency of the apostles, and the use made of their ministry in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith and the discipling of the nations.

3. Their address to Philip was in short this: *Sir, we would see Jesus*. They gave him a title of respect, as one worthy of honour, because he was in relation to Christ. Their business is, they would *see Jesus*; not only see his face, that they might be able to say, when they came home, they had seen one that was so much talked of (it is probable they had seen him when he

appeared publicly); but they would have some free conversation with him, and be taught by him, for which it was no easy thing to find him at leisure, his hands were so full of public work. Now that they were come to worship at the feast, they would see Jesus. Note, In our attendance upon holy ordinances, and particularly the gospel passover, the great desire of our souls should be to see Jesus; to have our acquaintance with him increased, our dependence on him encouraged, our conformity to him carried on; to see him as ours, to keep up communion with him, and derive communications of grace from him: we miss of our end in coming if we do not see Jesus.

4. Here is the report which Philip made of this to his Master, v. 22. He tells Andrew, who was of Bethsaida likewise, and was a *senior fellow* in the college of the apostles, contemporary with Peter, and consults him what was to be done, whether he thought the motion would be acceptable or no, because Christ had sometimes said that he was *not sent but to the house of Israel*. They agree that it must be made; but then he would have Andrew go along with him, remembering the favourable acceptance Christ had promised them, in case *two of them should agree touching any thing they should ask*, ⁴¹⁸Matthew 18:19. Note, Christ's ministers should be helpful to one another and concur in helping souls to Christ: *Two are better than one*. It should seem that Andrew and Philip brought this message to Christ when he was teaching in public, for we read (v. 29) of *the people that stood by*; but he was seldom alone.

III. Christ's acceptance of this honour paid him, signified by what he said to the people hereupon, v. 23, etc., where he foretels both the honour which he himself should have in being followed (v. 23, 24) and the honour which those should have that followed him, v. 25, 26. This was intended for the direction and encouragement of these Greeks, and all others that desired acquaintance with him.

1. He foresees that plentiful harvest, in the conversion of the Gentiles, of which this was as it were the first-fruits, v. 23. Christ said to the two disciples who spoke a good word for these Greeks, but doubted whether they should speed or no, *The hour is come when the Son of Man shall be glorified*, by the accession of the Gentiles to the church, and in order to that he must be rejected of the Jews. Observe,

(1.) The end designed hereby, and that is the glorifying of the Redeemer: “And is it so? Do the Gentiles begin to enquire after me? Does the morning-star appear to them? and that blessed *say-spring*, which knows its place and time too, does that begin to *take hold of the ends of the earth*? Then the hour is come for the *glorifying of the Son of man*.” This was no surprise to Christ, but a paradox to those about him. Note,

[1.] The calling, the effectual calling, of the Gentiles into the church of God greatly redounded to the glory of the Son of man. The multiplying of the redeemed was the magnifying of the Redeemer.

[2.] there was a time, a set time, an hour, a certain hour, for the glorifying of the Son of man, which did come at last, when the days of his humiliation were numbered and finished, and he speaks of the approach of it with exultation and triumph: *The hour is come*.

(2.) The strange way in which this end was to be attained, and that was by the death of Christ, intimated in that similitude (v. 24): “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, you to whom I have spoken of my death and sufferings, except a corn of wheat fall not only to, but into, the ground, and die, and be buried and lost, it abideth alone, and you never see any more of it; but if it die according to the course of nature (otherwise it would be a miracle) it bringeth forth much fruit, God giving to every seed its own body.*” Christ is the corn of wheat, the most valuable and useful grain. Now here is,

[1.] The necessity of Christ's humiliation intimated. He would never have been the living quickening head and root of the church if he had not descended from heaven to this accursed earth and ascended from earth to the accursed tree, and so accomplished our redemption. He must *pour out his soul unto death*, else he cannot *divide a portion with the great*, ~~and~~ Isaiah 53:12. He shall have a seed given him, but he must shed his blood to purchase them and purify, must win them and wear them. It was necessary likewise as a qualification for that glory which he was to have by the accession of multitudes to his church; for if he had not by his sufferings made satisfaction for sin, and so brought in an everlasting righteousness, he would not have been sufficiently provided for the entertainment of those that should come to him, and therefore must *abide alone*.

[2.] The advantage of Christ's humiliation illustrated. He *fell to the ground* in his incarnation, seemed to be buried alive in this earth, so much was his glory veiled; but this was not all: *he died*. This immortal seed submitted to the laws of mortality, he lay in the grave like seed under the clods; but as the seed comes up again green, and fresh, and flourishing, and with a great increase, so one dying Christ gathered to himself thousands of living Christians, and he became their root. The salvation of souls hitherto, and henceforward to the end of time, is all owing to the dying of this *corn of wheat*. Hereby the Father and the Son are glorified, the church is replenished, the mystical body is kept up, and will at length be completed; and, when time shall be no more, the Captain of our salvation, *bringing many sons to glory* by the virtue of his death, and being so made perfect by sufferings, shall be celebrated for ever with the admiring praises of saints and angels, ³²⁰Hebrews 2:10, 13.

2. He foretels and promises an abundant recompence to those who should cordially embrace him and his gospel and interest, and should make it appear that they do so by their faithfulness in suffering for him or in serving him.

(1.) In suffering for him (v. 25): *He that loves his life better than Christ shall lose it*; but he that hates *his life in this world*, and prefers the favour of God and an interest in Christ before it, shall *keep it unto life eternal*. This doctrine Christ much insisted on, it being the great design of his religion to wean us from this world, by setting before us another world.

[1.] See here the fatal consequences of an inordinate love of life; many a man hugs himself to death, and loses his life by over-loving it. He that so loves his animal life as to indulge his appetite, and make *provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*, shall thereby shorten his days, shall lose the life he is so fond of, and another infinitely better. He that is so much in love with the life of the body, and the ornaments and delights of it, as, for fear of exposing it or them, to deny Christ, he shall lose it, that is, lose a real happiness in the other world, while he thinks to secure an imaginary one in this. *Skin for skin* a man may give for his life, and make a good bargain, but he that gives his soul, his God, his heaven, for it, buys life too dear, and is guilty of the folly of him who sold a birth-right for a mess of pottage.

[2.] See also the blessed recompence of a holy contempt of life. He that so hates the life of the body as to venture it for the preserving of the life of

his soul shall find both, with unspeakable advantage, in eternal life. Note, *First*, It is required of the disciples of Christ that they hate *their life in this world*; a life in this world supposes a life in the other world, and this is hated when it is loved less than that. Our life in this world includes all the enjoyments of our present state, riches, honours, pleasures, and long life in the possession of them; these we must hate, that is, despise them as vain and insufficient to make us happy, dread the temptations that are in them, and cheerfully part with them whenever they come in competition with the service of Christ, ~~Acts~~ Acts 20:24; 21:13; ~~Revelation~~ Revelation 12:11. See here much of the *power of godliness* — that it conquers the strongest natural affections; and much of the *mystery of godliness* — that it is the greatest wisdom, and yet makes men hate their own lives. *Secondly*, Those who, in love to Christ, hate their own lives in this world, shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just. *He that hateth his life shall keep it*; he puts it into the hands of one that will *keep it to life eternal*, and restore it with as great an improvement as the heavenly life can make of the earthly one.

(2.) In serving him (v. 26): *If any man profess to serve me*, let him *follow me*, as a servant follows his master; and *where I am, ekei kai ho diakonos ho emos estai* — there *let my servant be*; so some read it, as part of the duty, there let him be, to attend upon me; we read it as part of the promise, *there shall he be* in happiness with me. And, lest this should seem a small matter, he adds, *If any man serve me, him will my Father honour*; and that is enough, more than enough. The Greeks desired to see Jesus (v. 21), but Christ lets them know that it was not enough to see him, they must *serve him*. He did not come into the world, to be a show for us to gaze at, but a king to be ruled by. And he says this for the encouragement of those who enquired after him to become his servants. In taking servants it is usual to fix both the work and the wages; Christ does both here.

[1.] Here is the work which Christ expects from his servants; and it is very easy and reasonable, and such as becomes them.

First, Let them attend their Master's movements: *If any man serve me, let him follow me*. Christians must follow Christ, follow his methods and prescriptions, *do the things that he says*, follow his example and pattern, *walk as he also walked*, follow his conduct by his providence and Spirit. We must go whither he leads us, and in the way he leads us; must follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes before us. “If any man serve me, if he put

himself into that relation to me, let him apply himself to the business of my service, and be always ready at my call." Or, "If any man do indeed serve me, let him make an open and public profession of his relation to me, by following me, as the servant owns his Master by following him in the streets."

Secondly, Let them attend their Master's repose: *Where I am, there let my servant be*, to wait upon me. Christ is where his church is, in the assemblies of his saints, where his ordinances are administered; and *there let his servants be*, to present themselves before him, and receive instructions from him. Or, "Where I am to be in heaven, whither I am now going, there let the thoughts and affections of my servants be, there let their conversation be, *where Christ sitteth.*" ^{<317>}Colossians 3:1, 2.

[2.] Here are the wages which Christ promises to his servants; and they are very rich and noble.

First, They shall be happy with him: *Where I am, there shall also my servant be*. To be with him, when he was here in poverty and disgrace, would seem but poor preferment, and therefore, doubtless, he means being with him in paradise, sitting with him at his table above, on his throne there; it is the happiness of heaven to be with Christ there, ^{<317>}John 17:24. Christ speaks of heaven's happiness as if he were already in it: *Where I am*; because he was sure of it, and near to it, and it was still *upon his heart*, and *in his eye*. And the same joy and glory which he thought recompence enough for all his services and sufferings are proposed to his servants as the recompence of theirs. Those that follow him in the way shall be with him in the end.

Secondly, They shall be honoured by his Father; he will make them amends for all their pains and loss, by conferring an honour upon them, such as becomes a great God to give, but far beyond what such worthless worms of the earth could expect to receive. The rewarder is God himself, who takes the services done to the Lord Jesus as done to himself. The reward is honour, true lasting honour, the highest honour; it is the honour that comes from God. It is said (^{<317>}Proverbs 27:18), *He that waits on his Master* (humbly and diligently) *shall be honoured*. Those that wait on Christ God will put honour upon, such as will be taken notice of another day, though now under a veil. Those that serve Christ must humble themselves, and are commonly vilified by the world, in recompence of both which they shall be exalted in due time.

Thus far Christ's discourse has reference to those Greeks who desired to *see him*, encouraging them to serve him. What became of those Greeks we are not told, but are willing to hope that those who thus asked the way to heaven with their faces thitherward, found it, and walked in it.

◀827▶ JOHN 12:27-36

THE DIVINE ATTESTATION TO CHRIST

Honour is here done to Christ by his Father in a voice from heaven, occasioned by the following part of his discourse, and which gave occasion to a further conference with the people. In these verses we have,

I. Christ's address to his Father, upon occasion of the trouble which seized his spirit at this time: *Now is my soul troubled*, v. 27. A strange word to come from Christ's mouth, and at this time surprising, for it comes in the midst of divers pleasing prospects, in which, one would think, he should have said, *Now is my soul pleased*. Note, Trouble of soul sometimes follows after great enlargements of spirit. In this world of mixture and change we must expect damps upon our joy, and the highest degree of comfort to be the next degree to trouble. When Paul had been in the third heavens, he had a *thorn in the flesh*. Observe,

1. Christ's dread of his approaching sufferings: *Now is my soul troubled*. Now the black and dismal scene began, now were the first throes of the travail of his soul, now his agony began, his soul *began to be exceedingly sorrowful*. Note,

(1.) The sin of our soul was the trouble of Christ's soul, when he undertook to redeem and save us, and to make his soul an offering for our sin.

(2.) The trouble of his soul was designed to ease the trouble of our souls; for, after this, he said to his disciples (◀841▶ John 14:1), "*Let not your hearts be troubled; why should yours be troubled and mine too?*" Our Lord Jesus went on cheerfully in his work, in prospect of the joy set before him, and yet submitted to a trouble of soul. Holy mourning is consistent with spiritual joy, and the way to eternal joy. Christ was *now* troubled, now in sorrow, now in fear, now for a season; but it would not be so always, it

would not be so long. The same is the comfort of Christians in their troubles; they are but *for a moment*, and will be turned into joy.

2. The strait he seems to be in hereupon, intimated in those words, *And what shall I say?* This does not imply his consulting with any other, as if he needed advice, but considering with himself what was fit to be said now. When our souls are troubled we must take heed of speaking unadvisedly, but debate with ourselves what we shall say. Christ speaks like one at a loss, as if what he should choose he wot not. There was a struggle between the work he had taken upon him, which required sufferings, and the nature he had taken upon him, which dreaded them; between these two he here pauses with, *What shall I say?* He looked, and there was *none to help*, which put him to a stand. Calvin observes this as a great instance of Christ's humiliation, that he should speak thus like one at a loss. *Quo se magis exinanivit gloriae Dominus, eo luculentius habemus erga nos amoris specimen* — *The more entirely the Lord of glory emptied himself, the brighter is the proof of the love he bore us.* Thus he was *in all points tempted like as we are*, to encourage us, when we know not what to do, to direct our eyes to him.

3. His prayer to God in this strait: *Father, save me from this hour, ek tes oras tautes* — *out of this hour*, praying, not so much that it might not come as that he might be brought through it. *Save me from this hour*; this was the language of innocent nature, and its feelings poured forth in prayer. Note, It is the duty and interest of troubled souls to have recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and in prayer to eye him as a Father. Christ was voluntary in his sufferings, and yet prayed to be saved from them. Note, Prayer against a trouble may very well consist with patience under it and submission to the will of God in it. Observe, He calls his suffering *this hour*, meaning the expected events of the time now at hand. Hereby he intimates that the time of his suffering was,

(1.) A set time, set to an hour, and he knew it. It was said twice before that his hour was not yet come, but it was now so near that he might say it was come.

(2.) A short time. An hour is soon over, so were Christ's sufferings; he could see through them to the *joy set before him*.

4. His acquiescence in his Father's will, notwithstanding. He presently corrects himself, and, as it were, recalls what he had said: *But for this*

cause came I to this hour. Innocent nature got the first word, but divine wisdom and love got the last. Note, those who would proceed regularly must go upon second thoughts. The complainant speaks first; but, if we would judge righteously, we must hear the other side. With the second thought he checked himself: *For this cause came I to this hour;* he does not silence himself with this, that he could not avoid it, there was no remedy; but satisfies himself with this, that he would not avoid it, for it was pursuant to his own voluntary engagement, and was to be the crown of his whole undertaking; should he now fly off, this would frustrate all that had been done hitherto. Reference is here had to the divine counsels concerning his sufferings, by virtue of which it behoved him thus to submit and suffer. Note, This should reconcile us to the darkest hours of our lives, that we were all along designed for them; see ~~STAB~~ 1 Thessalonians 3:3.

5. His regard to his Father's honour herein. Upon the withdrawing of his former petition, he presents another, which he will abide by: *Father, glorify thy name,* to the same purport with *Father, thy will be done;* for God's will is for his own glory. This expresses more than barely a submission to the will of God; it is a consecration of his sufferings to the glory of God. It was a mediatorial word, and was spoken by him as our surety, who had undertaken to satisfy divine justice for our sin. The wrong which by sin we have done to God is in his glory, his declarative glory; for in nothing else are we capable of doing him injury. We were never able to make him satisfaction for this wrong done him, nor any creature for us; nothing therefore remained but that God should get him honour upon us in our utter ruin. Here therefore our Lord Jesus interposed, undertook to satisfy God's injured honour, and he did it by his humiliation; he denied himself in, and divested himself of, the honours due to the Son of God incarnate, and submitted to the greatest reproach. Now here he makes a tender of this satisfaction as an equivalent: "*Father, glorify thy name;* let thy justice be honoured upon the sacrifice, not upon the sinner; let the debt be levied upon me, I am solvent, the principal is not." Thus he *restored that which he took not away.*

II. The Father's answer to this address; for he heard him always, and does still. Observe,

1. How this answer was given. By a voice from heaven. The Jews speak much of a *Bath-kal* — *the daughter of a voice,* as one of those divers

manners by which God in time past spoke to the prophets; but we do not find any instance of his speaking thus to any but to our Lord Jesus; it was an honour reserved for him (⁴⁰⁸⁷Matthew 3:17; 17:5), and here, probably, this audible voice was introduced by some visible appearance, either of light or darkness, for both have been used as vehicles of the divine glory.

2. What the answer was. It was an express return to that petition, *Father, glorify thy name: I have glorified it already, and I will glorify it yet again.* When we pray as we are taught, *Our Father, hallowed be thy name,* this is a comfort to us, that is it an answered prayer; answered to Christ here, and in him to all true believers.

(1.) The name of God had been glorified in the life of Christ, in his doctrine and miracles, and all the examples he gave of holiness and goodness.

(2.) It should be further glorified in the death and sufferings of Christ. His wisdom and power, his justice and holiness, his truth and goodness, were greatly glorified; the demands of a broken law were fully answered; the affront done to God's government satisfied for; and God accepted the satisfaction, and declared himself well pleased. What God has done for the glorifying of his own name is an encouragement to us to expect what he will yet further do. He that has secured the interests of his own glory will still secure them.

III. The opinion of the standers-by concerning this voice, v. 29. We may hope there were some among them whose minds were so well prepared to receive a divine revelation that they understood what was said and bore record of it. But notice is here taken of the perverse suggestion of the multitude: some of them said that *it thundered*: others, who took notice that there was plainly an articulate intelligible voice, said that certainly *an angel spoke to him.* Now this shows,

1. That it was a real thing, even in the judgment of those that were not at all well affected to him.

2. That they were loth to admit so plain a proof of Christ's divine mission. They would rather say that it was this, or that, or any thing, than that God spoke to him in answer to his prayer; and yet, if it thundered with articulate sounds (as ⁴⁰⁸⁸Revelation 10:3, 4), was not that God's voice? Or,

if angels spoke to him, are not they God's messengers? But thus *God speaks once, yea twice, and man perceives it not.*

IV. The account which our Saviour himself gives of this voice.

1. Why it was sent (v. 30): “It came *not because of me*, not merely for my encouragement and satisfaction” (then it might have been whispered in his ear privately), “*but for your sakes.*”

(1.) “That all you who heard it may *believe that the Father hath sent me.*” What is said from heaven concerning our Lord Jesus, and the glorifying of the Father in him, is said for our sakes, that we may be brought to submit to him and rest upon him.

(2.) “That you my disciples, who are to follow me in sufferings, may therein be comforted with the same comforts that carry me on.” Let this encourage them to part with life itself for his sake, if they be called to it, that it will redound to the honour of God. Note, The promises and supports granted to our Lord Jesus in his sufferings were intended for our sakes. *For our sakes he sanctified himself, and comforted himself.*

2. What was the meaning of it. He that lay in the Father's bosom knew his voice, and what was the meaning of it; and two things God intended when he said that he would *glorify his own name*: —

(1.) That by the death of Christ Satan should be conquered (v. 31): *Now is the judgment.* He speaks with a divine exultation and triumph. “Now the year of my redeemed is come, and the time prefixed for breaking the serpent's head, and giving a total rent to the powers of darkness; now for that glorious achievement: *now, now*, that great work is to be done which has been so long thought of in the divine counsels, so long talked of in the written word, which has been so much the hope of saints and the dread of devils.” The matter of the triumph is,

[1.] That *now is the judgment of the world*; *krisis*, take it as a medical term: “Now is the *crisis* of this world.” The sick and diseased world is now upon the turning point; this is the critical day upon which the trembling scale will turn for life or death, to all mankind; all that are not recovered by this will be left helpless and hopeless. Or, rather, it is a law term, as we take it: “Now, judgment is entered, in order to the taking out of execution against the prince of this world.” Note, The death of Christ was the *judgment of this world*. *First*, It is a judgment of discovery and

distinction — *judicium discretionis*; so Austin. Now is the trial of this world, for men shall have their character according as the cross of Christ is to them; to some it is foolishness and a stumbling-block, to others it is the wisdom and power of God; of which there was a figure in the two thieves that were crucified with him. By this men are judged, what they think of the death of Christ. *Secondly*, It is a judgment of favour and absolution to the chosen ones that are in the world. Christ upon the cross interposed between a righteous God and a guilty world as a sacrifice for sin and a surety for sinners, so that when he was judged, and *iniquity laid upon him*, and he was wounded for our transgressions, it was as it were the judgment of this world, for an everlasting righteousness was thereby brought in, not for Jews only, but the whole world, ^{<BIB>}1 John 2:1, 2; ^{<BIB>}Daniel 9:24. *Thirdly*, It is a judgment of condemnation given against the powers of darkness; see ^{<BIB>}John 16:11. Judgment is put for vindication and deliverance, the asserting of an invaded right. At the death of Christ there was a famous trial between Christ and Satan, the serpent and the promised seed; the trial was for the world, and the lordship of it; the devil had long borne sway among the children of men, time out of mind; he now pleads prescription, grounding his claim also upon the forfeiture incurred by sin. We find him willing to have come to a composition (^{<BIB>}Luke 4:6, 7); he would have given the kingdoms of this world to Christ, provided he would hold them by, from, and under him. But Christ would try it out with; by dying he takes off the forfeiture to divine justice, and then fairly disputes the title, and recovers it in the court of heaven. Satan's dominion is declared to be a usurpation, and the world adjudged to the Lord Jesus as his right, ^{<BIB>}Psalms 2:6, 8. The judgment of this world is, that it belongs to Christ, and not to Satan; to Christ therefore let us all *atturn* tenants.

[2.] That *now is the prince of this world cast out*. *First*, It is the devil that is here called the *prince of this world*, because he rules over the men of the world by the things of the world; he is the *ruler of the darkness of this world*, that is, of this dark world, of those in it that *walk in darkness*, ^{<BIB>}2 Corinthians 4:4; ^{<BIB>}Ephesians 4:12. *Secondly*, He is said to be *cast out*, to be *now* cast out; for, whatever had been done hitherto towards the weakening of the devil's kingdom was done in the virtue of a Christ to come, and therefore is said to be done *now*. Christ, reconciling the world to God by the merit of his death, broke the power of death, and cast out Satan as a destroyer; Christ, reducing the world to God by the doctrine of his cross, broke the power of sin, and cast out Satan as a deceiver. The

bruising of his heel was the breaking of the serpent's head, ^{<6185>}Genesis 3:15. When his oracles were silenced, his temples forsaken, his idols famished, and the kingdoms of the world became Christ's kingdoms, then was the *prince of the world cast out*, as appears by comparing this with John's vision (^{<6188>}Revelation 12:8-11), where it is said to be done by the *blood of the Lamb*. Christ's frequent casting of devils out of the bodies of people was an indication of the great design of his whole undertaking. Observe, With what assurance Christ here speaks of the victory over Satan; it is as good as done, and even when he yields to death he triumphs over it.

(2.) That by the death of Christ souls should be converted, and this would be the casting out of Satan (v. 32): *If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me*. Here observe two things: —

[1.] The great design of our Lord Jesus, which was to *draw all men to him*, not the Jews only, who had been long in a profession a people *near to God*, but the Gentiles also, who had been *afar off*; for he was to be the *desire of all nations* (^{<3188>}Haggai 2:7), and *to him must the gathering of the people be*. That which his enemies dreaded was that the world would go after him; and he would draw them to him, notwithstanding their opposition. Observe here how Christ himself is all in all in the conversion of a soul. *First*, It is Christ that draws: *I will draw*. It is sometimes ascribed to the Father (^{<6184>}John 6:44), but here to the Son, who is the *arm of the Lord*. He does not drive by force, but draws with the *cords of a man* (^{<3188>}Hosea 11:4; ^{<2818>}Jeremiah 31:3), draws as the loadstone; the soul is *made willing*, but it is in a *day of power*. *Secondly*, It is to Christ that we are drawn: “I will draw them to me as the centre of their unity.” The soul that was at a distance from Christ is brought into an acquaintance with him, he that was shy and distrustful of him is brought to love him and trust in him, — drawn up to his terms, into his arms. Christ was now going to heaven, and he would draw men's hearts to him thither.

[2.] The strange method he took to accomplish his design by *being lifted up from the earth*. What he meant by this, to prevent mistake, we are told (v. 33): *This he spoke signifying by what death he should die*, the death of the cross, though they had designed and attempted to stone him to death. He that was crucified was first nailed to the cross, and then lifted up upon it. He was *lifted up as a spectacle to the world*; lifted up between heaven and earth, as unworthy of either; yet the word here used signifies an

honourable advancement, *ean hypsotho* — *If I be exalted*; he reckoned his sufferings his honour. Whatever death we die, if we die in Christ we shall be lifted up out of this dungeon, this den of lions, into the regions of light and love. We should learn of our Master to speak of dying with a holy pleasantness, and to say, “We shall then be lifted up.” Now Christ’s drawing all men to him followed his being *lifted up from the earth*. *First*, It followed after it in time. The great increase of the church was after the death of Christ; while Christ lived, we read of thousands at a sermon miraculously fed, but after his death we read of thousands at a sermon added to the church. Israel began to multiply in Egypt after the death of Joseph. *Secondly*, It followed upon it as a blessed consequence of it. Note, There is a powerful virtue and efficacy in the death of Christ to draw souls to him. The cross of Christ, though to some a *stumbling-stone*, is to others a *loadstone*. Some make it an allusion to the drawing of fish into a net; the lifting up of Christ was as the spreading of the net (^{<RB>}Matthew 13:47, 48); or to the setting up of a standard, which draws soldiers together; or, rather, it refers to the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, which drew all those to it who were stung with fiery serpents, as soon as ever it was known that it was lifted up, and there was healing virtue in it. O what flocking was there to it! So there was to Christ, when salvation through him was preached to all nations; see ^{<RB>}John 3:14, 15. Perhaps it has some reference to the posture in which Christ was crucified, with his arms stretched out, to invite all to him, and embrace all that come. Those that put Christ to that ignominious death thought thereby to drive all men from him; but the devil was outshot in his own bow. *Out of the eater came forth meat*.

V. The people’s exception against what he said, and their cavil at it, v. 34. Though they had heard the voice from heaven, and the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, yet they object, and pick quarrels with him. Christ had called himself the *Son of man* (v. 23), which they knew to be one of the titles of the Messiah, ^{<RB>}Daniel 7:13. He had also said that the *Son of man must be lifted up*, which they understood of his dying, and probably he explained himself so, and some think he repeated what he said to Nicodemus (^{<RB>}John 3:14), *So must the Son of man be lifted up*. Now against this,

1. They alleged those scriptures of the Old Testament which speak of the perpetuity of the Messiah, that he should be so far from being cut off in the midst of his days that he should be a *priest for ever* (^{<RB>}Psalms 110:4),

and a king *for ever* (¹⁸⁸⁹Psalm 89:29, etc.), that he should have *length of days for ever and ever*, and *his years as many generations* (¹⁸⁷⁴Psalm 21:4; 61:6), from all which they inferred that the Messiah should not die. Thus great knowledge in the letter of the scripture, if the heart be unsanctified, is capable of being abused to serve the cause of infidelity, and to fight against Christianity with its own weapons. Their perverseness in opposing this to what Jesus had said will appear if we consider,

(1.) That, when they vouched the scripture to prove that the Messiah *abideth for ever*, they took no notice of those texts which speak of the Messiah's death and sufferings: they had heard out of the law that *Messiah abideth for ever*; and had they never heard out of the law that Messiah should *be cut off* (²⁷⁰⁶Daniel 9:26), and that he should *pour out his soul unto death* (²⁵⁹²Isaiah 53:12), and particularly that his *hands and feet* should be pierced? Why then do they make so strange of the *lifting up of the Son of man*? Note, We often run into great mistakes, and then defend them with scripture arguments, by putting those things asunder which God in his word has put together, and opposing one truth under pretence of supporting another. We have heard out of the gospel that which exalts free grace, we have heard also that which enjoins duty, and we just cordially embrace both, and not separate them, nor set them at variance.

(2.) That, when they opposed what Christ said concerning the sufferings of the Son of man, they took no notice of what he had said concerning his glory and exaltation. They had heard out of the law that *Christ abideth for ever*; and had they not heard our Lord Jesus say that he should be glorified, that he should bring forth much fruit, and draw all men to him? Had he not just now promised immortal honours to his followers, which supposed his abiding for ever? But this they overlooked. Thus unfair disputants oppose some parts of the opinion of an adversary, to which, if they would but take it entire, they could not but subscribe; and in the doctrine of Christ there are paradoxes, which to men of corrupt minds are stones of stumbling — as Christ *crucified*, and yet *glorified; lifted up from the earth*, and yet *drawing all men to him*.

2. They asked hereupon, *Who is the Son of man*? This they asked, not with a desire to be instructed, but tauntingly and insultingly, as if now they had baffled him, and run him down. “Thou sayest, *The Son of man must die*; we have proved the Messiah must not, and where is then thy Messiahship? This Son of man, as thou callest thyself, cannot be the Messiah, thou must

therefore think of something else to pretend to.” Now that which prejudiced them against Christ was his meanness and poverty; they would rather have no Christ than a suffering one.

VI. What Christ said to this exception, or rather what he said *upon it*. The objection was a perfect cavil; they might, if they pleased, answer it themselves: man dies, and yet is immortal, and abideth for ever, so the *Son of man*. Therefore, instead of answering these fools according to their folly, he gives them a serious caution to take heed of trifling away the day of their opportunities in such vain and fruitless cavils as these (v. 35, 36): “*Yet a little while, and but a little while, is the light with you; therefore be wise for yourselves, and walk while you have the light.*”

1. In general, we may observe here,

(1.) The concern Christ has for the souls of men, and his desire of their welfare. With what tenderness does he here admonish those to look well to themselves who were contriving ill against him! Even when he *endured the contradiction of sinners*, he sought their conversion. See ^{<390>}Proverbs 29:10.

(2.) The method he takes with these objectors, *with meekness instructing those that opposed themselves*, ^{<405>}2 Timothy 2:25. Were but men's consciences awakened with a due concern about their everlasting state, and did they consider how little time they have to spend, and none to spare, they would not waste precious thoughts and time in trifling cavils.

2. Particularly we have here,

(1.) The advantage they enjoyed in having Christ and his gospel among them, with the shortness and uncertainty of their enjoyment of it: *Yet a little while is the light with you*. Christ is this light; and some of the ancients suggest that, in calling himself the light, he gives a tacit answer to their objection. His dying upon the cross was as consistent with his *abiding for ever* as the setting of the sun every night is with his perpetuity. The duration of Christ's kingdom is compared to that of the sun and moon, ^{<417>}Psalm 72:17; 89:36, 37. The ordinances of heaven are unchangeably fixed, and yet the sun and moon set and are eclipsed; so Christ the Sun of righteousness abides for ever, and yet was eclipsed by his sufferings, and was but a little while within our horizon. Now,

[1.] The Jews at this time had the *light with them*; they had Christ's bodily presence, heard his preaching, saw his miracles. The scripture is to us a light shining in a dark place.

[2.] It was to be but a little while with them; Christ would shortly leave them, their visible church state would soon after be dissolved and the kingdom of God taken from them, and blindness and hardness would happen unto Israel. Note, It is good for us all to consider what a little while we are to have the light with us. Time is short, and perhaps opportunity not so long. The candlestick may be removed; at least, we must be removed shortly. Yet a little while is the light of life with us; yet a little while is the light of the gospel with us, the day of grace, the means of grace, the Spirit of grace, yet a very little while.

(2.) The warning given them to make the best of this privilege while they enjoyed it, because of the danger they were in of losing it: *Walk while you have the light*; as travellers who make the best of their way forward, that they may not be benighted in their journey, because travelling in the night is uncomfortable and unsafe. "Come," say they, "let us mend our pace, and get forward, while we have day-light." Thus wise should we be for our souls who are journeying towards eternity. Note,

[1.] It is our business to walk, to press forward towards heaven, and to get nearer to it by being made fitter for it. Our life is but a day, and we have a day's journey to go.

[2.] The best time of walking is while we have the light. The day is the proper season for work, as the night is for rest. The proper time for getting grace is when we have the word of grace preached to us, and the Spirit of grace striving with us, and therefore then is the time to be busy.

[3.] We are highly concerned thus to improve our opportunities, for fear lest our day be finished before we have finished our day's work and our day's journey: "*Lest darkness come upon you*, lest you lose your opportunities, and can neither recover them nor despatch the business you have to do without them." Then *darkness* comes, that is, such an utter incapacity to make sure the great salvation as renders the state of the careless sinner quite deplorable; so that, if his work be undone then, it is likely to be undone for ever.

(3.) The sad condition of those who have sinned away the gospel, and are come to the period of their day of grace. *They walk in darkness*, and know neither *where* they go, nor *whither* they go; neither the way they are walking in, nor the end they are walking towards. He that is destitute of the light of the gospel, and is not acquainted with its discoveries and directions, wanders endlessly in mistakes and errors, and a thousand crooked paths, and is not aware of it. Set aside the instructions of the Christian doctrine, and we know little of the difference between good and evil. He is going to destruction, and knows not his danger, for he is either sleeping or dancing at the pit's brink.

(4.) The great duty and interest of every one of us inferred from all this (v. 36): *While you have light, believe in the light*. The Jews had now Christ's presence with them, let them improve it; afterwards they had the first offers of the gospel made to them by the apostles wherever they came; now this is an admonition to them not to out-stand their market, but to accept the offer when it was made to them: the same Christ saith to all who enjoy the gospel. Note,

[1.] It is the duty of every one of us *to believe in the gospel light*, to receive it as a divine light, to subscribe to the truths it discovers, for it is a light to our eyes, and to follow its guidance, for it is a light to our feet. Christ is the light, and we must believe in him as he is revealed to us; as a true light that will not deceive us, a sure light that will not misguide us.

[2.] We are concerned to do this while we have the light, to lay hold on Christ while we have the gospel to show us the way to him and direct us in that way.

[3.] Those that believe in the light *shall be the children of light*; they shall be owned as *Christians*, who are called *children of light* (~~CHR~~ Luke 16:8; ~~CHR~~ Ephesians 5:8) and of the day, ~~CHR~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:5. Those that have God for their Father are children of light, for God is light; they are born from above, and heirs of heaven, and children of light, for heaven is light.

VII. Christ's retiring from them, hereupon: *These things spoke Jesus*, and said no more at this time, but left this to their consideration, *and departed, and did hide himself from them*. And this he did,

1. For their conviction and awakening. If they will not regard what he hath said, he will have nothing more to say to them. They are joined to their

infidelity, as Ephraim to idols; *let them alone*. Note, Christ justly removes the means of grace from those that quarrel with him, and *hides his face* from *a froward generation*, ~~(6520)~~ Deuteronomy 32:20.

2. For his own preservation. He hid himself from their rage and fury, retreating, it is probable, to Bethany, where he lodged. By this it appears that what he said irritated and exasperated them, and they were made worse by that which should have made them better.

~~(6125)~~ JOHN 12:37-41

THE UNBELIEF OF THE PEOPLE

We have here the honour done to our Lord Jesus by the Old-Testament prophets, who foretold and lamented the infidelity of the many that believed not on him. It was indeed a dishonour and grief to Christ that his doctrine met with so little acceptance and so much opposition; but *this* takes off the wonder and reproach, makes the offence of it to cease, and made it no disappointment to Christ, that herein the scriptures were fulfilled. Two things are here said concerning this untractable people, and both were foretold by the evangelical prophet Isaiah, that they *did not* believe, and that they *could not* believe.

I. They did not believe (v. 37): *Though he had done so many miracles before them*, which, one would think, should have convinced them, yet they believed not, but opposed him. Observe,

1. The abundance of the means of conviction which Christ afforded them: *He did miracles, so many miracles; tosauta semeia* signifying both so many and so great. This refers to all the miracles he had wrought formerly; nay, the blind and lame now came to him into the temple, and he healed them, ~~(4214)~~ Matthew 21:14. His miracles were the great proof of his mission, and on the evidence of them he relied. Two things concerning them he here insists upon: —

(1.) The number of them; they were *many*, — various and of divers kinds; numerous and often repeated; and every new miracle confirmed the reality of all that went before. The multitude of his miracles was not only a proof of his unexhausted power, but gave the greater opportunity to examine

them; and, if there had been a cheat in them, it was morally impossible but that in some or other of them it would have been discovered; and, being all *miracles of mercy*, the more there were the more good was done.

(2.) The notoriety of them. He wrought these miracles *before them*, not at a distance, not in a corner, but before many witnesses, appearing to their own eyes.

2. The inefficacy of these means: *Yet they believed not on him*. They could not gainsay the premises, and yet would not grant the conclusion. Note, The most plentiful and powerful means of conviction will not of themselves work faith in the depraved prejudiced hearts of men. These *saw*, and yet *believed not*.

3. The fulfilling of the scripture in this (v. 38): *That the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled*. Not that these infidel Jews designed the fulfilling of the scripture (they rather fancied those scriptures which speak of the church's best sons to be fulfilled in themselves), but the event exactly answered the prediction, *so that (ut for ita ut)* this saying of Esaias was fulfilled. The more improbable any event is, the more does a divine foresight appear in the prediction of it. One could not have imagined that the kingdom of the Messiah, supported with such pregnant proofs, should have met with so much opposition among the Jews, and therefore their unbelief is called a *marvellous work, and a wonder*, ^{<2914>}Isaiah 29:14. Christ himself *marvelled at it*, but it was what Isaiah foretold (^{<2911>}Isaiah 53:1), and now it is accomplished. Observe,

(1.) The gospel is here called *their report: Who has believed, te akon hemon* — *our hearing*, which we have heard from God, and which you have heard from us. Our report is the report that we bring, like the report of a matter of fact, or the report of a solemn resolution in the senate.

(2.) It is foretold that a few comparatively of those to whom this report is brought will be persuaded to give credit to it. Many hear it, but few heed it and embrace it: *Who hath believed it?* Here and there one, but none to speak of; not the wise, not the noble; it is to them but a report which wants confirmation.

(3.) It is spoken of as a thing to be greatly lamented that so few believe the report of the gospel. *Lord* is here prefixed from the Septuagint, but is not in the Hebrew, and intimates a sorrowful account brought to God by the

messengers of the cold entertainment which they and their report had; as *the servant came, and showed his lord all these things*, ^{<24>}Luke 14:21.

(4.) The reason why men believe not the report of the gospel is because *the arm of the Lord* is not *revealed* to them, that is, because they do not acquaint themselves with, and submit themselves to, the grace of God; they do not experimentally know the virtue and fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection, in which the arm of the Lord is revealed. They saw Christ's miracles, but did not see *the arm of the Lord revealed in them*.

II. They could not believe, and *therefore* they could not *because Esaias said, He hath blinded their eyes*. This is a hard saying, who can explain it? We are sure that God is infinitely just and merciful, and therefore we cannot think there is in any such an impotency to good, resulting from the counsels of God, as lays them under a fatal necessity of being evil. God dams none by mere sovereignty; yet it is said, *They could not believe*. St. Austin, coming in course to the exposition of these words, expresses himself with a holy fear of entering upon an enquiry into this mystery. *Justa sunt judicia ejus, sed occulta — His judgments are just, but hidden*.

1. They *could not believe*, that is, they *would not*; they were obstinately resolved in their infidelity; thus Chrysostom and Austin incline to understand it; and the former gives divers instances of scripture of the putting of an impotency to signify the invincible refusal of the will, as ^{<1374>}Genesis 37:4, *They could not speak peaceably to him*. And ^{<1375>}John 7:7. This is a *moral* impotency, like that of one that is accustomed to do evil, ^{<2423>}Jeremiah 13:23. But,

2. They could not because Esaias had said, *He hath blinded their eyes*. Here the difficulty increases; it is certain that God is not the author of sin, and yet,

(1.) There is a righteous hand of God sometimes to be acknowledged in the blindness and obstinacy of those who persist in impenitency and unbelief, by which they are justly punished for their former resistance of the divine light and rebellion against the divine law. If God withhold abused grace, and give men over to indulged lusts, — if he permit the evil spirit to do his work on those that resisted the good Spirit, — and if in his providence he lay stumbling-blocks in the way of sinners, which confirm their prejudices, then he *blinds their eyes*, and *hardens their hearts*, and these are spiritual judgments, like the giving up of idolatrous Gentiles to

vile affections, and degenerate Christians to *strong delusions*. Observe the method of conversion implied here, and the steps taken in it.

[1.] Sinners are brought to *see with their eyes*, to discern the reality of divine things and to have some knowledge of them.

[2.] To *understand with their heart*, to apply these things to themselves; not only to assent and approve, but to consent and accept.

[3.] To *be converted*, and effectually turned from sin to Christ, from the world and the flesh to God, as their felicity and portion.

[4.] Then God will *heal* them, will justify and sanctify them; will *pardon* their sins, which are as bleeding wounds, and mortify their corruptions, which are as lurking diseases. Now when God denies his grace nothing of this is done; the alienation of the mind from, and its aversion to, God and the divine life, grow into a rooted and invincible antipathy, and so the case becomes desperate.

(2.) Judicial blindness and hardness are in the word of God threatened against those who wilfully persist in wickedness, and were particularly foretold concerning the Jewish church and nation. Known unto God are all his works, and all ours too. Christ knew before who would betray him, and spoke of it, ^{<4160>}John 6:70. This is a confirmation of the truth of scripture prophecies, and thus even the unbelief of the Jews may help to strengthen our faith. It is also intended for caution to particular persons, to *beware lest that come upon them which was spoken of in the prophets*, ^{<4134>}Acts 13:40.

(3.) What God has foretold will certainly come to pass, and so, by a necessary consequence, in order of arguing, it might be said that *therefore they could not believe*, because God by the prophets had foretold they would not; for such is the knowledge of God that he cannot be deceived in what he foresees, and such his truth that he cannot deceive in what he foretels, so that the scripture cannot be broken. Yet be it observed that the prophecy did not name particular persons; so that it might not be said, “Therefore such a one and such a one could not believe, because Esaias had said so and so;” but it pointed at the body of the Jewish nation, which would persist in their infidelity till their cities were wasted without inhabitants, as it follows (^{<2111>}Isaiah 6:11, 12); yet still reserving a remnant (v. 13, *in it shall be a tenth*), which reserve was sufficient to keep a door

of hope open to particular persons; for each one might say, Why may not I be of that remnant?

Lastly, The evangelist, having quoted the prophecy, shows (v. 41) that it was intended to look further than the prophet's own days, and that its principal reference was to the days of the Messiah: *These things said Esaias when he saw his glory, and spoke of him.*

- 1.** We read in the prophecy that this was said to Esaias, ~~<208>~~ Isaiah 6:8, 9. But here we are told that it was said *by him* to the purpose. For nothing was said by him as a prophet which was not first said to him; nor was any thing said to him which was not afterwards said by him to those to whom he was sent. See ~~<210>~~ Isaiah 21:10.
- 2.** The vision which the prophet there had of the *glory of God* is here said to be his *seeing the glory* of Jesus Christ: He *saw his glory*. Jesus Christ therefore is equal in power and glory with the Father, and his praises are equally celebrated. Christ had a glory *before the foundation of the world*, and Esaias saw this.
- 3.** It is said that the prophet there *spoke of him*. It seems to have been spoken of the prophet himself (for to him the commission and instructions were there given), and yet it is here said to be spoken of Christ, for as all the prophets testified of him so they all typified him. This they spoke of him, that as to many his coming would be not only fruitless, but fatal, a savour of death unto death. It might be objected against his doctrine, If it was from heaven, why did not the Jews believe it? But this is an answer to it; it was not for want of evidence, but because their *heart was made fat*, and their *ears were heavy*. It was spoken of Christ, that he should be glorified in the ruin of an unbelieving multitude, as well as in the salvation of a distinguished remnant.

~~<622>~~ JOHN 12:42-43

THE COWARDICE OF THE RULERS

Some honour was done to Christ by these rulers: for they *believed on him*, were convinced that he was sent of God, and received his doctrine as divine; but they did not do him honour enough, for they had not courage to

own their faith in him. Many professed more kindness for Christ than really they had; these had more kindness for him than they were willing to profess. See here what a struggle was in these rulers between their convictions and their corruptions.

I. See the power of the word in the convictions that many of them were under, who did not wilfully shut their eyes against the light. They *believed on him* as Nicodemus, received him as a teacher come from God. Note, The truth of the gospel has perhaps a better interest in the consciences of men than we are aware of. Many cannot but approve of that in their hearts which yet outwardly they are shy of. Perhaps these chief rulers were *true* believers, though very weak, and their faith like smoking flax. Note, It may be, there are more good people than we think there are. Elijah thought he was left alone, when God had seven thousand faithful worshippers in Israel. Some are really better than they seem to be. Their faults are known, but their repentance is not; a man's goodness may be concealed by a *culpable* yet pardonable weakness, which he himself truly repents of. The *kingdom of God comes not in all with a like observation*; nor have all who are good the same faculty of appearing to be so.

II. See the power of the world in the smothering of these convictions. They believed in Christ, but because of the Pharisees, who had it in their power to do them a diskindness, they durst not confess him for fear of being excommunicated. Observe here,

- 1.** Wherein they failed and were defective; They did not *confess* Christ. Note, There is cause to question the sincerity of that faith which is either afraid or ashamed to show itself; for those who believe with the heart ought to *confess with the mouth*, ⁽⁵¹⁰⁾Romans 10:9.
- 2.** What they feared: being *put out of the synagogue*, which they thought would be a disgrace and damage to them; as if it would do them any harm to be expelled from a synagogue that had made itself a synagogue of Satan, and from which God was departing.
- 3.** What was at the bottom of this fear: *They loved the praise of men*, chose it as a more valuable good, and pursued it as a more desirable end, than the *praise of God*; which was an implicit idolatry, like that (⁽⁵¹⁵⁾Romans 1:25) of *worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator*. They set these two in the scale one against the other, and, having weighed them, they proceeded accordingly.

(1.) They set the praise of men in one scale, and considered how good it was to give praise to men, and to pay a deference to the opinion of the Pharisees, and receive praise from men, to be commended by the chief priests and applauded by the people as good sons of the church, the Jewish church; and they would not confess Christ, lest they should thereby derogate from the reputation of the Pharisees, and forfeit their own, and thus hinder their own preferment. And, besides, the followers of Christ were put into an *ill name*, and were looked upon with contempt, which those who had been used to honour could not bear. Yet perhaps if they had known one another's minds they would have had more courage; but each one thought that if he should declare himself in favour of Christ he should stand alone, and have nobody to back him; whereas, if any one had had resolution to *break the ice*, he would have had more *seconds* than he thought of.

(2.) They put the praise of God in the other scale. They were sensible that by confessing Christ they should both give praise to God, and have praise from God, that he would be pleased with them, and say, *Well done*; but,

(3.) They gave the preference to the praise of men, and this turned the scale; sense prevailed above faith, and represented it as more desirable to stand right in the opinion of the Pharisees than to be accepted of God. Note, Love of the praise of men is a very great prejudice to the power and practice of religion and godliness. Many come short of the glory of God by having a regard to the applause of men, and a value for that. Love of the praise of men, as a by-end in that which is good, will make a man a hypocrite when religion is in fashion and credit is to be got by it; and love of the praise of men, as a base principle in that which is evil, will make a man an apostate when religion is in disgrace, and credit is to be lost for it, as here. See ~~412~~Romans 2:29.

~~412~~ JOHN 12:44-50

CHRIST'S LAST DISCOURSE WITH THE JEWS

We have here the honour Christ not assumed, but asserted, to himself, in the account he gave of his mission and his errand into the world. Probably this discourse was not at the same time with that before (for them *he departed*, v. 36), but some time after, when he made another public

appearance; and, as this evangelist records it, it was Christ's farewell sermon to the Jews, and his last public discourse; all that follows was private with his disciples. Now observe how our Lord Jesus delivered this parting word: he *cried and said. Doth not wisdom cry* (^{208B}Proverbs 8:1), *cry without?* ^{209B}Proverbs 1:20. The raising of his voice and crying intimate,

1. His boldness in speaking. Though they had not courage openly to profess faith in his doctrine, he had courage openly to publish it; if they were ashamed of it, he was not, but set his face as a flint, ^{280B}Isaiah 50:7.

2. His earnestness in speaking. He cried as one that was serious and importunate, and in good earnest in what he said, and was willing to impart to them, not only the gospel of God, but *even his own soul*.

3. It denotes his desire that all might take notice of it. This being the last time of the publication of his gospel by himself in person, he makes proclamation, "Whoever will hear me, let them come now." Now what is the conclusion of the whole matter, this closing summary of all Christ's discourses? It is much like that of Moses (^{480B}Deuteronomy 30:15): *See, I have set before you life and death*. So Christ here takes leave of the temple, with a solemn declaration of three things: —

I. The privileges and dignities of those that believe; this gives great encouragement to us to believe in Christ and to profess that faith. It is a thing of such a nature that we need not be shy either of doing it or of owning it; for,

1. By believing in Christ we are brought into an *honourable acquaintance with God* (v. 44, 45): *He that believes on me, and so sees me, believes on him that sent me, and so sees him*. He that believes on Christ,

(1.) He does not believe in a mere man, such a one as he seemed to be, and was generally taken to be, but he believes in one that is the Son of God and equal in power and glory with the Father. Or rather,

(2.) His faith does not terminate in Christ, but through him it is carried out to the Father, that sent him, to whom, as our end, we come by Christ as our way. The doctrine of Christ is believed and received as the truth of God. The rest of a believing soul is in God through Christ as Mediator; for its resignation to Christ is in order to being presented to God. Christianity is made up, not of philosophy nor politics, but pure divinity. This is

illustrated, v. 45. He that *sees me* (which is the same with *believing* in him, for faith is the eye of the soul) *sees him that sent me*; in getting an acquaintance with Christ, we come to the knowledge of God. For,

[1.] God makes himself known in the face of Christ (~~406~~2 Corinthians 4:6), who is the express image of his person, ~~300~~Hebrews 1:3.

[2.] All that have a believing sight of Christ are led by him to the knowledge of God, whom Christ has revealed to us by his word and Spirit. Christ, as God, was the image of his Father's person; but Christ, as Mediator, was his Father's representative in his relation to man, the divine light, law, and love, being communicated to us in and through him; so that in seeing him (that is, in eying him as our Saviour, Prince, and Lord, in the right of redemption), we see and eye the Father as our owner, ruler, and benefactor, in the right of creation: for God is pleased to deal with fallen man by proxy.

2. We are hereby brought into a comfortable enjoyment of ourselves (v. 46): *I am come a light into the world, that whoever believes in me, Jew or Gentile, should not abide in darkness.* Observe,

(1.) The character of Christ: *I am come a light into the world*, to be a light to it. This implies that he had a being, and a being as light, before he came into the world, as the sun is before it rises; the prophets and apostles were made lights to the world, but it was Christ only that came a light into this world, having before been a glorious light in the upper world, ~~479~~John 3:19.

(2.) The comfort of Christians: They *do not abide in darkness.*

[1.] They do not continue in that dark condition in which they were by nature; they are *light in the Lord*. They are without any true comfort, or joy, or hope, but do not continue in that condition; light is sown for them.

[2.] Whatever darkness of affliction, disquietment, or fear, they may afterwards be in, provision is made that they may not long abide in it.

[3.] They are delivered from that darkness which is perpetual, and which *abideth for ever*, that utter darkness where there is not the least gleam of light nor hope of it.

II. The peril and danger of those that believe not, which gives fair warning to take heed of persisting in unbelief (v. 47, 48): *“If any man hear*

my words, and believe not, I judge him not, not I only, or not now, lest I should be looked upon as unfair in being judge in my own cause; yet let not infidelity think therefore to go unpunished, though I judge him not, there is one that judgeth him.” So that we have here the doom of unbelief. Observe,

1. Who they are whose unbelief is here condemned: those who *hear Christ's words* and yet *believe them not*. Those shall not be condemned for their infidelity that never had, nor could have, the gospel; every man shall be judged according to the dispensation of light he was under: *Those that have sinned without law shall be judged without law*. But those that have heard, or might have heard, and would not, lie open to this doom.

2. What is the constructive malignity of their unbelief: not receiving Christ's word; it is interpreted (v. 48) a *rejecting* of Christ, *ho atheton eme*. It denotes a rejection with scorn and contempt. Where the banner of the gospel is displayed, no neutrality is admitted; every man is either a subject or an enemy.

3. The wonderful patience and forbearance of our Lord Jesus, exercised towards those who slighted him when he was come here upon earth: *I judge him not, not now*. Note, Christ was not quick or hasty to take advantage against those who refused the first offers of his grace, but continued waiting to be gracious. He did not strike those dumb or dead who contradicted him, never made intercession against Israel, as Elias did; though he had authority to judge, he suspended the execution of it, because he had work of another nature to do first, and that was to *save the world*.

(1.) To save effectually those that were given him before he came to judge the degenerate body of mankind.

(2.) To offer salvation to all the world, and thus far to save them that it is their own fault if they be not saved. He was to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Now the executing of the power of a judge was not congruous with that undertaking, ~~Acts~~ Acts 8:33. *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away*, it was suspended for a time.

4. The certain and unavoidable judgment of unbelievers at the great day, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God: unbelief will certainly be a damning sin. Some think when Christ saith, *I judge no man*,

he means that they are *condemned already*. There needs no process, they are *self-judged*; no execution, they are *self-ruined*; judgment goes against them of course, ^{<1818>}Hebrews 2:3. Christ needs not appear against them as their accuser, they are miserable if he do not appear for them as their advocate; however, he tells them plainly when and where they will be reckoned with.

(1.) There is *one that judgeth them*. Nothing is more dreadful than abused patience, and grace trampled on; though for awhile *mercy rejoiceth against judgment*, yet there will be *judgment without mercy*.

(2.) Their final judgment is reserved to the *last day*; to that day of judgment Christ here binds over all unbelievers, to answer then for all the contempts they have put upon him. Divine justice has *appointed a day*, and adjourns the sentence to that day, as ^{<1864>}Matthew 26:64.

(3.) The word of Christ will judge them then: *The words that I have spoken*, how light soever you have made of them, *the same shall judge* the unbeliever *in the last day*; as the apostles, the preachers of Christ's word, are said to judge, ^{<1720>}Luke 22:30. Christ's words will judge unbelievers two ways: —

[1.] As the evidence of their crime, they will convict them. Every word Christ spoke, every sermon, every argument, every kind offer, will be produced as a testimony against those who slighted all he said.

[2.] As the rule of their doom, they will condemn them; they shall be judged according to the tenour of that covenant which Christ procured and published. That word of Christ, *He that believes not shall be damned*, will judge all unbelievers to eternal ruin; and there are *many such like words*.

III. A solemn declaration of the authority Christ had to demand our faith, and require us to receive his doctrine upon pain of damnation, v. 49, 50, where observe,

1. The commission which our Lord Jesus received from the Father to deliver his doctrine to the world (v. 49): *I have not spoken myself*, as a mere man, much less as a common man; *but the Father gave me a commandment what I should say*. This is the same with what he said ^{<1876>}John 7:16. *My doctrine is*,

(1.) *Not mine, for I have not spoken of myself.* Christ, as *Son of man*, did not speak that which was of human contrivance or composure; as *Son of God*, he did not act separately, or by himself alone, but what he said was the result of the counsels of peace; as *Mediator*, his coming into the world was voluntary, and with his full consent, but not arbitrary, and of his own head. But,

(2.) It was his that sent him. God the Father gave him,

[1.] His commission. God sent him as his agent and plenipotentiary, to concert matters between him and man, to set a treaty of peace on foot, and to settle the articles.

[2.] His instructions, here called a *commandment*, for they were like those given to an ambassador, directing him not only what he may say, but what he must say. The messenger of the covenant was entrusted with an errand which he must deliver. Note, Our Lord Jesus learned obedience himself, before he taught it to us, though he was a Son. *The Lord God commanded* the first Adam, and he by his disobedience ruined us; he commanded the second Adam, and he by his obedience saved us. God commanded him what he should *say* and what he should *speak*, two words signifying the same thing, to denote that every word was divine. The Old-Testament prophets sometimes spoke of themselves; but Christ spoke by the Spirit at all times. Some make this distinction: He was directed what he should say in his set sermons, and what he should speak in his familiar discourses. Others this: He was directed what he should say in his preaching now, and what he should speak in his judging at the last day; for he had commission and instruction for both.

2. The scope, design, and tendency of this commission: *I know that his commandment is life everlasting*, v. 50. The commission given to Christ had a reference to the everlasting state of the children of men, and was in order to their everlasting life and happiness in that state: the instructions given to Christ as a prophet were to reveal eternal life (¹John 5:11); the power, given to Christ as a king was to give eternal life, (¹John 17:2. Thus the command given him was life everlasting. This Christ says he knew: “I know it is so,” which intimates how cheerfully and with what assurance Christ pursued his undertaking, knowing very well that he went upon a good errand, and that which would bring forth fruit unto life eternal. It intimates likewise how justly those will perish who reject Christ and his word. Those who disobey Christ despise everlasting life, and

renounce it; so that not only Christ's words will judge them, but even their own; so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it; and who can except against it?

3. Christ's exact observance of the commission and instructions given him, and his steady acting in pursuance of them: *Whatsoever I speak, it is as the Father said unto me.* Christ was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God, and was faithful in discovering so much of them to the children of men as it was agreed should be discovered, and *kept back nothing that was profitable.* As the faithful witness delivers souls, so did he, and spoke the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Note,

(1.) This is a great encouragement to faith; the sayings of Christ, rightly understood, are what we may venture our souls upon.

(2.) It is a great example of obedience. Christ said as he was bidden, and so must we, communicated what the Father had said to him, and so must we. See ~~400~~ Acts 4:20. In the midst of all the respect paid to him, this is the honour he values himself upon, that what the Father had said to him that he spoke, and in the manner as he was directed so he spoke. This was his glory, that, as a Son, he was faithful to him that appointed him; and, by an unfeigned belief of every word of Christ, and an entire subjection of soul to it, we must give him the glory due to his name.