

# ***Concordant Commentary on the New Testament***

A. E. Knoch



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## PREFACE

THIS COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT was first published more than forty years ago. It was a part of the "Complete Edition," which has been out of print for some time. Hence this reprint of A. E. Knoch's "Notes" reflects his doctrinal views at the time of their first publication.

This edition is printed from the same type as the original edition. The correction lines which he had had set during the last years of his life, have been inserted. Although we have not been indifferent to changes suggested, additional insertions have been kept to a minimum in order to preserve the work as that of A. E. Knoch.

What A.E.K. had to say on commentaries in general, should always be kept in mind, for it applies to his own "Notes" on the New Testament as well:

"The writer of these notes cannot help uttering a heartfelt prayer that they will never be taken for more than what they are intended to be—suggestive thoughts which lead to and not from the Sacred Text. He would rather they would vanish than that they should stand between anyone and the living oracles. May we never be tainted with the spirit of the ancient Rabbis who did not scruple to place their words above the Sacred Scrolls. In the Talmud we read: 'The words of the scribes are more noble than the words of the law; for the words of the law are both hard and easy [to understand], but the words of the scribes are all easy.' Another traditional saying was, 'He who deals with Scripture does a thing indifferent; he who reads the Mishna has a reward; but he who devotes himself to the Gemara is most meritorious of all.'

"In the same way the commentaries and confessions and creeds of Christendom have a stronger hold on the hearts of many of His saints than the inspired Scriptures. May He grant that many will return to the fountain undefiled!"

## THE GREEK SCRIPTURES

## “CORRECTLY CUT”

# CIRCUMCISION

*The King  
and Kingdom  
Refused*

MATTHEW	.....Christ as King
MARK	.....Servant
LUKE	.....Man
JOHN	.....Son of God

## Reoffered and Rejected

## ACTS

## *In Abeyance*

### *The Present Parenthetical Interval*

## PAUL'S EPISTLES

## THE PREPARATORY EPISTLES

## *Faith*

ROMANS ..... *Justification*  
                                   *Conciliation*  
                                   *Department*

## I. CORINTHIANS . . . *Department*

## II. CORINTHIANS . . . *Conciliation*

**GALATIANS . . . . . Justification**

## THE PERFECTION EPISTLES

*Love*

**EPHESIANS** ..... *Doctrine*  
*Department*

PHILIPPIANS ..... *Department*  
COLOSSIANS ..... *Doctrine*

## THE PROMISE EPISTLES

### Expectation

## I. THESSALONIANS

## II. THESSALONIANS

## THE PERSONAL EPISTLES

## I. AND II. TIMOTHY, TITUS, PHILEMON

*Reaffirmed*

**HEBREWS**  
**JAMES**  
**I. AND II. PETER**  
**I., II., AND III. JOHN**  
**JUDE**

***Realized***

## THE UNVEILING

# WRITINGS

## THE GREEK SCRIPTURES

CHRIST and His kingdom occupies the place of prominence in the Greek Scriptures. They chronicle its refusal when proclaimed by the King Himself, its rejection when heralded by His apostles after His resurrection, its present abeyance, its reaffirmation and realization in the days to come.

Only a very small portion of the Hebrew Scriptures was written to or for the nations, or gentiles. By far the greater part is concerning the nation of Israel. The same is true of the Greek revelation. Excepting Paul's epistles, all is directly related to the Circumcision. Christ confined His ministry to the people of the covenant. There was nothing but crumbs for aliens in the accounts of our Lord's life. The chief of the twelve apostles could with difficulty be persuaded to preach even to such a proselyte as Cornelius. From Hebrews to Jude all is limited to the twelve tribes. The Unveiling gives Israel the sovereignty of the earth.

Only Paul's epistles, from Romans to Philemon, are written to, or intended for, the Uncircumcision. While all blessing for the nations was planned to come through the sons of Israel, this channel is choked when they reject the testimony of the apostles, as recorded in the book of Acts. All blessing for the present is based on their apostasy, and comes to us, not through them, but through their defection, and is limited to the period of their rejection. Furthermore, the destiny in Paul's epistles is different. The Circumcision and their beneficiaries are blessed on earth. The Uncircumcision of this economy are blessed among the celestials.

This book is not the "New Testament" or covenant. The new covenant which Jehovah will make with His people Israel is to be found in the so-

called "Old Testament" (Jer.31<sup>31-34</sup>), and is repeated in the "New" (Heb.8<sup>8-13</sup>). In both cases it is confined to the physical seed of Jacob, the same people who received the old covenant at Sinai, and its place is in the coming kingdom. The grand division in God's purpose is not between these two covenants, but rather between covenanted and uncovenanted blessings. The nations or gentiles will share some of Israel's good things when they are in favor once again, and are under the new covenant. But in the great parenthetical period between their past apostasy and future fullness we have the present grace. This is made known only in Paul's epistles and is entirely distinct from the message of the scriptures to the Circumcision.

We have enclosed Paul's writings in a parenthesis to indicate that they are an interlude. The great movements inaugurated in the Hebrew Scriptures are continued in the accounts of our Lord's life, in Acts, and in Hebrews, James, Peter, John and Jude, and especially in the Unveiling. But Paul's epistles reveal a secret purpose which antedates and transcends God's counsels for the earth, and the blessing which comes through them is based on grace so pure and unadulterated that it depends for its display on Israel's failure rather than their faithfulness. Hence the same thread of thought can be traced through all the scriptures, omitting Paul's revelations, and they form a complete system, suited to the regeneration of the earth, through Israel. But Paul has a higher mission. He is concerned with the heavens and their reconciliation to God.

The outline shown at left will give a grasp of the Greek scriptures at a glance.

## MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT

MATTHEW manifests the Messiah as the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. He is the King of Israel and the Owner of the land. His genealogy is presented to prove His title to the throne and attest His inheritance from the father of the faithful. This account is occupied with the kingdom to Israel and the land of promise. It is concerned with the covenants made with Abraham and with David.

The four accounts or portraiture of Christ give four discriminated aspects of their common subject, and are not intended to be "harmonized". Each writer has his peculiar principles of selection and arrangement. Matthew's account, ever recognized as the Hebrew gospel, is the true commencement of the Greek scriptures, showing how they grow out of the Hebrew writings. It quotes at every step from the older scriptures. It is both a history and a fulfillment of prophecy. Matthew never rises above the plane of Israel's interests and hopes.

The characteristic phrase is "the kingdom of the heavens". This refers to Daniel's prophecy, "And in the days of these kings the God of the heavens shall set up a kingdom which shall not be harmed for the eon, and the kingdom shall not be left to another people. It shall crush and terminate all these kingdoms . . ." (Dan.2<sup>44</sup>). "And the kingdom and the authority and the majesty of the kingdom under all the heavens is granted to the people of the saints of the supremacies..." (Dan. 7<sup>27</sup>). It is a kingdom in the sense that Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece were kingdoms; it is still future; it is the rule of one people over other nations; yet it will not be destroyed as its predecessors in world dominion, but will last for the eons.

Notwithstanding the fact that Messiah is sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (15<sup>24</sup>) and that He forbade His apostles to go to the na-

tions or Samaritans (10<sup>5</sup>), the few instances in which the aliens are mentioned are most significant. Four gentile women enter the genealogy (1<sup>3,5,6</sup>). Tamar's sin introduced her into the line of ancestry, Rahab came in by faith. In Ruth's case grace triumphed over the law that would ban a Moabite from the congregation of Jehovah. Bathsheba reminds us of David's great transgression and shows us grace reigning despite sin. The magi come to worship Him, while Herod seeks His life (2<sup>1-12</sup>). The centurion exhibits a faith unknown in Israel (8<sup>5-12</sup>). The Canaanitish woman is commended for her confidence in Christ (15<sup>21-28</sup>). Pilate and his wife refuse responsibility when the Jews seek to condemn Him (27<sup>10,24</sup>). The centurion at the cross acknowledges that He is the Son of God (27<sup>54</sup>). It is only at the end of the account, after all authority on earth is in the hands of the King, that the disciples are commissioned to go and make disciples of all nations. This cannot occur until the kingdom comes. Thus the proclamation of the kingdom of the heavens is restricted to the people of whom the prophet Daniel spoke.

The narrative is divided into two distinct periods, each of which begins with His acknowledgement as Son of God by a voice from heaven and closes by its acknowledgment by men, the first by the disciples, the second by the nations. The first extends from John's baptism (3<sup>16,17</sup>), and closes with Peter's confession (16<sup>16</sup>). During this period the kingdom is proclaimed and rejected, so that He forbids its further proclamation. The second period is occupied with His priestly preparation for the sacrifice on Golgotha. It begins with the transformation on the mount (17<sup>1-5</sup>) where Moses and Elijah spoke of His decease, and continued to the crucifixion, where the centurion said, "Truly this was God's Son!" (27<sup>54</sup>).

1-6 Compare Lu.3:28-38.

6-11 Compare 1 Chr. 3:10-16.

12-16 Compare 1 Chr. 3:17-19.

This is the royal lineage of the Son of David as well as the title to the land granted to Abraham. In contrast to the genealogy given by Luke, we are given the actual physical descent by the male line to Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of our Lord. The three sections bring before us three distinct phases of rule and the failure of each. First we have the theocracy until David, which ended when the people clamored for a king (1 Sa. 8:22). Then comes the period of the kingdom, which was a series of failures, until the Babylonian exile. Since then the nations ruled Israel, until the birth of Messiah, when they were under the Roman yoke. It was a dismal descent, and proved conclusively that no male issue of this line would ever be competent to sit upon the throne of Messiah.

David was the greatest of the kings, yet his son Solomon was a living evidence of his terrible sin. And so degenerate did the line of his sons become that at the time of the exile Jechoniah drew down upon himself the curse of Jehovah:

"Thus saith the Lord,  
"Write this man bereft,  
A master who shall not prosper in his  
days:  
For no man of his seed shall prosper,  
Sitting on the throne of David  
And ruling any more in Judah."  
(Jer.22:30)

Neither Joseph, nor any of his progenitors since the exile, were eligible to the throne. If Christ were his natural son, He also would be debarred. The Messiah cannot be of the seed of Jechoniah. Hence the absolute necessity of the virgin birth. Being begotten by God, the sins of progenitors did not taint His blood, and the curse of Coniah had no claim on Him. Yet, as the Son of Joseph, He inherited the title to the throne and all the honors of the house of David.

\* Between Joram and Ozias, there were three kings, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, but their names were blotted out according to the law (Deut.29:20), because they introduced idolatry into Israel. Ahaziah (or Azariah or Jehohaz) walked in the ways of Ahab and was slain by Jehu (2 Chron. 22:9).

## Matthew 1:1-17

Joash served Jehovah as long as the priest Jehoiada lived, but afterwards the princes of Judah served idols. He slew the son of Jehoiada, who remonstrated. Hence the servants of King Joash slew him and would not bury him in the tombs of the kings (2 Chr. 24:17,25). Amaziah also bowed down to the gods of the sons of Seir, and was slain by the people of Jerusalem (2 Chr. 25:15,27).

10 Jehoiakim (or Shallum) is omitted from the list of kings because he refused Jeremiah's warnings, forsook the covenant, and turned to other gods (Jer. 22:1-7). In Chronicles mention is made, not only of his abominations, or idolatry, but to "that which was found on him" (2 Chr. 36:8). He made cuttings or marks on his flesh as a sign of his allegiance to other gods (Lev. 19:28). Hence he was denied human burial and his name is blotted out of the register of kings (Deut. 29:18-20).

Jechoniah's name is shortened to Coniah (Jer. 22:24) to show that Jehovah withdrew His support from him. He is not included in the line of kings. None of his seven sons (1 Chr. 3:17,18) succeeded to the throne. As no man of his seed can prosper, sitting on the throne of David, yet the regal rights are in his line, Messiah must be his Son, but not his seed.

17 In each group there are fourteen generations. From Abraham to, and including, David, are fourteen. From David to and including Josiah are fourteen. From Jechoniah to and including Christ are fourteen.

14	Abraham to David	14	David to Exile	14	Exile to Christ
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By this peculiar Hebrew system of enumeration, the true spiritual values are emphasized. David, as the most important progenitor, is counted twice. By substituting an event in place of a man for the link between the second and third group, Jechoniah is degraded to a place among the private persons of the third group. As a result the twenty kings of Judah are divided into two groups of ten each, the first seven of whom are counted and the last three are blotted out, as on the list herewith.

Each period began with a revival and closed in apostasy. At the end of the first the land was oppressed by the Philistines; at the end of the second it

was beneath the feet of Babylon: at the end of the third it was under the Roman yoke.

1 David	1 Ozias
2 Solomon	2 Joatham
3 Roboam	3 Achaz
4 Abijah	4 Hezekiah
5 Asaph	5 Manasseh
6 Josaphat	6 Amos
7 Joram	7 Josiah
[Ahaziah]	[Jehoahaz]
[Jehoash]	[Jehoiakim]
[Amaziah]	[Jechoniah]

18 Compare Lu. 12<sup>6-38</sup>.

19 The law was very strict in an ordinary case of this kind, and demanded that the woman be taken to the entrance of her father's house and the men of her city be required to stone her until she died (Deut. 22<sup>21</sup>). Joseph could not bring himself to this, so intended to divorce her according to the law that when a man had taken a wife and has found some uncleanness in her then he was to write her a bill of divorcement and send her out of his house (Deut. 24<sup>1</sup>).

23 In Isaiah, the prophet does not use the usual word for virgin, but *olme*, *damsel* (Isa. 7<sup>14</sup>). It is not likely that it was a virgin when it first came to pass in the prophet's day. But in this, the proper *fulfillment*, the spirit changes the word to *virgin*, as it is in the Septuagint also.

1-6 Bethlehem, the House of Bread, can be traced back in the family of our Lord to the time of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 1<sup>2</sup>). Here David dwelt. It was so insignificant that it is not even mentioned among the cities of Judah by Joshua or Nehemiah. This is seized on by the prophet Micah (5<sup>2</sup>) to form a background for its future greatness. Nor has any other event of importance transpired there. Its solitary and surpassing glory is the birth of the Shepherd of Israel.

1 The magi represent those who are learned in the lore of nature. All nature leads the true devotee to the worship of Him Whose handiwork it is. Many attempts have been made to explain the star of Bethlehem as a purely normal occurrence—a meteor, a comet, the conjunction of a number of planets, etc. But no such star could guide the magi for a long period and then take its place above Bethlehem, as distinct from Jerusalem. It is much easier to believe that it was an extraordinary star, for it heralded the birth of a most extraordinary Babe.

3 Herod the Great, as this king was usually called, may have been of Philistine extraction, his ancestors having been brought to Idumea as prisoners of war. He was the first sovereign of the Edomites who reigned over Judea, under Roman supremacy, and began about 40 B. C. His father, Antipater, had been procurator of Judea when Hyrcanus II., the Maccabean, was king. He died not long after these events. He received his kingdom from Antony and the Roman Senate. After the fall of Antony he found favor with the emperor Augustus. His actions tell us that he feared for his throne when the Messiah should come. In this he was in striking contrast with the Maccabean dynasty which he displaced. They took the royal authority with the express reservation of the rights of the Messiah (1 Macc. 14<sup>41</sup>). He massacred helpless infants in a futile effort to murder the Messiah.

7 It is evident, from the anxiety of Herod to get the exact time when the star first appeared, and his order to kill all the babes under two years, that the magi did not visit Bethlehem when Christ was born, but a long time afterward. He is now a little Boy, and Herod does not consider it safe to allow any child under two years to live. It is probable that they saw the star in the east at His birth, and, after some time for preparation, took their slow journey to Judea.

12 There is a startling contrast between the worshipful adoration of the magi, and the cruel conduct of His own people. The priests and scribes and populace should have exulted at His coming, but they are disturbed and uneasy. The priests should have worshiped Him, but they would not go a two-hours' journey to see Him. The magi traveled for months and brought Him presents. The scribes knew where he was born, but none went thither. The people followed their leaders. His own received Him not!

13 The khan at Bethlehem was the starting point of caravans for Egypt. Such it was in the days of Jeremiah, who lodged with Chimham at Bethlehem on his way to Egypt (Jer. 41<sup>17</sup>). And in his day many Jews went down into Egypt so that there were large Jewish colonies there to which Joseph could go during his exile. Here the

true Image of God would find the first objects to strike His dawning intelligence, and these would probably be the false images and gigantic temples of their idolatrous worship. Here was the center of the world's wisdom, but we do not read that any of the wise men recognized Him in Whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are concealed (Col.2<sup>3</sup>). But here also was the home of the Septuagint, the Greek version of the sacred scrolls which He used in His ministry. From here He, like the nation before Him, was called out of Egypt (Hos.11<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>18</sup> Compare Jer.31<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> The name "Rama" was a common one for a site on a hill. There was probably such a place near Bethlehem beside the tomb of Rachel, who died there in sorrow (Gen.35<sup>18-20</sup>). There is a beautiful connection between her sorrow and that of the bereaved mothers whose infants Herod slew.

<sup>23</sup> "He will be called a Nazarene" was a *spoken* prophecy. There is no reason to believe it was written or is to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Much that was spoken by the prophets was never committed to writing, but was preserved by tradition.

<sup>1-12</sup> Compare Mk.11-8Lu.31-18Jn.16-8,10-34.

<sup>3</sup> The wretched roads in the East were seldom repaired unless in preparation for some royal visitor. To see the peasants employed in removing the stones and straightening the road, and leveling its rough places was a sure sign that some one of high rank was expected. John the baptist was the herald of the King, calling on His subjects to prepare His path before Him (Isa. 40<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>4</sup> There is no reason why this should not be taken literally. The Arabs of those regions still feed on locusts. The American Indians of the western deserts have been known to subsist for weeks on locusts alone. The insect was included among those which it was lawful for a Jew to eat (Lev.11<sup>22</sup>). The monks of the dark ages thought this incredible, so they planted locust trees near the grotto in the desert which was supposed to be John's home. The carob is also found in this region and pilgrims have given it the name "St. John's bread" in order to shield him from the charge of eating insects!

<sup>6</sup> Baptism, or ceremonial washing, was a recognized rite in the Jewish ritual. It was usually performed by the person himself. Since Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons (Ex.29<sup>4</sup>) no one did it for another. The priests washed themselves at the laver (Ex.40<sup>31</sup>). Defiled clothes were to be washed by the man himself (Lev.11<sup>40</sup>). Naaman dipped himself in the Jordan (2 Ki.5<sup>14</sup>). But, because John did the baptizing, he was called "the baptist".

<sup>7</sup> John came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Mt.11<sup>14</sup>; Lu.11<sup>7</sup>). The superficial ceremonial without a corresponding condition of the heart was offensive to his spirit. He loathed hypocrisy. So he refused to baptize the religious zealots whose lives were not in accord with their profession. True repentance alone could avail to prepare them for the Coming One. Water could only symbolize the inward cleansing. It was not a substitute.

<sup>9</sup> Compare Jn.8<sup>33-39</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> See Ac.15<sup>11</sup>16191-4.

<sup>11</sup> There are three baptisms here, water, spirit, and fire. John used water only. This method was continued during our Lord's ministry. But after His resurrection He told them "John, indeed, baptizes in water, yet *you* shall be baptized in holy spirit after not many of these days (Ac.15). From Pentecost onward two baptisms obtained. At first, those who were baptized in water received the baptism of holy spirit also. Cornelius received the spirit before he was baptized in water (Ac.10<sup>44-48</sup>). Now there is only one baptism (Eph.4<sup>5</sup>). In one spirit we all were baptized into one body (1 Co.12<sup>13</sup>). It is for *cleansing*, not for power.

<sup>12</sup> The baptism of fire is the burning of the chaff. Such was the only baptism which the Pharisees and Sadducees deserved. Those whom He does not baptize in holy spirit, in grace, He will baptize in fire, in judgment. All of this is eonian, and does not determine their ultimate destiny after the eons have passed by.

<sup>13-17</sup> Compare Mk.19-11Lu.321,22.

<sup>13</sup> The Lord needed no cleansing, for He had no sin. But He needed to identify Himself with those who were cleansed. It was a foreglimpse of His baptism on Golgotha, when He became sin for the sake of His own.



16-17 Compare Jn. 1:32-34.

16 As God's Spirit has no material form it is figured to us in various ways, which suggest its force and significance. It is usually presented as a blast of air, for this is the primary meaning of the word *pneuma*, or spirit (Jn. 3:8 Ac. 2:2 Heb. 1:7). Other spirits are represented as torches (Un. 4:5), and horns or eyes (Un. 5:6) to indicate their power and perception. Unclean spirits are figured as frogs (Un. 16:13). The exquisite picture presented to the spiritual Israelite by the descending dove is largely lost on us. Our Lord Himself commended their artlessness to the emulation of His disciples. But doubtless a deeper thought lay in its universal use for sacrifice, especially by the poor. When He was presented to the Lord they offered two squabs of the doves (Lu. 2:24). The Spirit of God endues Him with power for the proclamation of the kingdom, not by presenting Him with a sword and mace, not by mounting Him on a white horse or crowning Him with a diadem, but by investing Him with the far more godlike powers of gentleness, artlessness, and sacrifice.

1-11 Compare Mk. 1:12, 13 Lu. 4:1-13.

1 If Christ is to be the King of Israel, He must not only overcome the opposition of men, but first of all, He must conquer the spirit that operates in them and rules the darkness of this world. Christ came to save *others*, not to please Himself. He refuses to use His power to provide food for Himself, but depends on God alone. He will not go out of His way to try and see if God will perform a miracle to save Him. Neither will He avoid the suffering and shame which lie between Him and the kingdom by accepting it at the Slanderer's hands. The Dove meets the Serpent in the wilderness and conquers it. Utter dependence on God's provision, absolute confidence in His words and ways, and the fullest fealty to His love, are more than a match for the Slanderer.

4 Compare Deut. 8:3.

6 Compare Ps. 91:11, 12.

7 Compare Deut. 6:16.

8 Satan is evidently the real head of the fourth kingdom of Daniel's image. Rome's dominion was limited.

10 Compare Deut. 6:13 10:20.

12 Compare Mk. 1:14, 15 Lu. 4:14, 15.

12 It is not likely that John was "cast into prison" at this time. The Lord had not yet called His disciples, and John was not yet cast into prison (Jn. 3:24) until some time later. Several attempts seem to have been made to put him in ward. This is probably the first of these. Hence the Lord left Judea, and spent most of His ministry in Galilee. In John, His messenger, He was rejected in Judea before He even began His proclamation.

13-16 Compare Mk. 1:21, 22 Lu. 4:31, 32.

15 Compare Isa. 9:2.

15 Nazareth, Cana, and the region about, where the Lord commenced His ministry, were in Zebulun. This did not touch the sea of Galilee, but it bordered on Naphtali in the northeast, in which was Capernaum, "His own city," as well as Chorazin and Bethsaida, where so many of His mighty works were done.

17 Compare Mk. 1:14, 15.

17 "The kingdom of the heavens" would mean but one thing to a Jew in the days of our Lord. In the explanation of the marvelous dream of Nebuchadnezzar, in which he saw a succession of world empires, Daniel says that the last kingdom shall be set up by the God of the heavens (Dan. 2:44). "And in the days of these kings the God of the heavens shall set up a kingdom which shall not be harmed for the eon, and the kingdom shall not be left to another people. It shall crush and terminate all these kingdoms, and it shall rise for the eon." Babylon fell to Medo-Persia, and Medo-Persia to Greece. Greece had broken up, and the fourth kingdom, in which the prophet's people under the figure of clay, were to be mingled with mankind, was due to appear. And this was to be followed by the indestructible kingdom of Messiah, for which all the Jews longed.

Again, under the figure of rapacious beasts, Daniel had portrayed the kingdoms of the end time (Dan. 7:2-27). They are displaced by the kingdom of the heavens. "And the kingdom and authority and the majesty of the kingdom under all the heavens is granted to the people of the saints of the supremacies. The kingdom is an eonian kingdom, and all authorities shall serve and hearken to it."

"The kingdom of God" suggests subjection direct to the Deity, whether as individuals or nations. Its sphere cannot be circumscribed. "The kingdom of the heavens", is, however, always concerned with the sovereignty of Israel over the other nations. Just as Babylon ruled the whole earth, so Israel will be supreme. As Medo-Persia brought all nations beneath its sway, so Israel will subjugate every other dominion. As Alexander found no field for further conquest, so Messiah will rule all nations with a club of iron, and all peoples and languages and nations will serve Him and bring their tribute to the land of Israel and the nation He has chosen. This is the kingdom which Christ proclaimed.

The kingdom was proclaimed as "near". This does not imply that it must come soon. The nearness was only tentative. The same word is used of Epaphroditus (Phil. 2<sup>30</sup>), who *draws near* to death for the work of Christ, but God was merciful, and he drew away from death again. Nearness is a relative term, indicating that not much more is needed to cause contact. Israel was *near* the land of promise thirty-eight years before they actually entered. Had they believed Caleb and Joshua they would have drawn nearer instead of returning to the wilderness, far from its borders. So it was with Israel and the kingdom. As it was when their forefathers came out of Egypt, so they come near to the national hope, but for thirty-eight years they wandered in the wilderness of unbelief, and perished without entering the land of promise.

18-19 Compare Mk.1:16-18 Lu.5:1-11 Jn.1:40-42.

21-22 Compare Mk.1:19, 20 Lu.5:10, 11.

23 See Mk.1:21-39.

25 Compare Mk. 3:7, 8.

1-2 Compare Lu. 6:20-23.

1 The "Sermon on the Mount" was probably varied and repeated many times. Luke gives one of these. That was given on an "even place" (Lu. 6:17) after His calling of the apostles. It is much abridged. Mark gives scattered allusions here and there. It is fitting that the fullest proclamation of the laws of the kingdom should be given in this account, for it is concerned with the Son of David.

5 The Beatitudes will find their fulfillment in the kingdom of the heavens, when Messiah comes again and establishes His millennial reign. Till then most of them prove to be a practical disappointment. The merciful often do not obtain mercy. The meek do not receive an allotment in the land or the earth. Not only that, but they never shall. A meek unbeliever will receive no allotment whatever. A meek believer is promised every blessedness among the celestials (Eph. 1<sup>3</sup>). It would be a bitter disappointment to him to have an allotment on the earth or in the land of Israel. There is no happiness in this beatitude for us.

12 All blessing comes from heaven, but it is not all enjoyed in heaven. The kingdom will be the days of heaven on earth, for the blessing will be heavenly in source and character, though located on earth. The heavenly city, new Jerusalem, is heavenly but comes down out of heaven to the earth. English has no way of distinguishing that which is heavenly in character from that which has its place in heaven, so special care is needed to avoid confusion in thought on this theme.

13 See Mk.9:50 Lu.14:34, 35.

13 The salt of Palestine was usually gathered from marshes. Contact with the ground or exposure to rain or sun soon spoiled it, so that it lost its saltiness. As it was very harmful to growing vegetation it was carefully swept up and thrown into the street, and thus trodden under foot.

14 Compare Mk.4:21, 22 Lu.8:16, 17 11:33.

17 See Lu.16:1, 17 Ro.3:31.

18 See 24:35.

18 The *yod* or *iota* was the smallest of the Hebrew letters. The *ceriphs* were probably the small projections which distinguished some of the Hebrew letters. The idea of the *Massorah*, that they were small meaningless ornaments like horns is hardly in line with the spirit of Christ's teaching. He denounced unwarranted, uninspired additions to the Scriptures.

19 To obey is always better than sacrifice. The very least precept of the Lord calls for implicit, unquestioning response.

21 Compare Ex. 20:13.

<sup>22</sup> Gehenna, the valley of the son of Hinnom, just below the city of Jerusalem, where idolatrous worship was once carried on and where the city of fal was burned, will once more become the incinerator for Jerusalem. In the kingdom it will consume the carcasses of criminals as well as the rubbish of the city. It should not be confounded with the unseen, or *hades*, which is often translated "hell", or with tartarus, similarly translated. Neither is it the lake of fire (Un. 2014), which follows the great white throne judgment for the wicked. Its operation is confined to the temporal judgments of the millennial kingdom. It does not fix ultimate destiny, for it disappears long before the consummation.

<sup>22</sup> *Raka* seems to be a contemptuous epithet from the Aramaic, meaning *empty*.

<sup>23</sup> Instead of removing His hearers from beneath the thunders of the law (as grace has since done), He makes its precepts more pressing, its prohibitions more searching. The appearance counts for nothing with Him unless the heart is also right. He will not even allow them to approach God by means of an oblation, unless they are on terms with their brethren. There is no lenience in this kingdom proclamation. Those who are cast into jail are not delivered until the demands of righteousness have been fully met. A lustful look is a sin of the heart which will not be tolerated in His dominions. The criminals of that day will be executed and their corpses consigned to the vale of Hinnom, where the offal of Jerusalem is burned. So stringent is this law that if a member of the body sins, the whole is in danger of death in the kingdom.

<sup>27</sup> See Ex. 20:14.

<sup>31</sup> See 19:3-9 Deut. 24:1, 2 Mk. 10:2-12 Lu. 16:18 1 Co. 7:10, 11.

<sup>31</sup> Because of the hardness of their hearts, Moses made divorce an easy matter. Not so in the kingdom of the heavens. Only one cause will be a ground for separation then. Now, in grace, death alone can come between those whom the Lord has made one flesh (1 Co. 7:39). We are not living under the law of Sinai or under the kingdom code, but under the far more beneficent reign of grace (Ro. 5:21).

<sup>25-26</sup> Compare Lu. 12:58, 59. See Prov. 25:8.

<sup>33</sup> Compare Lev. 19:12. See Nu. 30:2 Deut. 23:21-23.

<sup>34-37</sup> From our Lord's time down to the present, cursing and swearing have been so common in Palestine that little notice is taken of it. They continually profane the name and attributes of God, and swear by anything that comes into their minds. In fact, to swear fluently and artistically is considered quite an accomplishment which deserves cultivation.

<sup>38</sup> Compare Ex. 21:23-25 Lev. 24:19, 20 Deut. 19:21.

<sup>38</sup> Many futile attempts have been made to carry out the principle of non-resistance here laid down, by those who did not see its relation to the kingdom. When the righteous King is on the throne such conduct will be not only right but rational. Grace, however, goes much further than mere non-resistance. It demands active effort on behalf of those who seek to injure or oppress. Recognizing the grave practical difficulty of practising these precepts at the present time, theologians assure us that "these expressions, in their paradox form, must not be taken literally." If these are not plain examples, it is impossible to form any definite idea of the Lord's meaning. It is ideal conduct for an ideal government, such as will be in actual operation when Christ comes again and Satan is bound for the thousand years.

<sup>39</sup> Compare Lu. 6:27-31.

<sup>43</sup> Compare Lev. 19:18. See Deut. 23:6.

<sup>43</sup> We are exhorted to imitate God, as beloved children, and walk in love, even as Christ loves us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a fragrant odor (Eph. 5:1, 2). The sons of the kingdom are here exhorted to imitate Him in His beneficence in nature. The sun and rain bring all blessing in the physical sphere. Christ brings all blessing in the spiritual sphere. Great is the gift of sunshine, yet how much greater is the gift of Christ! Yet so much brighter is the standard for conduct today as compared with the longed for millennium. The saints should always imitate God; yet this should ever be in accord with the particular revelation of Himself given for the time.

<sup>44</sup> Compare Lu. 6:27, 28, 32-36 23:34 Ac. 7:60 1 Pt. 2:18-23.

The kingdom will be, in a special sense, the display of God's goodness on earth; we will be the highest exhibition of God's grace among the celestials (Eph. 27). Hence it is most fitting that conduct, in each case, should correspond to the sphere and character of God's operations. The standard for us is as far beyond these precepts as these are beyond the law. The law demanded love, but limited it to neighbors. In their hard-heartedness they inferred that others should be hated. The Lord does not hesitate to enlarge the law. God is good to all. But we look to the cross and know that there are none righteous in His sight, and see His sacrifice for all. Here alone do we find the motive which should control our conduct. God's perfection in nature is not sufficient to provide the sweet smelling perfume which pleases Him today. It seems to be without any practical effect on the hard hearts of humanity.

1 The Pharisees deemed alms-giving, prayer and fasting the three most eminent exhibitions of piety, for alms was the ideal expression of their relation to their neighbor, prayer of their intercourse with God, and fasting of self-discipline. Hence the Lord takes up these three and exposes the hypocrisy which performs them in public and provokes the applause of men, rather than the praise of God.

2 The word *alms* denotes an accompaniment of mercy. Hence we are not surprised that it is entirely absent in the exhortations for the nations which are based on grace. We do not "do" alms, as a work of righteousness, in order to get the approval of men or even the smile of God, but give gratuitously in thankful response for benefits already received by grace. We are not working for wages, but offer our services as a thank-offering for gratuities already ours in Christ, even though we know that He will reward those who serve and suffer for His sake.

5 These instructions regarding prayer come very close to us, for our abhorrence of hypocrisy should be much more pronounced than theirs. Perhaps a succinct way of putting it is, Never *say* your prayers; always *pray* them. Real prayer is possible only under the urge of the holy Spirit, and shuns the possible approbation of men, for it is meant for God alone (cf page 332, 15).

9-13 Compare Lu. 11:2-4.

9 This is not the *Lord's* prayer, but His model for the disciples' petitions. Since He has just been condemning wordiness and loquacity in prayer, He gives them an example of how to say much with few words. It was far from His intention that this should become a form for repetition, especially in this day of grace when part of it is meaningless and contrary to present truth. "The forgiveness of offenses in accord with the riches of His grace" (Eph. 17) is far, far beyond the measure in which we forgive others. Moreover, our forgiveness is not at all dependent on our extending this favor to others. With them it was probational and temporary; with us it is irrevocable and eternal. The prayers for our emulation are found in Ephesians. The latter half of the first chapter and the whole of the third chapter of that epistle will teach us what to pray for. It is all concerned with a later outpouring of grace which was a profound secret during our Lord's sojourn on earth.

This marvelous prayer is exquisite in its perfections. Its seven petitions are divinely divided into three for the glory of God, and four for the frailty of man. His name, His kingdom, His will. It is His future kingdom which will come when His will is done on earth. At that time we will have our portion in His celestial administrations, so that our prayers should be much wider in scope than this. Man's needs are sustenance, release from past failures and future trials, and, especially in relation to the kingdom, deliverance from the power of that wicked one who will do his utmost to corrupt and destroy it.

Our Lord would not have them pray for that which God would not give. Every petition in it will be fulfilled, but not until the kingdom has come. Then, and not till then, will they be safe from the wicked one, for he will be bound in the submerged chaos. Not till then will their trials be over, their debts remitted, their daily sustenance assured; not till then will His will be done on earth, or His name be hallowed by a holy nation. We may rest assured that every prayer indited by His Spirit will be fulfilled in due course. The only uncertain element is time, and that is well known to God.

14-15 Compare Mk.11<sup>25,26</sup>.

14 Forgiveness now is according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1<sup>7</sup>), not according to our forgiveness of others. The believers in Israel failed at this point. Their forgiveness was withdrawn because they refused the same mercy to the other nations. But the believers of the nations were never forgiven in this probationary fashion.

19-21 Compare Lu. 12<sup>33-34</sup>.

19 Treasures were often hid in concealed pits in the ground, where thieves would need to dig to find them. But nothing is safe on earth. Only that which we give is ours beyond the possibility of loss.

22-23 Compare Lu.11<sup>33-36</sup>. See Prov.28<sup>22</sup> Mk.7<sup>22</sup>.

22 The Pharisees tried to make the best of both worlds. They wanted treasure on earth as well as in heaven. Their eyes were afflicted with double sight, which is worse than blindness. They wanted to worship both God and mammon.

24 Compare Lu.16<sup>13</sup>. See Ja.4<sup>4</sup> 1Jn.2<sup>15</sup>.

25 There is a blessed progression in the experience of God's saints as the purpose of His grace becomes more fully known. The Psalmist could sing (Ps. 55<sup>22</sup>):

"Fling what He grants you on Jehovah,  
And He will sustain you:  
He will not allow the righteous to  
slip for the eon."

Peter sounds a higher strain when he writes to the dispersion, "tossing your entire worry on Him, seeing that He is caring concerning you" (1 Pt. 5<sup>7</sup>). But how much loftier is the position of Paul, as he exhorts us, "Let nothing be worrying you, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, that is superior to every frame of mind, shall be garrisoning your hearts and your apprehensions in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4<sup>6,7</sup>). The Psalmist struggled under a burden with the help of God, Peter got rid of the weight, but Paul prevents it, and replaces it with peace and thanksgiving.

25-34 Compare Lu.12<sup>22-31</sup>.

29 We cannot be certain of the exact flower intended by our Lord from the somewhat general term used, but the brilliant scarlet anemone, which flour-

ishes in all parts of Palestine in great profusion seems to be the only one which fully answers all the conditions. Its great abundance and rich beauty fit it perfectly for the illustration used by our Lord. The figure is full of spiritual refreshment. Clothing is that which meets the eye and corresponds to the character of the wearer. Solomon's robes were tokens of his royal station. Pharisaic righteousness He has shown to be a hypocritical pretense. The anemones suggest that God can supply His saints with divine apparel more beautiful than that of Solomon. In a word, He not only can clothe them in splendid style, but He can make them kings to rule the nations of the earth.

33 See 1 Ki.3<sup>13</sup> Ps.34<sup>9,10</sup> 37<sup>25</sup> 84<sup>11</sup> Mk.10<sup>29</sup>, 30 1 Tim. 4<sup>8</sup>.

1-2 Compare Lu. 6<sup>37,38</sup>.

1 This has no reference to God's judgment, but to the relations of man with man, as explained in the next paragraph. Should self-judgment precede the judgment of others it would probably do away with judging. One who has a beam in his eye, and knows it, will think little of the mote in another's eye. So the Lord sought to turn the censorious critics of His day to an examination of their own shortcomings.

3-5 Compare Lu.6<sup>41,42</sup>.

6 See Prov.9<sup>7</sup>, 8<sup>23</sup>.

6 Both dogs and hogs were unclean according to the law. The Lord Himself followed this principle when He spoke in parables to those without, and kept the holy and precious truth for His own disciples. We are hardly justified in "applying" these opprobrious terms to immature saints who are not yet able to bear more than milk.

7-11 Compare Lu. 11<sup>9-13</sup>.

7 See 21<sup>22</sup> Jn.14<sup>13,14</sup> 15<sup>7</sup> 1Jn.3<sup>22</sup> 5<sup>14,15</sup>.

7 This, of course, is limited to prayer to God. He can and will respond to those who ask for what they need, or seek what is hid, or knock at closed doors. But the answer may not be realized until the kingdom comes. We have no right or reason to expect God to change His plans and purposes in order to carry out our whims. We are not aware what we should be praying for, but the spirit is pleading for us with inarticulate groanings (Ro.8<sup>26</sup>).

<sup>12</sup> Compare Lu. 6<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> To do as we would be done by is an ethical standard far above the world's attainment, yet far beneath the monitions of grace. The law and the prophets demand compliance with this code, yet supply no power to carry it out. Grace gives the ability, yet makes no demands, but rather entreats us to do as we have been done by in our dealings with God, rather than man.

<sup>13-14</sup> Compare Lu. 13<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> The crowds enter a city by the broad road which passes through the wide gate. The narrow side-paths leading to a narrow gateway in some retired corner were seldom used and were always shut in the daytime and locked at night. Few find or use these paths. This is not an illustration of the gospel, but of the law. It represents an effort to attain life. It is not stated that few find life, but few find the path to it. All life is God's gift and can never be made by man, either in the sphere of religion or of science.

<sup>15-23</sup> Compare Lu. 6<sup>43-46</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> The law was exceedingly severe on false prophets. Death was their penalty (Deut. 13<sup>5</sup>). It is generally supposed that a prophet is false if his sign or prediction does not come to pass. Not so. *If it comes to pass*, yet leads away from the Lord, they were not allowed to hearken (Deut. 13<sup>1-5</sup>). This is being written at the very time when a modern prophethood predicts the end of the world. That prophethood is not false because her vision is not being verified, but because her dreams were not of God and led away from His word. This, however, is a day of grace, and false prophets are not stoned.

But the term prophet includes all who claim a direct revelation from God, apart from His written revelation. As prophets are only in the *foundation* of the ecclesia (Eph. 2<sup>20</sup>), the mere claim to a personal and direct message from God is evidence in itself that it is false. The word of God is complete (Col. 1<sup>25</sup>), and only those who do not fully apprehend what God has revealed crave further communications. The latest revelations given to the apostle Paul make all further prophecy useless and round out the whole realm of revelation.

<sup>16</sup> The figures are finely chosen. The fig tree stands for the righteous gov-

ernment of Messiah and the vine the spiritual cheer of His kingdom. In that day each one will sit under his own vine and fig tree (Mic. 4<sup>4</sup>). The kingdom of God is not only feeding on figs and drinking wine, but what these symbolize—righteousness and peace and joy in holy Spirit (Ro. 14<sup>17</sup>). These are the fruits that do not grow on thorns and thistles, and that characterized the true prophet.

<sup>21</sup> See 25<sup>11</sup>, 12 Lu. 13<sup>25-30</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Many will need to read this passage twice, for it is the popular conviction that any one who can prophesy or cast out demons and do other supernatural deeds is necessarily in the highest intimacy with God. *Many* will claim these powers, yet He refuses to acknowledge them. In itself supernaturalism is no index of divine activity, for the powers of evil win their greatest triumphs in mimicking the manifestations of the holy Spirit.

<sup>24</sup> That the Lord has not been preaching the evangel of God's grace, but proclaiming the constitution of His kingdom, is convincingly clear from His conclusion. He is not seeking for *faith* but *works*. The prudent man is *doing* them, and the stupid man is not *doing* them. Now the evangel for us is for him "who is *not* working, yet is believing" (Ro. 4<sup>5</sup>). "Now if it is out of works, it is no longer grace, else work is no longer work" (Ro. 11<sup>6</sup>). The great storm of which our Lord speaks suggests the terrible judgments which usher in the kingdom. Then it will be "he who *endures* . . . will be saved".

<sup>24-27</sup> Compare Lu. 6<sup>47-49</sup>.

<sup>28-29</sup> Compare Mk. 12<sup>2</sup> Lu. 4<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Jewish scribes always say that Rabbi So-and-so says, or that he says that another Rabbi says, etc. All their teaching is tradition.

<sup>2</sup> Our Lord cleansed many lepers, and probably dealt similarly with them all. The "parallel" accounts in Mark (14<sup>0-44</sup>) and Luke (5<sup>12-14</sup>) do not "disagree" in details, for they record different occurrences. Our Lord's first testimony must be to the priests. It is not a direct one, for the priests had already rejected the testimony of John the baptist, who was one of them—by birth, if not by office.

<sup>4</sup> See 9<sup>30</sup> Mk. 5<sup>43</sup> Lev. 14<sup>1-32</sup>.

They will not hear Him, so He sends these lepers to them, as a sign that He is the One Who can cleanse the leprosy of the sinful nation. They should have known that the One Who can do this is the long-desired Messiah. There is no intimation that they heeded this testimony, so that here we have, in a parable, the same truth with which John begins his evangel: His own people do not accept Him (Jn.1<sup>11</sup>). Indeed, this is more striking. For the priests had before them continually the lesson of the suffering sacrifice. If no other class in the nation could understand His rejection and sorrow and death, they should have recognized that this is the One Who was to be led as a lamb to the slaughter. But, in that deeper wisdom of God, they were also the ones who were ordained to be the slayers of the great Sacrifice.

5-13 Compare Lu. 7:1-10.

5 This is followed by an intimation that, though rejected by His own, He would be accepted by the nations, as is the case in the book of Acts. The priest was at one end of the religious scale, and the alien centurion at the other. Yet it was the far-off gentile who believed and received, without a sign, without even the Lord's presence, rather than the privileged priest, who had ample opportunity to examine the reality of His cures and to test His claims by the divine oracles of which the priests were the repositories.

10 Like the centurion's servant, the nations who believed, when the evangel went forth after His resurrection, as recorded in Acts, had no personal contact with Him, and never knew His presence. They are saved at a distance, by a faith unequalled in Israel. So, also, there will be many in the future who will find a place in the kingdom, while many even of the priests will be left out.

The paralytic who was healed is most appropriately delineated. He has no strength and needs none. He does nothing. All his salvation is outside his own efforts. It was, of necessity, not of works. It was all of God. Such was the salvation of the nations. In contrast with this the leper called on Him and entreated for the blessing. He came to Him and worshiped Him. Such was the case with the Jewish disciples.

14-17 Compare Mk.120-34 Lu.438-41.

14 There is considerable marshy land near Tell Hum, the probable site of Capernaum. This might account for the fever.

17 Compare Isa. 53<sup>4</sup>. See 1 Pt. 2<sup>24</sup>.

18 Compare Mk.435 Lu.822.

19-22 Compare Lu. 9:57-62.

20 This, the first time He takes the title "Son of Mankind", is full of deep pathos. After He has become wearied with His works of healing, a scribe knows no better than to call Him his "Teacher". How little had he apprehended of His power and glory! His words have shown Him to be capable of coping with all that Adam's sin has brought into the world. He is his greater Son. He has regained the sovereignty lost by the first man. His realm extends over all mankind, and over the beasts of the field and the birds of heaven. They are among the lowest of His subjects. The jackals have their burrows and may retire to rest; the winged denizens of heaven have their roosts on which to spend the night, yet His weary head, Whose dominion includes all earthly creatures, was denied even the possession of a place of repose! What a contrast is this to the last time we meet this title in the sacred records! Then we see His holy head wreathed with the chaplet of a conqueror (Un.14<sup>14</sup>). The victor's wreath adorns the brow they crowned with thorns. And then, as Daniel had foretold, will be given Him authority, and esteem, and a kingdom, that all peoples, races, and languages should serve Him, for His authority is an eonian authority, which shall not pass away (Dan.7<sup>14</sup>).

The title "Son of Mankind" is significant in every occurrence, even though our dull minds may miss it. It is always suggestive of the dignities which devolved on Adam as the sovereign of all earthly creatures and head of the human race. He inherits all these glories and restores them to far more than their pristine perfection in the coming eon.

24 This event probably occurred at an earlier date than the similar accounts in Mark and Luke. The cause here was an earthquake which started immense tidal waves. In the other cases it was a squall (Mk. 435-41 Lu. 823-25).

<sup>25</sup> Ever and anon, while revealing His own glory and exercising the faith of His followers, our Lord presents a marvelous prophetic picture of the course of the kingdom proclamation. Here we have a preview, on a small scale and in physical symbols, of that terrible time of affliction, which will threaten to engulf His disciples at the end of the eon, just before His advent. The winds are the spiritual forces of wickedness, figured by the great dragon (Un. 12<sup>3</sup>), the sea stands for the nations of mankind, led by the wild beast (Un. 13<sup>1</sup>). Together they will well-nigh destroy all hopes of the kingdom. Then it is that Christ will come and rebuke the nations and the spirit powers and usher in the calm of the kingdom, where there will be no more war, the nations will be subdued and Satan will be bound. Till then there will be no possible guarantee of peace among the nations of the earth, notwithstanding every effort to stop war.

28-34 Compare Mk. 5:1-20 Lu. 8:26-39.

<sup>28</sup> Vaticanus reads this "Gadarenes". Sinaiticus reads "Gazarenes", but the editor (<sup>s2</sup>) changed this to "Gergesenes", as we have it. Gadara was a well-known city, but is so far from the shores of Galilee, that it was quite impossible for the narrative to have been enacted there. The hogs would have had to run down a mountain, cross the Jermuk river, itself enough to drown them, up its banks, then several miles across a level plain into the water. At one place on the eastern shore of the lake, at a ruined town called Chersa by the Arabs, all the topography is in perfect keeping with the narrative. Behind the town tombs were cut in the rock. A steep mountain rises almost immediately out of the water, so that the hogs, rushing down, could not stop on the narrow beach, but plunged headlong into the lake. It seems evident that this is the true locality and the name Gergesene seems most likely to have been the original of the traditional "Chersa", as it is now known. Gadarene seems misleading, hence we do not use it.

<sup>31</sup> As swine's flesh was unclean, the keeping of hogs was illegal, and no wrong was done to their owners by sending them to destruction in the waters of the lake.

1-8 Compare Mk. 2:1-12 Lu. 5:17-26.

<sup>5</sup> Paralysis and all other human ills are but an effect, of which sin is the cause. Not, indeed, the personal sins of the paralytic, but the sins of mankind in general, for all men are born with a heritage of sin and live in an atmosphere heavy with wrong-doing. But the great truth here taught is that the physical blessings of the coming kingdom have a secure basis in the pardon of sins. So, in this scene, which suggests the believing remnant of Israel who receive Him as their Messiah, the Lord seems to overlook the paralysis at first, and pardons his sins. The delay, and the unbelief of the scribes, suggest the apostasy of the nation and the consequent postponement of physical blessings till the kingdom comes and the authority of the Son of Mankind to pardon sins is in full exercise, followed by the health, strength, and vigor which will be the portion of mankind in the millennium. If human governments would get beyond the outbreaks and symptoms and deal with sin they would not need to be concerned with all its evil effects. They can never bring health and righteousness.

9-15 Compare Mk. 2:13-20 Lu. 5:27-35.

<sup>9</sup> It is a most striking exhibition of God's grace and wisdom, that such a man as Matthew should be chosen for an apostle, and furthermore should be empowered to write this account of Israel's King. This was contrary to all the dictates of human wisdom. Matthew was a "publican" or tribute collector, a class more hated, perhaps, than aliens, and more despised than sinners. The Roman government did not collect its tribute from the nations under its yoke directly, but farmed it out to subordinates. A district was sold for what it would bring, and the collector received his wages by assessing as much more as he could get. Hence they amassed wealth at the expense of their poor countrymen and for the benefit of a foreign government. Yet God chose such a traitor to his country to describe the glories of the King! His fitness was not by birth but of God.

<sup>11</sup> See 11:19 Lu. 15:2.

<sup>12</sup> The strong need to be taught their weakness, and the just their sinfulness. Then, and not till then, are they in conscious need of a Saviour.

<sup>13</sup> See 12:7 Hos. 6:8 1Ti. 1:15.



<sup>14</sup> It is a most difficult lesson for the saints to learn, that God's dealings with His creatures change, and that their conduct should change accordingly. John's disciples thought that the Lord's followers should do as they did. But the coming of Christ entirely changed the circumstances. He was the Bridegroom. They were the Bride. John had introduced them. How unbecoming it would be for them to fast! They should feast! And this they did. The Lord appeared at Cana, and at many another feast.

<sup>16-17</sup> Compare Mk. 2<sup>21-22</sup> Lu. 5<sup>36-39</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> John's ministry was the old cloak, the old wine skins. The Lord's ministry was the unshrunk cloth, the new wine skins. They cannot be associated without disaster. How much more true is this today! Since John's time and our Lord's teaching, transcendent truth has been revealed which He could not impart to them then. Our conduct should be conformed to this higher and later revelation. Yet most of the saints seem satisfied with doing as John's disciples, or as our Lord's. No wonder the cloth tears, and their covering is ragged. No wonder the wine bursts the skins, and their joy is spilled. Let us keep the new wine which we have received in the new containers God has provided. Let us live and act in accord with the highest revelation, given in Paul's epistles.

<sup>18-23</sup> Compare Mk. 5<sup>22-48</sup> Lu. 8<sup>41-56</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> See Nu. 15<sup>37-41</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> How often is there a significant interruption in the performance of a miracle! The dead daughter, representing Israel as a nation, waits for His coming. So Ezekiel portrays Israel before His glorious appearing. They are dead. But on the way a woman secretly touches the tassel of His cloak. The tassel speaks of that which *finishes* the cloak and corresponds to His work on Golgotha, where He finished the robe of righteousness which clothed Him. Contact with that finished work saved many a sinner during the interval between His promise to come again and His advent. While the present interval of grace was a profound secret, and was not even intimated in this touching scene, yet we have here a definite hint of the direction in which God's grace would flow if hindered by the apostasy of Israel.

<sup>27</sup> Blindness is to this day a very common affliction in eastern lands. The glare of the sun or lack of care in infancy costs many their sight. These men evidently had become blind physically, yet had spiritual sight sufficient to see their Saviour. Hence He casts the burden of belief on them. This is in marked contrast to the next case, for the deaf-mute was incapable of faith so long as he was obsessed by the demon.

<sup>32</sup> One of the chief features of the coming kingdom will be the absence of Satan and other evil spirits. So every case of casting out demons is a demonstration of His power to take the throne. There could be no better proof that He was the Messiah than His power over the unseen domains of darkness. In the time of the end His great opponent will be the wild beast on the human side (Un. 13<sup>1</sup>). But it is the dragon that gives the beast his power and throne and authority (Un. 13<sup>2</sup>). Hence, not only is the wild beast arrested (Un. 19<sup>20</sup>), but the dragon is bound for the thousand years (Un. 20<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>34</sup> On another occasion we are told that this chief of the demons is Bezebul (12<sup>24</sup>). This is the blasphemy against the holy Spirit, which cannot be pardoned in this eon or that which is to come (12<sup>31</sup>). The reason for this is very easily seen. These signs were the powers of the coming eon, intended to convince the nation that Messiah was present, and induce them to believe on Him. Now, if the very signs which should have demonstrated His Messiahship are taken to indicate that He is in league with the powers of darkness, it is impossible that they should repent and believe. The unpardonable sin consists in ascribing to sinister spirits what is the work of God's holy Spirit. In this day there is the opposite danger of ascribing all supernatural manifestations to the holy Spirit. The spirits must be tested by the word of God. That their teaching and work is a very close imitation, so close as to deceive the great majority of the saints, is according to Paul's predictions concerning the end time. We know that, somewhere in Christendom today, the demons are deceiving the saints, and the fact that they do not know it does not alter it.

<sup>35</sup> Compare Mk. 6<sup>6</sup> Lu. 8<sup>1-3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Mk.3<sup>13-19</sup> Lu.6<sup>12-16</sup>. See Lu.9<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> There is some variation in the order of the names, as well as of the names themselves, in the lists of the twelve apostles, but they are always found in three groups, headed by Peter, Philip and James, as follows:

Mt 102	Mk.3 <sup>16</sup>	Lu.6 <sup>14</sup>	Ac.113
Simon	Simon	Simon	Peter
Peter	Peter	Peter	
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James	Zebedee	James	James
Zebedee	John		
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James	James	James	James
Alpheus	Alpheus	Alpheus	Alpheus
Thaddeus	Thaddeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Simon	Simon	Judas	Judas
Cananite	Cananite	James	James
Judas	Judas	Judas	Matthias (Ac.126)
Ischariot	Ischariot	Ischariot	

Bartholomew is usually identified with Nathanael (Jn.144-46212). Judas James, in order to distinguish him from Judas Ischariot, was called Thaddeus, and Simon (not Peter), was termed the Zealot, or its Hebrew equivalent the Cananite (not Canaanite). Of course, Matthias takes the place of Judas Ischariot in Acts.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Mk.6<sup>7-15</sup> Lu.9<sup>1-11</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord had been heralding the kingdom alone and had confirmed the proclamation by signs which indicated its nearness. Now He associates twelve of His disciples with Him in this work and dispatches them with authority over disease and death and the demons so that they could prove its proximity by both their words and their works. This is the first kingdom proclamation. The second is not given until after His resurrection (28<sup>16-20</sup>). They differ on almost every point. This was to be exercised in the land alone. Not even Samaria was to hear it. It was strictly for the lost sheep of Israel's fold and included no others. The second kingdom proclamation is for all nations, except Israel.

This first kingdom proclamation was carried on until the crisis in our Lord's ministry when it became evident that the nation had rejected Him and His message. Then He charged His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus, the Messiah (16<sup>20</sup>).

Even though Peter and John are given a foretaste of the kingdom on the mount of transformation, He charged them not to tell of the vision until the Son of Mankind should be risen from among the dead (17<sup>9</sup>). From this time until Pentecost this proclamation was interrupted.

Anticipating the renewal of its proclamation during His absence, our Lord gave the keys to Peter when he, in contrast to the apostate nation, acknowledged Him to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God (16<sup>19</sup>). The door to the kingdom is locked when its proclamation is forbidden. At Pentecost Peter uses the keys and once more proclaims the proximity of the kingdom, conditioned on the repentance of the nation. At first a small proportion of the people accept the message, but it is not long ere the nation, as such, by the murder of Stephen, and the attempts on Peter and Paul, signifies its rejection. At the end of Acts it is formally set aside by Paul's public proclamation of their apostasy.

When God once more turns to Israel in the future it will be proclaimed again and, in the midst of great affliction, the nation, represented by the hundred and forty-four thousand celibates (Un. 7<sup>3-8</sup>) and the vast throng (Un. 7<sup>9-17</sup>), will accept the proclamation and enter the kingdom. Then Peter's epistles will unlock the door. Then all Israel will be saved (Ro. 11<sup>26</sup>), and the presence of the kingdom will preclude its further proclamation.

This gospel of the kingdom is not concerned with sin or individual salvation. The pardon of sins, based on the sufferings of Christ, is in the commission for mankind in Luke's account (Lu. 24<sup>46-49</sup>). It was not confined to Israel. Christ had not suffered when this gospel of the kingdom was first proclaimed. It can refer to nothing else than the kingdom promised to Israel in the Hebrew scriptures.

<sup>10</sup> Compare Lu. 10<sup>1-16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> See Neh.5<sup>13</sup> Ac.13<sup>51</sup>186.

<sup>16-22</sup> Compare Mk.13<sup>9-13</sup> Lu.21<sup>12-18</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Compare Lu.12<sup>11-12</sup>. See Ex.4<sup>12</sup> Jer.17.

<sup>24</sup> See Lu.6<sup>40</sup> Jn.15<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> See Mk.4<sup>22</sup> Lu.8<sup>17</sup>122,3.

<sup>32</sup> See Lu.12<sup>8</sup>,9 Un.3<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> See Mk.8<sup>38</sup>2 Ti.2<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>34-36</sup> Compare Lu.12<sup>39-58</sup>. See Mic.7<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> The mood of the verb is most important here. The Lord is not telling what *would* but what *may* occur. His apostles were frail mortals, easily discouraged, so He does no more than hint at a possible failure of their mission. The common version, by ignoring the subjunctive form of the verbs, has given rise to much perplexity and speculation. This proclamation brought the kingdom very near, so that the Lord's coming in glory and power should not have been delayed much longer. That He did not come at that time is no proof that He was mistaken, but rather of His foreknowledge, for He was careful to phrase the prospect so as to provide for this contingency.

<sup>25</sup> Our Lord calls Beezeboul a householder, which, probably, is the meaning of the name. (See note on 12<sup>24</sup>). The disciples should expect no better treatment than their Lord had received, yet He exhorts them not to be afraid, for even the unseen powers shall be manifested.

<sup>28</sup> The soul is the seat of sensation, but is popularly confounded with the spirit. A soulish man is one who is swayed by his senses. He may even be sensual, for such is the usual rendering of Jas. 3<sup>15</sup>. Those of the apostles who were killed later will lose nothing in the kingdom. Their souls will be surfeited with joy in that day. Their death will only add to their soul's delight in the resurrection. They, however, who come under God's judgment in the kingdom will not only have their bodies destroyed in the vale of Hinnom, just below Jerusalem, where the offal of the city was incinerated, but they will miss all the joys which their souls long for in the millennium. The martyrs who die for the sake of the kingdom have nothing to fear. So far as their souls are concerned, death gives them an immediate entrance into the delights of that earthly paradise, even though at their martyrdom it was thousands of years in the future.

<sup>29</sup> The greatness of God is as evident in the minute details of His creation as in the vast immensities of stellar space. His microscopic care meets the needs of His creatures, and reaches their hearts. Nothing is too trivial for Him Whose presence pervades the universe. The ultimate electron is as much His providence as the cosmos in its entirety.

<sup>34</sup> The natural inference arising from the proclamation of the kingdom would be that, when Israel believed, the era of the millennium would immediately commence. But it is never wise to reason from God's apparent procedure. He may have deeper plans which do not appear on the surface. The proclamation of the kingdom was made in all good faith, yet we know now, as God always has known, that it was not intended to introduce the kingdom at that time. Moreover, He had also revealed that, before it could come, there would be a time of great distress in which His faithful followers would endure such affliction as had not been known on the earth before. Since the kingdom must be established by force, He thrusts in His sword, that peace may follow.

<sup>37</sup> See Lu. 14<sup>26,27</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> See 16<sup>24</sup>Mk.8<sup>34</sup>,35Lu.9<sup>23</sup>,24.

<sup>39</sup> This has special reference to the time of Jacob's trouble, at the time of the end, when many will suffer and die rather than worship the image of the wild beast (Un. 13<sup>15</sup>). They will avoid suffering, or save their souls, only at the risk of God's indignation, and the loss of the pleasures of the kingdom. Those who endure affliction for the kingdom will enjoy the bliss of the kingdom. They destroy their souls to find them. Those who avoid suffering by yielding to the pressure of the adversary, will have no portion in the kingdom. They find their souls for a brief period only to destroy them for the thousand years.

<sup>40</sup> When the Son of Mankind comes in His glory to sit upon His throne, then judgment will proceed on the basis, not of personal sinfulness, but of the treatment of His disciples during the time of their need. This principle is a fitting close to His instructions for proclaiming the kingdom. It shows that they are not commissioned to preach the evangel of God, which is for us today.

<sup>41</sup> See 1 Ki.17<sup>10</sup>1842 Ki.4<sup>8</sup>Heb.13<sup>2</sup>.

2-4 Compare Lu. 7<sup>18-23</sup>.

2 John was the greatest of all the prophets. Yet even he was not fully aware of the mind of God. If Christ is Messiah, and this he does not doubt, why is he allowed to languish in pris-

on? The Jews had difficulty in reconciling the prophecies concerning the Messiah. Some seemed to set Him forth as the Suffering One; others made Him a glorious King. So some looked for two Messiahs; one, Messiah ben Joseph, to suffer, and another, Messiah ben David, to reign. Perhaps some such thought came to John. He had openly rebuked Herod, but the Lord made no effort to get him out of Herod's hands, and did nothing to assert His own power. Was He the Suffering One, and was there to be another to rule with an iron club? We can now see that both Joseph and David were a combination of suffering and glory, and that there was in each case an interval between the two. But this could hardly be made known at the time He was sending out His apostles. It would have disheartened them to know that their proclamation was not destined to succeed. So our Lord does not give a definite reply to John's messengers, but bids them testify to what they saw. He hints that John might be snared by His course. Yet, however inexplicable it may appear to him, He assures him that it is his happy portion to trust where he cannot understand.

7 Compare Lu. 7<sup>24-30</sup>.

7 The Lord might well have spoken disparagingly of John at this juncture. Instead, He gives him a eulogy which places him on the highest pinnacle of human fame. He gives him a name greater even than Moses and Elijah. The Jews have never accorded him this place, partly because he was the forerunner of the Messiah they have rejected, and partly because his career is eclipsed by the coming and presence of his Lord.

10 Compare Mal. 3<sup>1</sup>.

12-15 Compare Lu. 16<sup>16,17</sup>.

12 John's methods were drastic and violent. He would have forced the kingdom on the nation, just as our Lord will do when the two witnesses will withhold rain, and turn waters into blood, and smite the earth with calamities (Un. 113-6). John came in the spirit and power of Elijah. For the time, our Lord was of an entirely different spirit.

14 See 17<sup>10-13</sup> Lu. 11<sup>7</sup> Mal. 4<sup>5</sup>.

18-19 Compare Lu. 7<sup>31-35</sup>.

## Matthew 11:7-26

16 The difference between John's ministry and that of our Lord is further evident by the different charges against them. The people were sulky, like little children who will not play at any game, grave or gay. John wailed, yet they would not grieve. The Lord fluted, yet they refused to dance. John was an ascetic, and they charged him with having a demon. Our Lord was the opposite, yet they called Him a glutton and a tippler. They would not be suited. Yet it was the wisdom of God to play these opposites against one another, thus to manifest the incurable stubbornness of the people.

20 The emphatic statement that Tyre and Sidon would have repented if they had been favored like the cities of Galilee makes it quite impossible to doom them to endless destruction without compromising the justice of God, quite apart from His mercy. The unqualified assertion that Sodom would not have been destroyed had it been privileged as Capernaum brings into question God's wisdom and love. Did He stint His favors so that these cities should *not* repent? The answer is that all is according to that deeper expression of His love which wisely provides for its ultimate display. God's justice will be vindicated in adjusting judgment to accord with privilege. In the consummation His love will be revealed in their salvation.

20-24 Compare Lu. 10<sup>13-16</sup>.

23 This is a most instructive illustration of the meaning of the word *unseen*, usually rendered *hell* or *hades*. Sodom had subsided to the unseen even in our Lord's day. And today the very site of Capernaum is uncertain. As a city it has passed beyond the sphere of human perception. The unseen is not confined to the death state, but is applied to invisible spirit powers and vanished cities. It is used here in the same sense as heaven in the preceding sentence.

25-27 Compare Lu. 10<sup>21-24</sup>. See Ps. 8<sup>21</sup> Co. 11<sup>9-27</sup>.

25 Though His ministry seems to be a failure, the Lord recognizes the fact that this is in accord with God's unrevealed purpose. He acquiesces in God's evident delight in hiding the truth from those who were wise and intelligent in the things of this life. He does

not fret because He cannot reach them, because God's work is apparently without the anticipated results, for He has the consciousness that, in the final analysis, it is God Himself Who is operating all for His own purpose and glory. It is not that those who rejected Him were blinded by some act of their own for which God disclaims responsibility. They do not see because God positively hides it from them.

27 See Jn.3<sup>5</sup>17<sup>2</sup>.

28 It is this God-consciousness, this recognition of His hand in all things, and more especially in that which is opposed to His apparent will, which gives His slaves heart's ease and rest in spirit. This is especially needed in days of apostasy. When we see the success of His enemies, the failure of His friends, when His own are enmeshed in the delusions of the last days, shall we *blame* those who must bear this load as they toil? How hard it is for their pride to be involved in failure! How great the temptation to throw off the yoke and insure success by methods of their own! O that they would learn to yoke themselves with Him, to bow humbly beneath the failure that is according to God's underlying purpose! Then they will acquiesce when He blinds, as well as when He blesses. Then the yoke will no longer gall, and the load will float from their aching shoulders. The false thought that failure is not of God and that success is His hall mark, has led His saints to imagine that any flagrant disobedience to His will is fully justified if it only results in apparent success. Let us remember that He has characterized these as days of apostasy, so that it is His will that many should depart from the faith, and, consequently, great success may result in great loss to any slave of His who does not contend lawfully. Our business is to please God by suffering rejection along with Him.

1-8 Compare Mk.2<sup>23</sup>-28Lu.6<sup>1-5</sup>. See Deut. 23<sup>25</sup>.

1-8 One of the most significant points in many of the miracles accomplished by our Lord is the fact that they were done on the sabbath. How else could He indicate the great truth that, when Israel is cured of all her ills, it would introduce that great sabbatism which is left for the people of God? Instead

of stumbling them, it should have proved His Messianic claims. Moreover, the law of the sabbath was not operative in the sanctuary, and He was the real Temple of God.

3 See Lev.24<sup>5-9</sup> 1 Sam.21<sup>1-6</sup>.

5 See Nu.28<sup>9</sup>,10Jn.7<sup>22,23</sup>.

7 See 9<sup>13</sup>Hos.6<sup>6</sup>Mic.6<sup>6-8</sup>.

9-13 Compare Mk.3<sup>1-5</sup>Lu.6<sup>6-10</sup>. See Lu. 13<sup>10-17</sup>14<sup>1-6</sup>Jn.9<sup>16</sup>.

10 Israel is the man with the withered hand. Instead of being punctilious about doing good on the sabbath, they should have been concerned with the fact that they could not work for God on any day. They will not be healed until the millennial rest, during which they will be busy "breaking" the sabbath.

11 See Ex.23<sup>4</sup>,5Deut.22<sup>4</sup>.

14-21 Compare Mk.3<sup>6-12</sup>Lu.6<sup>11,17-19</sup>.

16 Hitherto He wished to be known, but now He enters a new phase of His ministry, in accord with the fact that God had hid His proclamation from those who would have made it effective. Before this His voice was heard in the squares, so that Isaiah's prophecy could not be truly applied to Him then. Now, however, He is given a special token of God's approbation, not because He has succeeded, but because He has been faithful in failure. It is especially precious to appreciate the comforting fact that God preferred Him and delighted in Him when all the signs indicated that His marvelous ministry was almost unheeded. Only a crushed reed here, or a smouldering flax there, were the results of His efforts. Contrite hearts and feeble flickers of faith were all He could show, when His message, humanly speaking, should have aroused the whole nation and made them His ardent disciples.

18 Compare Isa. 42<sup>1-4</sup>.

22-23 Compare Lu. 11<sup>14</sup>.

22 It is a fact that all human ills have come to the race through the interference of outside malignant spirit forces. Satan introduced sin through Adam. He Who is superior to these invading forces is capable of curing all the ills which man is heir to.

24 Compare Mk. 3<sup>22-26</sup>.

25 See 9<sup>4</sup>Jn.2<sup>24</sup>,25Un.2<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> It is usual to associate this chief of the demons with the god of Ekron, called Baalzebub. *Owner* or *Lord* of *Flies* (2 Ki. 12). This the Septuagint renders *Baal miian*, *Baal fly*. But all the Greek texts have a different ending -*boul*. This is supposed to be derived from a Rabbinic word meaning *dung*. But it is not likely that a god of Ekron should be the *chief* of the demons, though doubtless he was one of them (1 Co. 10<sup>20</sup>). There is a Hebrew verb *zabal* (Gen. 30<sup>20</sup>) which means *reside*. It may be that the name of the chief of the demons is OWNER-RESIDENCE, the equivalent of *Master of the House*. Our Lord calls him a householder (10<sup>25</sup>). There is no real reason for identifying him with Satan, but rather, like Apollyon, he seems to be a subordinate, though head of that division of Satan's kingdom which includes the demons.

<sup>29</sup> Compare Mk. 3<sup>27</sup> Lu. 11<sup>21,22</sup>. See Isa. 49<sup>24,53,12</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Compare Lu. 11<sup>23</sup>. See Lu. 9<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>31-32</sup> Compare Mk. 3<sup>28-30</sup> Lu. 12<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> The blasphemy of the Spirit consists in attributing the works of Christ, done by the power of God's Spirit, to demons or unclean spirits. As these works were the means used to produce repentance and pardon, and this was essential for entrance into the kingdom, it is readily seen that pardon is quite impossible in such a case. The time, however, is limited to this eon or the coming eon of the kingdom. Eventually, all mankind will be far more than pardoned. They will be justified (Ro. 5<sup>18</sup>) and reconciled (Col. 1<sup>20</sup>). But this will not take place until a full eon later, when the kingdom is given over to the Father (1 Co. 15<sup>24</sup>).

We cannot commit the sin against the holy Spirit because our salvation is not based on miracles and signs. It follows faith, not sight. And we are not pardoned, but justified (Ro. 3<sup>24,26</sup>). Condemnation is impossible (Ro. 8<sup>1</sup>). Moreover, we are explicitly told that, in the latter eras, some will be withdrawing from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and the teaching of demons. Any spirit manifestation not in perfect accord with the scriptures should be given the most severe tests, lest we be among those who are deceived by them.

<sup>33-37</sup> Compare Lu. 6<sup>43-45</sup>. See Jn. 3<sup>6,7</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> What sign can be given to those who attribute His wonderful works to the agency of the demons? No sign shall be given them. They, instead, will provide themselves with a sign by murdering the Messiah. His death, entombment and resurrection is the only sign He will give them. Briefly, they will have one more opportunity to repent after He has been roused from the dead. This is given them in the Pentecostal era.

<sup>38</sup> Compare Mk. 8<sup>11,12</sup> Jn. 2<sup>18-22</sup>. See 1 Co. 12<sup>22,23</sup>.

<sup>39-40</sup> Compare Lu. 11<sup>29,30</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Twelve times in the four accounts of our Lord's life we read that He would be roused "the third day". When speaking to Romans it is twice "after three days". Here only, quoting from the Hebrew, it is "three days and three nights". The designation of time varies much in all languages. Hebrew chronology always counts the smallest part of a year or a day as a whole. The twelve times repeated testimony of our Lord, besides Peter (Ac. 10<sup>40</sup>), and Paul (1 Co. 15<sup>4</sup>), shows that "the third day" is a literal and this phrase an idiomatic expression.

<sup>40</sup> In Jonah this sea monster is called a large fish. The Greek name is now used as a scientific term for sea mammals, such as the whale. We are not told what species of sea monster it was, nor is there any good reason why we should know. Among the Greeks there was a tradition that it was a shark. There is a species in the Mediterranean some of which are so large that a man could stand upright in their outstretched throat. Men have been found whole in their stomachs. There are marine monsters in the depths of the sea, which are seldom seen. These are so large that they could swallow several men at one time.

It is said that an English seaman, thrown into the water when a gigantic sperm whale capsized the boat, was given up for drowned. But two days later, when the whale was cut up, he was found in the stomach of the sea monster, unconscious, but alive. He recovered completely. In some ways this is more remarkable than Jonah's case, for his sea monster had been specially prepared for his reception.

<sup>41</sup> Compare Lu. 11<sup>32</sup>. See Jonah 3.

<sup>42</sup> Compare Lu. 11<sup>31</sup>. See 1 Ki. 10<sup>2</sup> Chr. 9<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> "The ends of the earth," an expression which does not include the sea, would describe any location on Eurasia or Africa not far from the further coast line.

<sup>43-45</sup> Compare Lu. 11:24-26.

<sup>43</sup> Actual idolatry had no place in Israel. That evil spirit had been cast out since the captivity. They were like the empty house, for the spirit of God had not displaced the unclean spirit. Though untenanted, like the temple on Moriah's mount, they kept to the outward form of cleansing and ceremony. But during the time of the end they will receive the false christ and will worship the miracle-working image, and bring down upon the apostates the judgments of the bowls (Un. 15:5-16:21).

<sup>46-50</sup> Compare Mk. 3:31-35 Lu. 8:19-21. See 13:55 Mk. 6:3 Jn. 2:12-7:3, 5 Ac. 1:14 I Co. 9:5 Ga. 1:19.

<sup>46</sup> This is not intended to show disrespect and disregard for His own family. Rather it is brought up just at this juncture to indicate the change coming over His ministry. He no longer recognizes a merely physical relationship.

<sup>1-9</sup> Compare Mk. 4:1-9 Lu. 8:4-8.

<sup>1</sup> The action is significant, and corresponds with His repudiation of His relatives. He takes Himself outside the artificial Jewish system. Though vast throngs come, He does not proclaim the nearness of the kingdom but speaks so they cannot comprehend, concealing His meaning in parables. His subject is still the kingdom, but He is concerned with its past and future history, not its present proclamation. He utters secrets hitherto unrevealed, which even His own disciples could not understand.

<sup>3-5</sup> See verses 18 to 21.

<sup>3</sup> The removal of the kingdom to a distance in time is indicated by comparing it with the sowing and growing and harvesting of a crop. Had it still been imminent, He would not have called Himself a Sower, but a Reaper, as in the Unveiling, when the kingdom is about to appear (Un. 14:14).

The Lord is Himself the Sower, and the parable gives us the results of His past ministry. It shows us why His proclamation had not swept the whole nation into the kingdom. We must now wait until the sowing is ready for the harvest.

The picture presented is true to the life of the Orient. The unfenced fields were allotted to farmers, and the roads ran right through the grain, so that it was quite impossible to avoid sowing some on the hard ground. There were often outcroppings of the country rock and shallow soil near it, and in many places thorns were so thick that the farmers despaired of eradicating them. As their soil, so the people. It takes the sun and rain of heaven to change the rocks into fertile soil. The heart of the people was still hard. It will take the storms of persecution and the fire of affliction to prepare it for the kingdom of Christ.

<sup>7-8</sup> See verses 22 and 23.

<sup>10-13</sup> Compare Mk. 4:10-13 Lu. 8:9, 10.

<sup>11</sup> It cannot be too strongly emphasized that our Lord's parables were not intended to explain, but to mystify. He veiled His message in figures lest they should understand.

<sup>12</sup> Compare Mk. 4:24, 25 Lu. 8:18.

<sup>12</sup> This somewhat enigmatic statement must be understood in connection with its context. Our Lord's disciples had received spiritual gifts which enabled them to receive more. Those who had not believed on Him had no means of receiving what He was now dispensing, for they had no spiritual discernment. Not only would they lose these spiritual benefits but, as a result of the national apostasy, they would also lose the privileges which they had as the people of God.

<sup>14</sup> This quotation from the sixth chapter of Isaiah is quoted more frequently than any other passage from the prophets. It occurs at the two great crises in the spiritual history of Israel, the rejection of the kingdom ministry of Christ, and the repudiation of its renewal by the holy spirit in Acts (Ac. 23:25-27). It always marks the cessation of the evangel of the kingdom. Henceforth He is not seeking to open their eyes, but to blind them. After Paul's pronouncement of Israel's doom the kingdom proclamation ceased. The history of the kingdom ended. It will not be resumed until the present administration of God's grace, in which the evangel goes direct to the nations apart from Israel's mediacy, is finished. Then once more the evangel will not only go to Israel, but through them to all the nations.

14 Compare Isa. 6<sup>9-10</sup>, Septuagint. See Jn. 12<sup>37-40</sup> Ac. 28<sup>25-27</sup> Ro. 11<sup>7-10</sup> 2 Co. 3<sup>14-16</sup>.

16-17 Compare Lu. 10<sup>23,24</sup>. See 16<sup>17</sup>.

18-23 Compare Mk. 4<sup>14-20</sup> Lu. 8<sup>11-15</sup>.

19 Lack of understanding lays the heart open to the inroads of malignant spirit powers. The chief opposition to our Lord's ministry came from super-human sources. Before He could even enter on His work, Satan tried to turn Him aside. He was continually casting out demons. This satanic opposition continued to the end. Satan sifted Peter and obsessed Judas. Before the kingdom will be established he will be bound (Un. 20<sup>2</sup>). Then no evil spirit will mislead mankind until the close of the thousand years.

20 God's present evangel of pure grace expects nothing from man. It thrives in any soil. One who really receives it is never temporary. It will bear fruit in the midst of stones or thorns, for it expects no sustenance from beneath. This parable has no application whatever to the evangel of today. It refers exclusively to the proclamation of the kingdom by our Lord Himself up to the time when it was spoken. Of the many who had heard Him only one class out of four became His disciples.

24-30 See verses 36-38.

24 This parable is concerned with the future course of the kingdom proclamation before it comes. There is the same Sower as in the previous parable. There is no question of the kind of ground, but the kind of seed. The Sower put in ideal seed. His enemy sowed that which was similar in appearance, but poisonous. Darnel is so like wheat or barley before it heads out that it is practically impossible to separate them. It was customary to weed grain fields, but darnel was too like the good stalks to distinguish them. It is a strong soporific poison, and was winnowed and picked out of the wheat, grain by grain, before being ground up for meal.

The darnel represents the horde of hypocrites who took their place with true disciples. There was one even among the twelve apostles. Their number greatly increased in the later years of the Pentecostal era. They will flourish at the time of the end, and perish in the judgments which usher in the kingdom.

31-32 Compare Mk. 4<sup>30-32</sup> Lu. 13<sup>18,19</sup>. See Dan. 4<sup>10-12</sup>.

31 Mustard, like darnel, is a menace to the grain farmer. It is not a healthful food but a condiment. Its quick growth from a small beginning is in striking contrast to the parable of the Sower. Its sinister import is confirmed by the place it gives to the birds. In the first parable these represent the wicked spirits in their opposition to our Lord's proclamation. Now they actually take their place in the branches. At the time of the end there will be an exceedingly rapid development of the kingdom among the Jews, which will head up in false Babylon, which becomes the cage of every hateful bird (Un. 18<sup>3</sup>), and supports the wicked spirits who once opposed the kingdom proclamation.

33 Compare Lu. 13<sup>20,21</sup>. See Zech. 5<sup>5-11</sup>.

33 Leaven, in scripture, is always a symbol of evil and corruption. The Jews cleanse all leaven out of their houses once a year at the festival of Unleavened Bread (26<sup>17</sup> Ex. 11<sup>15</sup>). This the apostle calls evil and wickedness (1 Co. 5<sup>8</sup>). All types of Christ had to be without leaven (Ex. 23<sup>18</sup> 34<sup>25</sup> Lev. 21<sup>6,17</sup>). The meal was good. But the woman covertly introduces evil, which causes it to expand, and makes it palatable for men. The woman can hardly be any one but that false figure of the end time, great Babylon. The apostate nation will so corrupt the proclamation as to please the unregenerate in Israel. Instead of looking to Messiah to establish His reign and give them a place in it, they do as they did in the days of old, when they leaned on Egypt or Assyria, instead of on Jehovah. At the end time Babylon will be supported in millennial splendor by all the nations of the earth. It is true that the leaven of insincerity and falsehood is working in Christendom today, swelling it into a great world force, palatable to men but abominable in the sight of God, but this parable has reference to the kingdom only. Leaven typifies evil, and evil only, at all times.

34-35 Compare Mk. 4<sup>33-34</sup>.

35 This refers to the disruption of the kingdom from the house of David. This is the subject of the so-called seventy-eighth psalm, from which this quotation is taken.



<sup>37</sup> The history of the kingdom proclamation in Acts and what is predicted in the circumcision epistles and the Unveiling fully bears out our Lord's forecast. There were the seven sons of Sceva (Ac. 19<sup>15</sup>), the wolves in Ephesus (Ac. 20<sup>29</sup>), the rich in James (5<sup>1</sup>), the false prophets of second Peter (2<sup>1</sup>), and those who follow them, those who slip in, according to Jude (4), and many in the Unveiling, such as the false apostles (2<sup>2</sup>), those who are of the synagogue of Satan (2<sup>9</sup>), the Nicolaitans (2<sup>15</sup>), Jezebel (2<sup>20</sup>), and great Babylon (18-19<sup>5</sup>)—all these hypocrites were as darnel in the field, and have been allowed to flourish hitherto. But when the harvest comes the wicked will be severed from among the just and given up to judgment. No such severance shall take place in the body of Christ. Its members are beyond the sphere of condemnation (Ro. 8<sup>1</sup>). There is no excuse for their having fellowship with unbelievers (2 Co. 6<sup>14</sup>). They should be separate. This passage has no bearing on our conduct. It is concerned with the Circumcision alone.

<sup>44</sup> In a country subject to revolutions, invasions, and robbers, it was customary to hide money and valuables in secret cistern-like vaults in the fields. Such are not seldom found by accident, and often cause much excitement. It would be dangerous to dig in another man's field. Hence the buying. Israel is the treasure. The field is the world (see <sup>38</sup>). In order to possess Himself of the treasure, the Son of Mankind gives His all and purchases the world. He has overpaid its price by His blood.

<sup>45</sup> The parable of the pearl is another aspect of the truth revealed by the parable of the treasure hid in the field. The sea is a picture of the nations, among whom Israel is scattered. The dispersion among the nations is the precious pearl sought by the Merchant, Who gave up all His riches to purchase it for Himself. They will be His special treasure in that day.

There is no ground for the popular idea that Christ is the pearl, found by the sinner seeking salvation. He is, indeed precious, but sinners are not seekers. It is always the Saviour Who finds the lost. He is not lost nor hidden.

<sup>47</sup> Here is another aspect of Israel's dispersion among the nations. In the conclusion of this eon—still future—

Israel will be drawn from among all peoples. There will be a separation, such as was indicated in the parable of the darnel, and the bad will be destroyed in the terrible judgments of the seven bowls (Un. 15<sup>5</sup>-16<sup>21</sup>).

53-58 Compare Mk. 6:1-8.

<sup>53</sup> Notwithstanding the treatment He had received when He visited Nazareth before (Lu. 4<sup>15-30</sup>), when they had actually tried to put Him to death, and the fact that His own brethren had declared Him to be mad, He graciously returns to the home of His youth, staying this time as long as He desired, and meeting no open hostility. It may be that He wished to refute the rumors His brethren had spread concerning Him by His presence and by healing their sick. But the Nazarenes found it impossible to put aside their prejudices. How could He, a mere townsman of theirs, amount to anything? They knew all about Him and His family. So it was with the prophets, and continues to this day. No man of God need expect recognition from those with whom he is familiar.

<sup>54</sup> See Jn. 7<sup>16,17</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> See Isa. 49<sup>7</sup> 53<sup>2,3</sup> Ac. 1<sup>14</sup>.

1-5 Compare Mk. 6<sup>14-20</sup> Lu. 9<sup>7-9</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> There are a number of the Herodian family referred to in the Scriptures. This one, usually called Herod Antipas, was one of the sons of Herod the Great (Mt. 2<sup>1</sup> Lu. 1<sup>5</sup>) who had sought to kill our Lord soon after His birth. Two of his half-brothers are also mentioned, Herod Philip I. who had first married Herodias (Mt. 14<sup>3</sup> Mk. 6<sup>17</sup> Lu. 3<sup>19</sup>), and Herod Philip II. (Lu. 3<sup>1</sup>). Archelaus (Mt. 2<sup>22</sup>) was his full brother. Another half-brother, Aristobulus, was the father of Herod, king of Chalcis (Ac. 25<sup>13</sup>), Herod Agrippa I. (Ac. 12<sup>1-23</sup>), and Herodias, whose marriage, first to Herod Philip I., and then to Herod Antipas, was the cause of John the baptist's death. Agrippa II. (Ac. 25<sup>13</sup>) was a son of Agrippa I. Bernice (Ac. 25<sup>13</sup>) and Drusilla (Ac. 24<sup>24</sup>) were his sisters.

Herod the tetrarch, here referred to, was a son of Herod the Great by a Samaritan woman named Malthace. After his father's death the Romans appointed him tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, so that by far the greater part of our Lord's ministry was carried on

in his dominions. His first wife was a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, who made war with him and conquered him because he had repudiated his daughter in order to marry Herodias, his half-brother Philip's wife. This woman brought him to his ruin. She was exceedingly ambitious and induced him to go to the emperor at Rome and seek the title of king. But Herodias' brother, Herod Agrippa I., brought accusations against him, so that Caligula banished him to Gaul, where he seems to have died.

<sup>3</sup> See Lev.18:16,20,21.

<sup>6-12</sup> Compare Mk. 6:21-29.

<sup>13-15</sup> Compare Mk. 6:30-36 Lu. 9:10-12 Jn. 6:1-7.

<sup>13</sup> Herod's insistence that the Lord was John the baptist was not very reassuring, for He was almost continually within Herod's jurisdiction, and nothing could be simpler than to arrest Him and imprison Him, as John the baptist had been. His time had not yet come, so He quietly retires to avoid further publicity. But the throngs follow Him into the wilderness.

<sup>16</sup> Man shall not live by bread alone, but by the words which issue from the mouth of God. However great may be the marvel of providing food for such a multitude in the wilderness, it cannot compare with the miracle of which it was the sign. The kingdom has been rejected. The Lord's path is now a spiritual parallel with the interval between His rejection and His return to reign. His people will need to be sustained in the wilderness, just as Israel of old needed the manna after they had left Egypt and could not enter the land because of unbelief. The kingdom had come very near to them, just as their fathers had come to Kadesh, only to turn back into the wilderness for forty years. Then they needed physical food. Now they need spiritual sustenance. This provision is supplied by means of twelve cakes of bread, five on this occasion, and seven a little later, representing the twelve portions of scripture which have been given the Circumcision during the period which precedes the kingdom. The two fishes suggest that there is a testimony to the sons of Ham and Japhet who are proselytes in the nations.

In these writings there is more than sufficient to sustain the believing Israelites and a considerable surplus for

the nations. It does not, however, make any direct provision for the nations, such as is suggested at the end of Acts (28<sup>28</sup>). We are no longer called upon to eat the left-overs from Israel's feast (Eph. 2<sup>19</sup>). The writings to the Circumcision, represented by the twelve cakes, are not for the nations. The Lord has given us a banquet such as Israel never knew. We have thirteen of Paul's epistles which, if we would only satiate ourselves with them, would keep us from so much as tasting the scraps which they refuse, or trying to purloin what pertains only to them.

<sup>16-21</sup> Compare Mk. 6:37-44 Lu. 9:13-17 Jn. 6:8-13.

<sup>22-23</sup> Compare Mk. 6:45,46 Jn. 6:14,15.

<sup>23</sup> His ascent into the mountain alone, while His disciples are sent into the midst of the sea, is a lovely little likeness of His ascension and session in the heavens while His disciples are left to the mercy of the nations. Not for naught is the word "torment" used here. It may not fit the effect of the billows, but it certainly is a forceful description of the fearful trials which are the portion of His followers during His absence.

<sup>24-27</sup> Compare Mk. 6:47-50 Jn. 6:16-20.

<sup>25</sup> The Romans divided the night into four watches. There is a hint here that the Lord's absence will be prolonged until near morning. For them it will be night until the day of the Lord dawns.

<sup>26</sup> No one will question the actual reality of this miracle who realizes how much greater is the wonder of His control over the turbulent peoples who threaten to swallow up His disciples during His absence in heaven. Some have tried to explain such prodigies on purely natural grounds. Nature is itself a continuous miracle to which we have become accustomed. Even in our present debased condition there are feeble intimations of powers we will possess in resurrection. It is said that consciousness decreases the weight of the body. It is heavier when asleep. It would seem that a sufficiently great increase in its vitality or power would overcome the force of gravitation. This is seen in a much intensified form in His ascension, where He practically became able to walk on air.

<sup>28</sup> Peter here symbolizes the sovereignty of Israel over the turbulent gentiles in the time to come. They are made afraid by the spiritual power of evil, typified by the wind. Peter's cry will be theirs when He reappears in glory. Then all Israel shall be invoking the name of the Lord and shall be saved (Ro.10<sup>13</sup> 11<sup>26</sup>). Then Satan will be bound (Un.20<sup>2</sup>), even as the wind flags. And then the nation as a whole will worship Him as they never have done before.

<sup>32-33</sup> Compare Mk.6<sup>51</sup>Jn.6<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>34-36</sup> Compare Mk. 6<sup>53-56</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> See Lu.6<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> As millennial bliss follows the terrors of the end time, so this lovely scene of abounding blessing succeeds the night of stress and storm. His presence dispels disease. They simply touched the tassel of His robe. This is not merely indicative of the most casual contact or a sign of the strength of their faith. It had a deeper significance, derived from Jehovah's instructions in the law (Nu.15<sup>38-40</sup>). The garment of an Israelite was bordered by a fringe or tassel, in which was a ribbon of blue. The word blue is from the root meaning to *finish*. It was to remind them to do all His precepts. It may well be the sign of His complete obedience, especially of its finish on Golgotha. Contact with the cross is the basis of all blessing.

<sup>1-6</sup> Compare Mk. 7<sup>1-13</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Our Lord came to fulfill the law. When He taught that which seemed to be other than its precepts it was because He was above it. He could make it more searching (5<sup>27-48</sup>). Being the Temple of God, He and all in His presence could profane the sabbath (12<sup>1-8</sup>). Now, however, He is charged with violating the oral precepts which the Rabbis had not only added to the law, but actually placed above the law. In fact, while they rejected His supremacy above Moses, they arrogated it to themselves. Their choice of a test is most unfortunate for them. While they were hypocritically concerned with the ceremonial cleansing of their hands, their mouths were defiling themselves and all about them with thoughts dishonoring to God. The Lord did not take them up on the subject of wash-

ing before meals. He may have thought it a harmless rite, to be complied with or not, according to the finer dictates of courtesy. But He does attack the very idea that a tradition is binding, and that He or His were obliged to conform to any human precept. So He chooses one of their traditions, which was nothing less than an attempt to elude their legal obligations, and exposes their hypocrisy in placing their own precepts above the divine enactments. They called it "a hedge around the law", but it was a dagger thrust at the revealed will of God. It did not guard the law, but explained it away. His law was just and good, their perversions of it were unjust and bad.

The fifth precept was a most salutary provision for both parents and children. It is a sign of the degeneracy of our times that little honor is shown to father or mother. The law included in this the parental control of time or talent. The only way to avoid this was to claim that it was dedicated to God, the very One Who had demanded that it be dedicated to parents! The "corban" or approach offering was an oblation intended to win the favor of God. They thought to bribe Him with the results of their disobedience to His word! The same principle applies to all times. To hearken is better than sacrifice, to attend than the fat of rams (1Sa.15<sup>22</sup>). Let no one suppose that He is pleased with their oblations, whether it be success in service, or even suffering for His sake, if it is not in fullest accord with His will. It is one of the most insidious and deceitful of delusions to imagine that, since His grace bears with such evil, and sends blessing through it, it receives His approval. Let us not take advantage of His grace or presume upon His love. Such is not the leading of His Spirit. Our Lord not only denounces the oblations of disobedient sons, but plainly refutes the teaching that contamination comes from unwashed hands.

<sup>4</sup> See Ex.20<sup>12</sup>21<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>7-9</sup> Compare Mk. 7<sup>8-8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> See Isa.29<sup>13</sup>, Septuagint.

<sup>10-20</sup> Compare Mk. 7<sup>14-23</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> See Isa.9<sup>16</sup>Mal.2<sup>7</sup>,Lu.6<sup>39</sup>.

21 Compare Mk. 7:24-30.

21 The incident of the Canaanitish woman is of surpassing interest to us, for it shows clearly what was the status of the nations in our Lord's ministry. Her very mistakes are instructive. The nations have no part in the Son of David. He is Israel's King. No matter how much she may implore the Son of David, He answers her not a word. Let no one suppose that His heart was not touched or that He did not wish to be gracious. She has come to the wrong door. Yet He will not dismiss her. Finally, He tells why He cannot help. The Son of David, the character she approached, has no commission outside the nation of Israel. An oriental king is considered the father of his people. They are his children. The Canaanitish woman had no claim on His bounty. This is the key to Christ's earthly mission. He was a Servant of the Circumcision, not of the Uncircumcision (Ro. 15<sup>8</sup>). During His ministry the nations did not even have the place they received in the Pentecostal era. Then, after much preparation, the apostles were taught that proselytes, such as Cornelius, could share a little of Israel's spiritual blessings (Ac. 10). Later, at Pisidian Antioch, the door was opened by Paul, to some who were not proselytes (Ac. 13<sup>46,47</sup>). But it was not until the end of the Acts era that the salvation of God is sent directly to the nations (Ac. 28<sup>29</sup>). The latter half of the second chapter of Ephesians (2 11-22), is an elaborate statement showing that, in the present administration of God's grace, the nations are no longer in the inferior position accorded them in Paul's earlier ministry.

Christ is Lord of all (Ac. 10<sup>36</sup>). Under this title even the Canaanitish woman was within His jurisdiction. She worships and calls for help. Yet even thus, she is by no means on an equal footing with the favored nation. Only the scraps are for her. If she will take the place of a cur, she can have a little of the leavings. This is the place we gentiles have in the ministry of Christ. Our position was improved in the succeeding Pentecostal era. But it was not until Paul's imprisonment that we were brought nigh and enter the family of God (Eph. 2<sup>18,19</sup>). Until then we were still guests at Israel's table, if not puppies under it.

29-31 Compare Mk. 7:31-37.

32-39 Compare Mk. 8:1-10.

32 The feeding of the four thousand on this occasion is the complement of His previous miracle, when five thousand were satisfied (14<sup>16</sup>). There are two great lessons to be learned from it which can only be discerned by carefully comparing the two. As a sign, the seven cakes, added to the five, make twelve, which corresponds with the spiritual provision for Israel during their stay in the wilderness or before they enter the kingdom. The five cakes are for Israel in the past, being the first three accounts of our Lord's life, Acts and Hebrews. John's account was probably written later and is for the kingdom itself. The interval between the two miracles indicates the period of Israel's dispersion. The seven cakes are the seven epistles provided for their sustenance at the end of this eon. James, first and second Peter, the three epistles of John, and Jude will be their manna in the time of the end.

The need was much greater on this occasion, for the throng had been three days without food. They were faint and in danger of collapse. These conditions will be repeated in Israel in the time to come. Then the believers will be glad to avail themselves of the Circumcision epistles which meet their needs and minister to their wants.

It is sheer robbery for us to take this provision from God's covenant people. Should we purloin their spiritual provision it will not, indeed, diminish their store, but it will reduce our own enjoyment of the superabounding sufficiency supplied to us in Paul's epistles, for we cannot appreciate our own riches while we filch from them.

1-4 Compare Mk. 8:11-13. See 12:38-40/Lu. 12:54-56/1 Co. 12:2.

1 Blind mouths! What was the feeding of the four thousand but a sign from heaven? But if they cannot read a sign from above, He will see that they provide themselves with a sign from beneath. Undoubtedly these very Pharisees and Sadducees were instrumental in putting Him into the heart of the earth. His death and burial and resurrection constituted the great sign to the unbelieving nation. Jonah was a type of their disobedience as well as of His passage through death and of blessing to the nations through Israel.

5-12 Compare Mk. 8:14-21.

<sup>6</sup> Leaven stands for corrupt doctrine (12). Our Lord was concerned that the disciples should not be tainted by digesting the teaching of His enemies. But all that they were concerned about was the possible lack of a meal! And this just after seeing Him feed such a multitude! Even if they had no bread, a little calculation in highest mathematics would show them how well provided they were with Him on board. Leaving out of our reckoning the women and children, our Lord satisfied each man of the first five thousand with one-thousandth part of a cake, with a remainder of twelve packed panniers (14<sup>20</sup>). Now He distributes seven cakes among four thousand. Each man would get nearly two-thousandths, or twice as much as on the former occasion. Surely we may expect a much larger surplus! Not so. There are only seven hampers, probably not half as much as before! The more He had to work with, the less there is left! The less He had, the greater the surplus! If we develop these equations to their limits, there would have been no left-overs if they had bought the bread. But, on the other hand, no one can limit the amount of food remaining, if they had not found a single crumb for Him to bless! This is a form of infinitesimal calculus which our mathematicians cannot grasp, yet is well within the range of an infant in the school of God. God needs our lack to display the plenitude of His provision.

<sup>6</sup> See Lu.12:Ac.23<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>9-10</sup> See 14:17-21; 15:34-38.

<sup>13-20</sup> Compare Mk.8:27-30; Lu.9:18-21.

<sup>14</sup> See 14:1,2; Lu.9:7-9.

<sup>16</sup> See Jn.6:9; 1 Jn.4:15.

<sup>17</sup> See 11:25-27; Ga.1:15,16.

<sup>17</sup> We have come to the climax of our Lord's proclamation of the kingdom. The people know Him not. Only a few, led by Peter, recognize Israel's Messiah. These are the new ecclesia, called out from the nation, and separated from them by loyalty to Him. Our Lord's ministry commenced with the descent of the spirit in form as a dove. Peter is inaugurated into his new office by being named the "Son of a Dove". Then our Lord plays on the meaning of "Peter," which is "rock." As such this new ecclesia would be

built on him. The forms *Petros* and *petra* differ only in gender. In the new Jerusalem the twelve will be associated with him in the foundation (Un. 21:14). But he alone is the foundation in this ecclesia. He took this place in the Pentecostal era. This is the same ecclesia which will pass through the terrors of the end time, for whom Peter's epistles are especially intended. Then the great dragon and his hosts will not prevail against this ecclesia. Peter used the keys on the day of Pentecost to open the kingdom to Israel. From Peter's confession forward the doors into the kingdom were shut and the Lord no longer proclaimed it. As He would not be present when they were to be opened again, He gave Peter the keys. Peter's dealings with Ananias and Sapphira show the power he possessed. None of this has any connection with the present ecclesia, the body of Christ. We are not built on Peter. None of his teaching is for us. We are associated with Paul. Peter's keys would not be any service to us, for we do not enter that kingdom. Before the powers of the unseen hurl themselves against that ecclesia, we will be safely at home with our Lord (1 Th. 4:17).

<sup>20</sup> The proclamation of the kingdom is definitely postponed, to be taken up again by Peter on the day of Pentecost.

<sup>21-28</sup> Compare Mk.8:31-38; Lu.9:27.

<sup>22</sup> Peter was doubtless elated at his wonderful honors, but his spiritual endowment had not yet enabled him to sympathize in his Lord's sufferings. Indeed, he would not hear of them. Herein he was imitating the very tactics of Satan, who proposed to give Christ the kingdom without the suffering. Hence Peter is called a satan, which is Hebrew for adversary.

Our Lord now proclaims the evangel of suffering. Those who shirk—these will save their souls in the meantime, but lose them in the kingdom. Those who suffer—these will reign. There is much in common between the interval reaching from our Lord's rejection to His crucifixion and the present administration. In both the kingdom proclamation gives place to the evangel of His sufferings. In both service is associated with suffering and rejection with reigning. It is never said that the successful servant will reign, but, if we are enduring, we shall also be reigning together (2 Ti. 2:12).

<sup>28</sup> See 2 Pt. 1:16-18.

<sup>28</sup> This prediction was fulfilled about a week later when He took His most intimate disciples with Him and they saw His power and presence and were spectators of His magnificence (2 Pt. 1:16). It is fitting that, at this juncture, there should be some plain intimation of the postponement of the kingdom. In the record the promise is immediately followed by its fulfillment, but there is a week's delay. Another cycle must run its course before the proper conditions reappear which precede the kingdom.

<sup>1-9</sup> Compare Mk.9:2-10Lu.9:28-36.

<sup>1</sup> This was not merely a transfiguration but a transformation. Satan is, at present, transfigured into a messenger of light (2 Co. 11:14). We should be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Ro. 12:2). Transfiguration deals with the temporary fashion. Transformation is the permanent appearance. The Lord's flesh was a veil or curtain, which hid His innate splendor. On the mount, the glory shone out so that it became visible to mortal eyes.

<sup>3</sup> The mystery concerning Moses' body and the translation of Elijah explains their presence here. While this is a glorious kingdom scene, it is also a preparation for the "exodus" which He was about to complete at Jerusalem (Lu. 9:31). The scene was glory but the theme was shame. So we do not see David on the holy mountain, but Moses, the great mediator, who led the exodus out of Egypt, and who wrote so much concerning His sacrifice, and we see Elijah, the premier prophet, who must come ere the kingdom is an accomplished fact. These men sympathized with the sufferings which were before Him, but Peter has not yet learned the lesson. He wished to make this a permanent display and thus avoid the cross. But he foolishly places Moses and Elijah in the same class with our Lord. Just as Israel's unbelief dispelled the hope of the kingdom, so now his words draw down a cloud and the glory vanishes.

<sup>5</sup> See Mk.1:12 Pt.1:16-18Isa.42:1.

<sup>9</sup> Even during our Lord's ministry the kingdom could not be proclaimed because He had been rejected. He has once more been rejected by the nation, as recorded in the book of Acts, hence the kingdom proclamation is once more in abeyance.

<sup>10</sup> Though John the baptist was not Elijah, who will probably be one of the two witnesses at the time of the end (Un. 11:3-12), he came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Lu. 1:17), and could have performed his mission if the people had been ready to receive him.

<sup>11</sup> See Lu.1:16,17Ac.3:21.

<sup>12-13</sup> See 14:3-1011:14.

<sup>12</sup> John the baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, but without his mighty deeds. He did not call down fire on his enemies nor lock heaven as Elijah did (1 Ki. 17:1) and as he will do again when he reappears as one of the two witnesses (Un. 11:6). The prophetic testimony closes with the prediction that he must reappear "before the great and fearful day of Jehovah comes" (Mal.4:5).

<sup>14-18</sup> Compare Mk.9:14-27Lu.9:37-42.

<sup>16</sup> Intimations abound in this period of our Lord's ministry which point to a temporary failure of the kingdom testimony. When the disciples were left alone with epileptic Israel, in the Pentecostal era, they found it impossible to cure them, for lack of faith. The cure will not be effected until His return. If they had had a modicum of faith they could readily have removed the mountain of Roman supremacy far from them and put in its place the mountain of Jehovah. All the future fortunes of the kingdom were known to God, and, in His inimitable way, He is giving us a foreview of its history in the vale of unbelief, as well as a glimpse of its glory on the mountain top. These hidden hints, conveyed by His acts as well as by His words, are full of delightful food for reflection, and glorify the failures that follow.

<sup>19-21</sup> Compare Mk.9:28,29.

<sup>20</sup> See 21:21Lu.17:5,61 Co.12:913:2.

<sup>22-23</sup> Compare Mk.9:30-32Lu.9:43-45.

<sup>22</sup> The gloomy shadow of the cross lies athwart the pathway of our Lord throughout the second period of His ministry. More than that, His disciples were blind to it. As the Jews did not understand or accept Him as their King, so now His disciples refuse to entertain the revelation of Himself as their Priest and Sacrifice. So today His own saints turn from Him as the Saviour and seek to press His kingdom, which is in abeyance.

<sup>24</sup> See Ex.30<sup>11-16</sup>38<sup>25,26</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> According to the law every one who was numbered in Israel, being over twenty years of age, paid half a shekel to shelter his soul (Ex.30<sup>12-14</sup>). It was used for the temple service, and was known as the temple tribute. This must not be confused with the tribute paid to Caesar. There never was any question as to its payment by a patriotic Jew, until after the destruction of Jerusalem, when it was sent to Rome. The question is peculiarly appropriate at this time. It certainly was not incumbent on the Lord to support the empty forms of an obsolete sacrificial system, when He Himself was the true Temple of God and the real Sacrifice. He could justly demand the tribute, but give it, never. Peter has not yet learned the great truth of His coming sacrifice or he would not have consented so readily to pay such a tribute. Yet, while the Lord does not pay it from the funds, for the sake of His enemies He condescends to submit to a law which was far beneath Him. But, in doing so, He gives a little inkling of how the temple ought to be supported and how it will be upheld in the coming eon. The sea represents the gentiles. In that day the riches of the nations will flow to Jerusalem (Isa.49<sup>22</sup> 60<sup>5,11</sup>,16<sup>616</sup>), and then they will come to the sacred festival of tabernacles each year (Zech.14<sup>16-19</sup>). The sons of the kingdom will be free from the payment of tribute or poll tax. They will be ransomed, not with corruptible silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ (1 Pt.1<sup>18</sup>). So we see that the miracle was not only a marvel of practical power (for who else could catch a fish with exactly the proper amount in its mouth?), but is an even more marvelous sign, indicating the fiscal policy of the great King.

<sup>1-6</sup> Compare Mk.9<sup>33-37</sup>,42 Lu.9<sup>46-48</sup>22<sup>24-26</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> It seems very strange and sad that the disciples should choose such a time to inquire about their own greatness. He was trying to engage their hearts with His humiliation. They were sorry when He spoke of it, but His words did not sink in. Little did they dream that the only path to true greatness lay through these very sufferings.

<sup>6</sup> Compare Lu.17<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> See Mk.10<sup>14</sup>,15<sup>1</sup> Pt.2<sup>2</sup>Ps.131<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Compare Lu.17<sup>1</sup> Co.11<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> The application of these sayings apart from their context can only lead to confusion. The Lord is speaking of a place in the millennial kingdom. There will be much to hinder entrance there, hence He impresses on them the need of thrusting aside everything which would interfere. If anything done by the hand is in the way, it should be abandoned. If their foot is leading them astray, the path should not be longer pursued. If their perception is imperiling the prospect of eonian life, it should be repudiated.

<sup>8-9</sup> Compare Mk.9<sup>43-48</sup>. See 529,30.

<sup>9</sup> Gehenna, just below the city of Jerusalem, where the city of offal was incinerated, will receive the bodies of criminals in the kingdom (Isa.66<sup>24</sup>).

<sup>10</sup> Such a ministry of messengers is never hinted at outside the favored nation, Israel, in its physical standing, is the only nation, as such, which may claim angelic ministration.

<sup>12</sup> See Lu.15<sup>3-7</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> This is a beautiful picture of Israel at the time, and of the work in which He was now engaged. Let us not think that the ninety-nine lay safely in the fold. He left them out on the mountains, subject to the storms and to the attacks of wild beasts. Even thus had He left the nation while He went after the sheep which had strayed. To find it, He too must go into the dark ravine of death, where He went on Golgotha. Thus it was that He found the sheep which had gone astray. The rest of the self-righteous nation, who thought they were safe without Him, give Him no joy. But His bewildered, sin-sick disciples, with all their waywardness, are the joy and rejoicing of His heart. When the nations appear in the judgment which takes place at the commencement of the kingdom, they are called kids, in *contrast* to Israel. The nations are never known as sheep. Nothing in this illustration corresponds with God's present work of grace. The evangel of today is for all. None are left on the mountains. The parable is perfect only in its proper place.

<sup>15</sup> Compare Lu.17<sup>3</sup>. See Lev.19<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Our instructions, in such a case, are found in the latter parts of Paul's epistles (Gal.6<sup>1</sup>). There is no need to go

to the writings intended for the Circumcision under circumstances entirely foreign to us. It can only lead to confusion. This course of procedure is clearly confined to one nation, for there is no point to the punishment should we be treated as "one of the nations", or a gentile, for such we are. Neither is it unpatriotic or criminal to be classed among tax collectors. The ecclesia here spoken of was composed of His kingdom disciples who had been called out of the nation of Israel. They were just as prejudiced against the gentiles as the other Jews. And they were even more antagonistic to tribute collectors, though Matthew himself had been one.

<sup>16</sup> See Deut.19<sup>15</sup>Jn.8<sup>17</sup> 2Co.3<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> See 16<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> The Lord continues in the same vein. If we should attempt to apply these privileges and promises now it would only bring reproach on His name and His word. Our actions are not ratified in heaven. Two or three may solemnly agree in their request, yet now, in this secret administration of God's grace, of which our Lord breathed not a single syllable, and for which He gave no instructions, we sink our own requests and agreements in a profound appreciation of the will of God and acquiescence in the ways of God.

<sup>21-22</sup> Compare Lu. 17<sup>4</sup>. See 6<sup>14,15</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> A more harmonious note is struck in our Lord's answer to Peter. Pardon, or forgiveness, is extended almost to the beginnings of grace. Singularly, the verb, *pardon* or *forgive*, does not even occur in Paul's epistles except as a quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures (Ro. 4<sup>7</sup>). A term is used which goes beyond the seventy times seven of this passage. We are to *deal graciously* with one another *even as God, in Christ, deals graciously* with us (Eph. 4<sup>32</sup>Col.3<sup>13</sup>). There are no limits to such grace.

<sup>33</sup> The parable of the ten thousand talent debtor is a most graphic illustration of the true meaning of pardon or forgiveness. Though so great a debt was remitted, the pardon was afterwards recalled. The permanence of pardon depends on the conduct of the one receiving it. It may be withdrawn. Our "pardon" of sins is in the kingdom of the Son of His love.

We are justified or vindicated or acquitted, in our judicial standing, for there is no charge against us. God, as Judge, has cleared us of guilt by the blood of Christ (Ro. 3<sup>24</sup>). A judge cannot pardon. That is the prerogative of a governor or king. Only when a kingdom is in view can the pardon of sins be proclaimed.

Justification puts us beyond the sphere of condemnation. It is based entirely on the blood of Christ, is received by faith, apart from works, in order that it may accord with grace (Ro.8<sup>14,16</sup>). Pardon leads to probation. Unbecoming conduct causes it to be withdrawn. God cancelled it in every case where it was not extended to others.

Those who were pardoned in the Pentecostal era are the ten thousand talent debtor. They had crucified Christ, the Lord of glory, and were under incalculable obligations to God. Nevertheless, out of the compassion of His heart He pardoned their sins, as Peter proclaimed at Pentecost (Ac.2<sup>38</sup>). The nations, who had none of the light and privilege which was Israel's special portion, did not owe nearly so much. They are the debtor who owed only one hundred denarii. But the pardoned believers in Israel had no thought of sharing the mercy they had received with the despised aliens. It took much persuasion before Peter would go to Cornelius, a convert who was already a proselyte to Judaism (Ac. 10). And when he did he found his brethren most antagonistic to the very thought (Ac. 11<sup>3</sup>). But they are far more antagonistic to Paul's ministry among the nations. At his final appearance in Jerusalem these pardoned believers sought to stone him for the very mention of the name of the gentiles. Paul in his speech to them gets as far as the word "nations" (Ac. 22<sup>21</sup>), and they refuse to listen further. Consequently their pardon is revoked. It is important to note that this does not apply to the unbelieving part of the nation, for they had not been pardoned. It was true only of those who had "believed". Pardon is probational because it is based on behaviour. Justification is irrevocable because it is based on the blood of Christ, which is ever precious and potent.

<sup>35</sup> See 6<sup>12-16</sup>Ja.2<sup>13</sup>.

1-2 Compare Mk.10<sup>1</sup> Jn.10<sup>40-42</sup>.



3-12 Compare Mk. 10:2-12.

4 Compare Gen. 1:27. See Mal. 2:15.

4 Man was originally bi-sexual. Adam had both male and female functions (Gen. 1:27). Before the woman was taken out of Adam, the sexes were actually one flesh. Marriage is the reverse of this. The woman was not formed from a "rib". The Hebrew word is nowhere else so rendered. It is used of the chambers in the temple building (1 Ki. 6:5), and denotes an angular vault. Hence the woman is the complement of the man, and both together constitute the human unit. One is incomplete without the other. The physical union, moreover, is not a mere legal agreement, but actual oneness of flesh, in which each is merged in the other. It is not the work of man merely, but of God. It is contrary to nature and to nature's God to destroy this unity. Originally no separation was contemplated. It is a concession to the hardness of their hearts. Only the infraction and destruction of the physical unity by union with another is given by our Lord as a just cause of separation (9), for, in that case, the unit is already marred beyond repair, in the offending party. It is in fullest harmony with the present grace, in which physical unity has no standing, that even the cause allowed by our Lord is not a valid basis for separation. This corresponds with the overflowing grace in which we are submerged. The only cause now given is where the unbelieving husband or wife gets a divorce. Then the believer is free (1 Co. 7:15). The believer today is to act in perfect grace even to the acknowledgment of a wrongful separation.

5 See Gen. 2:24; 1 Co. 6:16; Eph. 5:31.

7 See 5:31, 32; Deut. 24:1.

9 Compare Lu. 16:18; 1 Co. 7:10, 11.

12 As we have no standing in flesh, such matters are not within our sphere. They do not affect our place in Christ. Not so with the kingdom. We read of a male son who will shepherd the nations in that day (Un. 12:5), and of the hundred and forty-four thousand who are celibates (Un. 14:4) out of the twelve tribes (Un. 7:3). It is more than likely that these are those to whom the special saying of which He spoke has been given.

13-15 Compare Mk. 10:13-16; Lu. 18:15-17.

14 See 18:3.

16-22 Compare Mk. 10:17-22; Lu. 18:18-23.

16 See Lu. 10:27.

16 When Israel entered the land, each one received an allotment sufficient for a living. This could not be sold outright. It could only be mortgaged till the next jubilee. With some exceptions, no one could acquire much land without encroaching on the allotments of others. That is why it is so difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom. He must of necessity lose his riches and enter poor. That is the position of this rich youth. He had great *acquisitions*. This was land which God had allotted to others for their living, but which they had lost through poverty. His superfluous wealth meant distress for them. He claimed to keep the law, and no doubt he had never murdered or robbed any one, for he had no provocation to commit flagrant offenses. He even maintained that he loved his associates as himself! The Lord very simply suggests that he act in accordance with his profession. He did not ask him to give up his own means of livelihood. He could never expect him to relinquish his own allotment, for that was given by God. All He desired was that he should return to others their allotments. This is what God's law does at the jubilee. This is what will occur when the kingdom is established. The believing disciples in the Pentecostal era, recognizing the impossibility of carrying possessions and acquisitions, over and above their inherited allotments, into the kingdom, sold all such property and put the proceeds into the common fund (Ac. 2:45). None of these acts have any bearing on present conduct, for our allotment is among the celestials. The Israelite might possibly carry his allotment into the kingdom, but we can take nothing of earth into the realms above. The shrewdest saint is the one who exchanges his terrestrial real estate for celestial currency before it all is taken from him. He knows that his acquisitions on earth will all be forfeited and decrease his balance in the celestial bank.

18 Compare Ex. 20:12-16.

19 See Lev. 19:18.

21-22 See 6:19-21; Ac. 2:45; 1 Ti. 6:17-19.

23-26 Compare Mk. 10:23-27; Lu. 18:24-27.

23 See 13:22.

<sup>23</sup> As the political constitution of the Jewish commonwealth rendered it practically impossible to acquire great possessions without oppressing others, riches were a hindrance and are largely lost in the readjustments of that day. No rich man, as such, will enter.

<sup>26</sup> See Jer.32<sup>17</sup> Lu.13<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>27-30</sup> Compare Mk.10<sup>28-31</sup> Lu.18<sup>28-30</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> See 4<sup>18</sup> Lu.5<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, those sons of that kingdom who lose all, even the enjoyment of their own allotment for the time, will find an overflowing recompense in kind, in the kingdom, not only for the brief space of their mortal life, but for the whole of the coming eon. The apostles, who suffered most, will gain most. The government of the nation will be in their hands. This explains in part why there must be just twelve apostles, one for each tribe. The other nations will come under the jurisdiction of the male son (Un.12<sup>5</sup>), a company out of Israel distinct from the twelve. It will be seen that Paul has no place in the government of that kingdom. He and those connected with his ministry, have a celestial destiny and will judge messengers (Eph.1<sup>3</sup> 1Co.6<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>28</sup> See 20<sup>21</sup> Lu.22<sup>28-30</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> See 20<sup>16</sup> Lu.13<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Many of the explanations of this parable ignore the fact that it illustrates the kingdom of the heavens, and is not at all intended to be applied to our service for God. If so applied, it can hardly encourage aught but idleness in the hope that a little labor at the end of life will bring an equal, if not greater, reward than a long career of suffering service. The vineyard is Israel. Those who agree for a denarius a day were under law and got what was their due. The others were recipients of various degrees of grace. The third hour workers were under promise. Though they made no contract, yet they received more than they had a right to expect, because they had mixed their work with a little confidence in the householder. In the sixth and ninth hour we have the same circumstances, but less deserts. The eleventh hour workers do not seem to have had even a promise on which to base their expectations. They trusted the householder completely, and had

very little of their own works to offer him.

At this point we must insert another class, who do not appear in the parable, for the very good reason that they do nothing at all and are not associated with the kingdom. So far as salvation goes, our works have no part in it. We are the *twelfth* hour "laborers", who have done *nothing* (Ro. 4<sup>5</sup>), yet receive *much more* than those who toil under law. This is because we do not depend on our own efforts whatever, but upon the favor of the great Householder. We were lower than the last in the parable, and have become higher than the first. Such is the nature of grace. May we never seek to make a bargain with God! Let us work without a contract or any assurances, but rest wholly on the innate graciousness which He delights to display when His creatures give Him occasion.

Even in the kingdom, it is not the amount of work which determines the reward, but the amount of faith which is blended with it (Heb. 4<sup>2</sup>). Since those who worked the full day are displeased with His goodness, and have a wicked eye, and are last, we may well believe that they will have no part in the kingdom. They are not of faith but of law works. They stumble on the the Stumbling Stone (Ro. 9<sup>32,33</sup>):

Lo! I am laying in Zion a Stumbling  
Stone and a Snare Rock,  
And the one believing on Him will not  
be disgraced.

<sup>8</sup> See Lev. 19<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> See 19<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>17-19</sup> Compare Mk.10<sup>32-34</sup> Lu.18<sup>31-34</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Though the Lord is blinding the eyes of the people by parables, He is seeking to open the understanding of His disciples and to engage their hearts with His great sacrifice. It seems strange that they, who had been accustomed to the thought of blood propitiation all their lives, could not entertain His teaching concerning the great Antitype of all their offerings. He did not perplex them with parables, but spoke to them plainly and persistently, and still they do not seem to have grasped His meaning until all He foretold had occurred, and He was roused from among the dead.

<sup>20-28</sup> Compare Mk. 10<sup>35-45</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> See 4<sup>21</sup>.

20 James and John were the sons of Zebedee (Mk. 10<sup>35</sup>). Our Lord called them "sons of thunder" (Mk. 3<sup>17</sup>), to indicate their tempestuous and violent disposition. The gentleness and love of John's writings are not the reflection of his character, but of the restraint of the inspiring Spirit. They certainly were the most ambitious and selfish of all the apostles. The request of their mother shows how little fellowship they had with His downward path to the shame and humiliation of the cross. They could not comprehend that this was the only path to glory. Only those who drink His cup can share His honors. So He grants them the boon of a sip of His sorrow. James was the first to follow his Lord. Herod put him to death by the sword (Ac. 12<sup>1</sup>). But John seems to have lived longer.

21-23 See 19<sup>28</sup>26<sup>39-42</sup>Lu.12<sup>50</sup>Ac.12<sup>2</sup>.

24 It is evident from the resentment of the rest that they also coveted the highest place, even if they could not follow Him to the lowest. So He gives them a sorely needed lesson on the true path to greatness. It consists in service, servility, and suffering, the very opposite of the course they were accustomed to associate with human honors. His own example was their cue. Only those who suffer are qualified to reign. The greatness of His glories finds its source in His service as a slave, and the sorrows of His soul, of which He spoke to them in vain.

25 See Lu.22<sup>24-27</sup>.

26 See 23<sup>11</sup>Mk.9<sup>35</sup>1 Pt.5<sup>3</sup>.

27 See 18<sup>4</sup>.

28 See Jn.13<sup>4</sup>11<sup>51</sup>,52 14<sup>5</sup> Phil2<sup>5-7</sup> Isa.53<sup>10-12</sup>.

29-31 Compare Mk.10<sup>46-48</sup>Lu.18<sup>35-39</sup>. See 9<sup>27-31</sup>.

32-34 Compare Mk.10<sup>49-52</sup>Lu.18<sup>40-43</sup>.

29 The restoration of two blind men was in itself a marvelous manifestation of His messiahship, but we must not miss the deeper current of thought which lies beneath. He was going out of Jericho, the city of the curse. Does this not speak of His resurrection, the exit from the curse of the cross? Two is the number of testimony. He sent the seventy-two in pairs. He was accompanied on His journey by His apostles, who were to testify concerning Him, but they were blind! They could not see the great central sight of all

testimony, the cross of Christ. Hence they could not follow Him in spirit, though they accompanied Him in flesh. When shall their blindness be removed? When He emerges from the curse. And so it was. Not till then did He open up their mind to understand the Scriptures (Lu. 24<sup>45</sup>).

1-9 Compare Mk.11<sup>1-10</sup>Lu.19<sup>28-44</sup>.

1 The animals on which our Lord was supported on His presentation to Israel were representative of the ransomed. The firstlings had to be ransomed with a lamb (Ex.13<sup>13</sup>). Thus the whole scene was a typical picture of spiritual truth. The ransomed had been bound, but He has them loosed and brought to own His sovereignty. Only on this occasion does He exercise His prerogative as King and commandeer a mount for His royal entry. He will come some day on a white horse (Un.19<sup>11</sup>), in might and majesty, and enforce His claims with a gory sword. But not so now. Only the lowly beasts of burden bear Him. Only His own support Him. They offer Him the humble honors and lowly loyalty of their station. Their garments pave His path. Their leafy offerings carpet the royal roadway. Their acclamations proclaim Him King. But what a feeble few they are! The citizens of His capital do not even recognize their Sovereign! They ask "Who is this?" And the best answer they could get was "This is the prophet." They should have said "This is Christ, the King, the Son of God!"

This is the day which Daniel predicted. Sixty-nine heptads had passed by, and the scribes, at least, should have known that Prince Messiah would present Himself to the people on that day (Dan. 9<sup>25</sup>). But they did not expect Him or prepare for Him, so He leaves them until sore affliction shall have taught the nation to say "Blessed is He Who is coming in the name of the Lord." This is the secret of Israel's present plight. Through discipline they are being prepared for their Messiah. Their sorest trials are yet to come.

4-5 Compare Jn. 12<sup>12-19</sup>.

5 See Zech. 9<sup>9</sup>.

8 See Lev. 23<sup>40</sup>.

9 Compare Ps. 118<sup>25,26</sup>.

10 Compare Mk. 11<sup>11</sup>.

12-17 Compare Mk.11:15-19 Lu.19:45-48. See Jn.2:13-17.

12 His first act as King was to cleanse the temple of idolatry, for covetousness is nothing less (Col.3<sup>5</sup>). The temple tax, or double drachma (17<sup>24</sup>) had to be paid by even the poorest of the people. Collectors were in each city and in the sanctuary. They began a few weeks before the Passover. The brokers made change at a profit to themselves. They were in the court of the nations, or gentiles, which was added by Herod outside the sanctuary proper. In this, proselytes of other nations might approach with gifts and worship and prayer. It was never intended for a merchant's store (Jn. 2:16), or a broker's bank. It was a place for God to give, not for man to rob.

The two cleansings of the sanctuary are typical of the two appearances of Christ. The first (Jn. 2:13-22), was priestly in its nature, and is connected with His death and resurrection (Jn. 2:19). It is found only in John's account. The second follows His presentation as Messiah.

The sullen, yet silent submission of these robbers is mute evidence of the moral majesty and might with which He did this deed. Violent passion on His part would have been met by physical force, and caused His undoing. It was the righteous wrath of the Shekinah glory overawing these idolaters which made them flee from the sublime Presence.

13 See Isa.56 Jer.7:11.

14 Having cleansed the sacred precincts, He puts them to their proper use by restoring blind eyes and healing lame legs, so that they can behold the holiness of God and walk in His ways.

15 The chief priests and scribes, however, are not healed. They are too blind to see Him and too lame to keep from stumbling. The little children put them to shame.

16 Compare Psa. 82, Septuagint. See Jn. 12:17-19.

18-19 Compare Mk. 11:12-14.

19 The fig, the olive, and the vine present varied views of the kingdom. Perhaps we should include the bramble also, as Jotham did in his parable (Jud. 9:8-15). The bramble is that false flare of authority exercised by great Babylon, which has a kingdom over the kings of the earth (Un. 17:18). The

vine speaks of that which cheers the heart of God and man. Then will be joy. The olive speaks of light. The fig brings before us its goodness and sweetness. It is national in its scope, and is in contrast with Rome, represented by the wild fig tree (Lu. 17<sup>6</sup>).

Israel's doom is sealed. It is like a fig tree with leaves but no fruit. The fig tree forms some of its fruit before its leaves, unless it is barren. This fig tree had evidently anticipated the season, and put forth its leaves very early. So were Israel's national pretensions. The Lord's first coming was premature. They made a beautiful show of national righteousness, but there was no genuine reality to their claims. The doom of the fig tree is the doom of the nation. It was withered. But today its branch is tender and it is trying to put forth leaves. In the kingdom it will bear an abundance of luscious fruit.

20-21 Compare Mk. 11:20-26.

21 See 17<sup>20</sup> Lu.17<sup>6</sup> Ja.1:1 Co.13<sup>2</sup>.

21 Faith is not confidence in the fulfillment of our prayers, but of God's word. He had promised that the mountain of gentile supremacy should be removed from the midst of Israel. Had they believed *Him*, it should have occurred. Faith can move no mountains that God has not promised to move. It is His pleasure to accomplish far greater feats in fellowship with the faith of His saints.

22 See 7<sup>7</sup> Ja.5:1 Jn.3:25 14.

23-27 Compare Mk.11:27-33 Lu.20:1-8.

23 The chief priests and elders imagined that they were the supreme spiritual authority in Israel. They should have been. When they challenged Him to present His credentials, He exposes theirs by asking a simple question. Had their authority been from above they would have believed John the baptist. That it was from beneath is clear from their fawning at the feet of the populace. The high priest should have been the eldest of the line of Aaron, tracing his priestly prerogatives back to the law. Instead he was appointed by political parties and Roman procurators.

26 See 14<sup>5</sup> Mk.6:20.

28 This parable was for the priests and elders. They made the greatest protestation of obeying the will of God, but did not do it. The sinners who made no

profession, whom they despised, actually obeyed God's precept. By His parable He makes the leaders pronounce their own condemnation.

<sup>31</sup> See Lu. 7<sup>29,30</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> See 3<sup>1</sup> Lu. 3<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> The Lord now proceeds to show them His authority and to expose their abuse of the privileges entrusted to them. They were mere tenants of God's vineyard; He was the Owner's Son. Their predecessors had claimed such authority as they were arrogating to themselves. That is why the prophets were persecuted. These men and almost all of the rulers in Israel, whether kings or priests, chiefs or scribes, sought to use the nation for their own profit and not for the glory of God. Had they been faithful, no prophets would have been sent to them. They would have delivered to the Owner of the vineyard the joy and cheer which were His by right. Because they did not do this, because the priesthood was apostate and the rulers rebellious, He raised up men of God to remind them of their obligations to Himself. Israel boasted in Elijah and all the prophets, which were the badge of their shame. Moreover, their treatment of the prophets confirmed their apostate condition, for none of them escaped persecution at their hands.

But by far the most memorable part of the parable is the prediction of the rejection of His authority and His subsequent murder at their hands. That it was possible for them to proceed in their program of putting Him to death after He had given them this preview of their appalling crime proves the utter depravity of the priesthood, the hopeless immorality of religion when its light has become darkness, and its life turned to death.

<sup>33-41</sup> Compare Mk. 12<sup>1-9</sup> Lu. 20<sup>9-16</sup>. See Ps. 80<sup>8-16</sup> S.S. 8<sup>11,12</sup> Isa. 51<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> See 5<sup>12</sup> 23<sup>37</sup> 2 Chr. 24<sup>18-21</sup> 36<sup>15-17</sup> Neh. 9<sup>26</sup> Ac. 7<sup>52</sup> Th. 2<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> See 26<sup>50</sup> Ac. 2<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> See Lu. 21<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> As before, they pronounce their own doom. In the kingdom their rule will be replaced by the sway of the twelve apostles under the Priest-King Whose authority they had dared to question. Then the Lord will enjoy the fruit of His vineyard.

<sup>42-46</sup> Compare Mk. 12<sup>10-12</sup> Lu. 20<sup>17-19</sup>. See Ps. 118<sup>22,23</sup> Ac. 4<sup>11</sup> 1 Pt. 2<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> Not long after this these same chief priests and those with them question Peter's authority. He confirms the word here spoken by our Lord. "If *we* today are being examined as to the benefaction to the infirm man, by what *he* has been saved, let it be known to you all and to the entire people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, Whom *you* crucify, Whom God rouses from among the dead, by this One, this man stands by before you sound. This is the Stone that is being scorned by you builders, which is becoming the Head of the corner" (Ac. 4<sup>9-11</sup>). Yet even this double witness fails to move their hard hearts to repentance.

<sup>44</sup> See Isa. 8<sup>14,15</sup> Ro. 9<sup>33</sup> 1 Pt. 2<sup>8</sup> Dan. 2<sup>34,35</sup>, 44<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> So long as the chief priests did not fear God the mob did not fear them and had small respect for their authority. Who fears not God fears man. The priests were in an impossible position. Between Pilate and the populace their vaunted authority practically vanished. All they could do was to appeal to Pilate and persuade the people.

<sup>1-9</sup> Compare Lu. 14<sup>15-24</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This parable should never be used to illustrate the evangel of today. In the first place, none of the nations are called to the wedding in this economy. It will take place in the kingdom, to which we are not invited. Neither is any one invited in the evangel today and subsequently rejected because of unworthiness. That is true of Israel as a nation, to whom our Lord is speaking. The parable refers to the various proclamations of the kingdom. The first was made by the apostles while He was still with them. It had been rejected when our Lord was speaking. The second was made in the Pentecostal era, after all preparations had been made by the *sacrifice* of Christ. That, too, is rejected, and calls for the destruction of Jerusalem. The last proclamation is still future, when the Lord will deal in judgment and compel them to come in. The apparel at such weddings was provided by the host. God will provide His people with a righteousness in that day. No one can remain, in his own righteousness.

It must be noted that this is quite a distinct figure from that of the bride. Those who accept the invitation here are the guests. The bride does not appear in the picture and should be left entirely out of view in the interpretation. The same saints who are elsewhere seen under the figure of the bride are here seen under the figure of guests, because the truth here is judgment rather than love, and could not be developed in the closer relationship. The main point is that those invited, or called, are not necessarily chosen. In the proclamation of the kingdom in our Lord's day and in the Pentecostal era many were invited, but few chosen. Some, in that day, came at first, and were later rejected because they fell away. The last invitation by no means goes out to the gentiles. It goes out in the same city. The parable of the virgins (25<sup>1</sup>) takes up the relation of the other nations to Israel in the kingdom.

14 See 20<sup>16</sup>.

15-22 Compare Mk.12<sup>13-17</sup>Lu.20<sup>20-26</sup>.

15 Fulsome flattery has proven the undoing of many men, and seldom fails to throw them off their guard. The man of God should beware of it, for it is far more dangerous than calumny. But it did not deceive our Lord. Was He true? Was He unafraid to teach the way of God in truth? Was He unmoved by men? Were their wiles transparent to His gaze? If this was so, and it was, they did not believe it. But He soon demonstrated that their flattery was plain fact. He saw through their trap, and not only answered their question but convicted them of one of the crimes which they hoped to fasten on Him.

He has shown them how little authority they have. They know their helplessness. They must get Him into conflict with the people or with the government. Then they might manage His destruction. They formulate a leading question. If He says "Yes", the Pharisees will inform the people and His popularity will be forfeited. If He says "No", the Herodians will accuse Him to the government and He will be tried for sedition. So He avoids the catch in their question. So long as they accepted the Roman currency they were obliged to acknowledge Rome's ascendancy and pay taxes.

The use of Roman currency denoted their subjection to Rome. So long as they were subject they should pay. The use of temple currency showed their subjection to God. To Him, also, they should give His due.

23-33 Compare Mk.12<sup>18-27</sup>Lu.20<sup>27-40</sup>. See Ac.23<sup>8</sup>.

23 The Pharisees and Herodians having been silenced, the Sadducees tried their best argument on Him. Like many another theological deduction, it was based on two errors, ignorance of the Scriptures and of the power of God. Yet they sought to find a foundation for it in the law. The principle of error which seemed to give weight to their reasoning is still very widespread. It is the lack of proper apporportionment of truth. What Moses said for their guidance in this life is transported into the life to come. Moses did not legislate for the resurrection, especially not in regard to matters which do not reappear in the life that is to be.

Let us by all means avoid their methods. Even if we think we can involve some passages of scripture in doubt and ridicule by a course of reasoning or questioning, it proves nothing except our lack of discernment and our ability to confuse things which are clear when left in their own place.

Moses made provision that a man's name should not be blotted out of Israel by death (Deut. 25<sup>5,6</sup>). What possible place can this have in the resurrection, where there is no death? Why provide for a contingency which cannot occur? Furthermore, what ground is there for the idea that the marriage state is resumed in resurrection? Nevertheless, a powerful sect in Israel was built on such flimsy bases!

32 Our Lord is proving the necessity of resurrection. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are dead. God is the God of the dead, if they will not be raised. But He is not the God of the dead. The dead praise not the Lord (Ps. 115<sup>17</sup>). They know not anything (Ecc. 9<sup>5</sup>). In death there is no remembrance of Him (Ps. 6<sup>5</sup>). Apart from resurrection His saints are lost, our faith is vain, we are still in our sins (1 Co. 15<sup>16-19</sup>). The dead have no God. He is the God of the living. There must be a resurrection—which was to be proved (Ex. 3<sup>0</sup>).

34-36 Compare Mk.12<sup>28</sup>Lu.10<sup>25-28</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> From their subsequent course (Ac. 23<sup>8</sup>), it is evident that the Sadducees were not convinced. Their difficulty was deeper. It was in the heart. Though they could not answer, they could refuse to believe.

<sup>35</sup> The Pharisees had failed in fixing a political crime on Him. Now they try to involve Him in a theological heresy, which, to the Jews, was even worse. That He claimed to be the Messiah was bad, but not so blasphemous as calling Himself the Son of God. The expounder of the law hoped to get Him to convict Himself by quoting the first of the ten commandments, especially, "You shall have no other gods above My face" (Ex.20<sup>3</sup>). Or, at least the great rubric, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah, our God, is one Jehovah!" (Deut.6<sup>4</sup>). He does not ask for the second greatest. The Lord significantly omits this and gives him the following precept: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6<sup>5</sup>). They were prepared to do this in their own way by hating and killing Him. But He forestalls their deduction by quoting another passage which utterly frustrated their argument.

<sup>37-40</sup> Compare Mk.12<sup>29-34</sup> Deut.6<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> See Lev. 19<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>41-46</sup> Compare Mk.12<sup>35-37</sup> Lu.20<sup>39-44</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> He now confutes the fanatical element in their monotheism by showing them that they did not even know Whose Son Christ is! Had they known, they would not have accused Him of blasphemy when He claimed to be the Son of God. David, whose son the Messiah was to be, knew better than they, for he called Him his *Adon*, or Lord. If Christ was merely David's son, he assuredly would not call Him by such a title. Who could there be who was so far above David, yet seated at Jehovah's right hand? They had no room for Him in their theology. But He was in their Scriptures. The Pharisees, also, are muzzled. They did not even know that the God of their Scriptures was not the invisible Deity, but His Image (Col.1<sup>15</sup>), not the One Whose voice is inaudible to human ears, but His Word (Jn.1<sup>1</sup>), or Expression. Their Messiah was the Elohim Whom they feared, the Jehovah Whom they revered, the Adonai Whom they claimed to serve.

<sup>44</sup> Compare Ps. 110<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Though the Sadducees were probably included in the term scribes, the Pharisees are especially singled out for this final denunciation. For a hundred and fifty years they had enjoyed the highest respect of the populace because of their zeal and rigid observance of the law of Moses. The Sadducees were comparatively few and lacking in influence. It is highly significant that our Lord seldom spoke harshly of the common people. He did not blame the sheep, but the shepherds.

In so far as the Pharisees followed the teaching of Moses our Lord did not censure them, but rather because they did not burden themselves with the observance of the law, but shifted it to the shoulders of others. Their whole religion consisted in self-adulation. It is highly important that we should recognize the fact that our Lord's woes were not directed against the vice and immorality and crime in the lower levels of the social scale. He did not denounce the corruption in politics, and the oppression and rapacity of rulers. The worst offenders, in His anointed eyes, were the acknowledged religious leaders, those who made the strongest protestations of serving God. It is ever thus. The most heinous criminals are not those who make no pretense of serving Him, but those who make a great profession.

<sup>2</sup> See Neh8<sup>4-8</sup> Mal.2<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> See Lu. 11<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Bad as the doctrine of the Pharisees was, their deportment was worse. The Lord now turns from their precepts to warn against their practises.

<sup>5-14</sup> Compare Mk.12<sup>38-40</sup> Lu.20<sup>45-47</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> See Deut.6<sup>6-8</sup> 22<sup>12</sup> Nu.15<sup>37-41</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> See Lu. 11<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> See 20<sup>25-28</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> The constant aim of the Pharisees was to receive from men the recognition to which they considered themselves entitled.

<sup>13</sup> See Lu. 11<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Our Lord commenced His ministry with a nine-fold benediction on the poor, the mourners, the meek, those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, the merciful, the clean-hearted, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted on account of righteousness, and those reproached falsely on His account (5<sup>3-11</sup>). Where is there the slightest feature of the Pharisees

in these beatitudes? They were as unlike all this as they could be. Hence He closes His ministry with seven maledictions on the hypocrites who hinder others from entering the kingdom, who proselyte for their own party, who elevate that which is hallowed above that which hallows, who distort the proportions of God's precepts, who cleanse the outside but leave the inside full of filth, who outwardly appear just, but are lawless within, who feign themselves more righteous than their progenitors, yet excel them in iniquity.

<sup>13</sup> The kingdom of the heavens was locked at that time, not to be opened until Peter uses the keys entrusted to him, on the day of Pentecost. Then once more the Pharisees and scribes lock the kingdom by refusing the testimony of the apostles. It is locked now. It will not be opened until Christ comes again in glory.

<sup>16</sup> The Pharisees had practically annulled the Scriptures by false interpretations and especially by human additions. Their commentaries were full of distinctions which destroyed the spiritual force of the law. Externals alone were important. The glitter of the gold on the temple blinded their eyes to the preciousness of the place hallowed by the presence of God. The offering on the altar was, to them, much more sacred than the altar that hallowed it. All the vital values created by contact with God had no appeal to their blind hearts.

<sup>19</sup> See Ex. 29<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> See 1 Ki. 13<sup>Ps.26</sup>8.

<sup>22</sup> See 5<sup>34</sup>Ps.11<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>23-24</sup> Compare Lu. 11<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> It is probable that these were grown in small quantities for home use and so hardly of as much value as the work involved in tithing them, yet it is well to be punctilious in what pertains to God. But to do this and evade the great moral obligations of the law came near the limits of hypocrisy.

<sup>25-26</sup> Compare Lu. 11<sup>39-41</sup>.

<sup>27-28</sup> Compare Lu. 11<sup>44</sup>. See Ac. 23<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> It is difficult to imagine a more scathing comparison than the clean, whitewashed tombs and the corrupting corpses within. Yet such is all religion that is outward and ostentatious, that knows nothing of humility of heart and self-abasement.

<sup>29-33</sup> Compare Lu. 11<sup>47-51</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> See Ac. 7<sup>51</sup> 1Th. 2<sup>15,16</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Instead of refraining from the evil deeds of their fathers and thus reducing the measure of the nation's guilt, these religious Pharisees were about to go to the very limits of iniquity in the murder of Messiah. All evil is measured by God. When it attains dimensions beyond which it no longer contributes to His purpose, it is restrained.

<sup>34</sup> See Ac. 5<sup>40</sup> 7<sup>58,59</sup> 2Co. 11<sup>24,25</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> The record in Acts fulfills this promise. James was killed by the sword (Ac. 12<sup>2</sup>). Peter was probably crucified (Jn. 21<sup>18</sup>).

<sup>35</sup> See Gen. 4<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Judgment will be based on light and privilege. He who commits a crime which he has deliberately condemned is far more guilty than one who has little knowledge of its moral measure. These men who condemned and crucified Christ were not only killing Him but all who came before Him, for they make it abundantly evident that nothing would have restrained them from the actual act except their absence.

<sup>35</sup> There was a Zechariah slain in the court of the house of the Lord in the days of King Joash (2 Chr. 24<sup>20-22</sup>). But he was the son of Jehoiada, while we are expressly told by our Lord that He has reference to another Zechariah, whose father was named Berechiah. He was one of the minor prophets (Zech. 1<sup>1</sup>), and must have been murdered hundreds of years after the days of Joash. The Pharisees did not actually have a hand in His murder, nor, indeed, did they drive the nails that fastened Him to the cross, but they had the spirit of Cain and all who truly served God were their legitimate prey. The horrors which came upon that generation, up to the destruction of Jerusalem, have hardly had their parallel in the annals of history.

<sup>37-39</sup> Compare Lu. 13<sup>34,35</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> This affecting farewell closes His mission to the holy city. If they will not have Him, He must leave them exposed to the powers of darkness. With Him the Presence leaves the temple tenantless. Its empty grandeur continues for forty years and is then laid level with the dust.



1-14 Compare Mk.13<sup>1-13</sup> Lu.21<sup>5-19</sup>.

1 The sanctuary was doomed, for it was no longer even a nominal shrine after He had left its courts. It was almost unbelievable that such buildings, with such enormous stones, so highly venerated, should fall so suddenly into utter ruin. Its destruction was averted for forty years by His prayer upon the cross, and the subsequent Pentecostal proclamation of the kingdom, much of which took place within its walls. At the siege of Jerusalem, not only were the fanatical Jewish factions within the city anxious to save it from destruction, but the Roman general Titus was very desirous of preserving it without damage. But the divine decree had gone forth. Nothing could save it from its doom. And so it was leveled with the ground and no stone remained upon another.

3 This prophetic outline of events to come before the kingdom can be realized entirely ignores the present secret administration of God's grace, so that we must overlook all that occurs during Israel's unbelief (Ro.11) and consider the future time of the end as following immediately after the close of Acts. It is only as we keep the future before us and the present out of sight, that we can view these scenes aright.

4 Many false messiahs have come and will come, but the greatest of all will be the white horse rider who comes forth under the first seal (Un. 6<sup>2</sup>).

5 See 24Jn.5<sup>43</sup> Un.6<sup>1,2</sup>.

6-7 See Un. 6<sup>3-8</sup>.

6 The wars correspond with the second seal (Un. 6<sup>3,4</sup>), when a red horse comes forth and takes peace from the earth.

7 The famine is the same one that occurs under the third seal, when wheat and barley will be worth about eight times their normal value.

9-14 See 10<sup>17-23</sup> Jn.16<sup>2,3</sup> Un.6<sup>9-11</sup>.

9 The great affliction occurs under the fifth seal (Un. 6<sup>9</sup>). It begins at that great chronological crisis, the middle of the last seven years of Daniel's seventy heptads, when the covenant with the false christ will be broken and the daily offering stopped. Many will be martyred. It is their blood which calls down vengeance on the world and leads to the awful judgments on the nations and Babylon.

15-18 Compare Mk.13<sup>14-16</sup> Lu.17<sup>31-33</sup>.

15 See Dan. 9<sup>27</sup>.

15 The Septuagint of Daniel may be closely rendered as follows: "And he shall establish a covenant with many one heptad, and in the middle of the heptad My sacrifice and libation shall be suspended, and on the temple is the abomination of desolations, and till the conclusion of the era a conclusion shall be given to the desolation" (Dan. 9<sup>27</sup>). It seems evident that, coincident with the breaking of the covenant, the image spoken of in the Unveiling (13<sup>14</sup>) will be placed in the holy place as a signal for the greatest anti-Semitic outbreak of all time. Then it is that the dragon is cast out of heaven and persecutes the woman, who flees into the wilderness to be there for the remainder of the seventieth heptad (Un. 12<sup>1-16</sup>).

Through the terrible afflictions the faithful of that day will be gathered in the mountainous wilderness southeast of Judea near the scene of their wanderings of old, when they came out of Egypt. There they will be miraculously preserved for the twelve hundred and sixty days until the coming of Christ.

19-22 Compare Mk. 13<sup>17-20</sup>.

21 See Dan. 12<sup>1</sup> Joel 2<sup>2</sup> Un.7<sup>14</sup>.

23-28 Compare Mk.13<sup>21-23</sup> Lu.17<sup>23,24</sup>.

23 Then will the false prophet give spirit to the image of the wild beast and cause it to speak, and cause as many as should not be worshipping the image to be killed, and all must have the emblem of the wild beast on their right hand or their forehead before they will be able to buy or sell (Un. 13<sup>15-17</sup>).

24 See Jn.10<sup>28-29</sup> Th.2<sup>8-12</sup> Pt.2<sup>9</sup> Un.13.

26 The coming of Christ to the earth for Israel is not a secret, invisible event. That is the sign of the false prophets. His presence will be with the utmost publicity and swiftness. Like a lightning flash will His glory appear, so that no one will be unaware of its startling brightness, or fail to apprehend His presence. We can only enjoy His presence before this by being caught up to Him in the air the moment that He is present there.

28 See Lu.17<sup>37</sup> Job 39<sup>30</sup>.

29-31 Compare Mk.13<sup>24-26</sup> Lu.21<sup>25-27</sup>.

29 See Un.6<sup>12-17</sup> Isa.13<sup>10</sup> Joel 2<sup>30,31</sup> 3<sup>15</sup> Amos 5<sup>20</sup>.

29 Israel goes through the great affliction, and watches for the Son of Mankind, Who will stand on the mount of Olives, from which He ascended. We have a prior expectation (Eph. 1<sup>12</sup>) and wait (not watch) for the Son of God out of the heavens (1 Th. 1<sup>10</sup>), not to come down to earth, but to meet us in the air (1 Th. 4<sup>17</sup>), according to a secret, not revealed during the ministry of our Lord or His twelve apostles, which tells of the change of our bodies to suit a celestial destiny (1 Co. 15<sup>52-54</sup>), when these bodies of humiliation will be transfigured to conform them to His glorious body (Phil. 3<sup>21</sup>). In Israel, after His descent to earth, He sends His messengers to gather His saints about Him. Both events will take place with incredible speed. The lightning flash of judgment describes His advent to earth. The upward movement of the eyelid measures the time taken for our transfiguring and gathering together to Him in the air.

30 See Dan 7<sup>13,14</sup> Zech. 12<sup>4-14</sup> Un. 1<sup>7</sup>.

31 Compare Mk. 13<sup>27</sup>. See Isa. 27<sup>13</sup>.

32-35 Compare Mk. 13<sup>28-30</sup> Lu. 21<sup>28-33</sup>.

32 We do not watch for signs, for, except the apostasy, which is already at full tide, none are given. We look for Him. Israel is given indications of His approach. Among His last acts was the withering of the fig tree, indicating the national decadence of the Jews. Among the first signs to be looked for is the national resurgence of unbelieving Israel as foretold by Isaiah (66<sup>8</sup>). "Who has seen things as these? Will the land travail in one day? Should a nation be born at one time?" In our day we see leaves which sprout from the tender stem of Jewish national aspirations. Summer is near for that nation. The Lord's return to earth cannot be long delayed. But, as He must come for us some time before His descent to the mount of Olives, His coming for the members of His body is far more imminent than His later descent to earth for His Bride, the redeemed of Israel.

34 His coming to Israel *should* have taken place in that generation.

35 See Ps. 102<sup>26,27</sup> Isa. 51<sup>6</sup> Un. 20<sup>11</sup>.

36-39 Compare Mk. 13<sup>32</sup> Lu. 17<sup>26-30</sup>.

36 See Ac. 1<sup>7</sup> 1 Th. 5<sup>2</sup>.

36 The probable time of the Lord's advent to Israel can only be known by the signs, but the exact time will never be known till it arrives. A day or an hour would have sufficed for many to enter the ark in Noah's day. But no date was given.

37 See Gen. 6<sup>3-5</sup> 1<sup>10</sup>.

40-41 Compare Lu. 17<sup>34-36</sup>.

41 When His messengers gather His elect (31) not all will be taken along to stand before the Son of Mankind. Some will be left.

42 See 25<sup>13</sup>.

43 For them there is not the joyous anticipation of being ever with the Lord (1 Th. 4<sup>17</sup>), but a certain dread that, should they not be watching, instead of His coming as a Saviour, He may come as a thief. For us He does not come as a thief (1 Th. 5<sup>4</sup>). Our conduct does not count in His coming for us. Whether we watch or are drowsy we shall live together with Him. The difference between the two events is pictured for us in Peter's recall of Dorcas from death (Ac. 9<sup>36-41</sup>), and Paul's restoration of Eutychus to life (Ac. 20<sup>9-10</sup>). Dorcas was deserving, but Eutychus (like many of His saints today) had nothing to commend him, but that he went to sleep while Paul preached. So it will be when we hear His shout. We may be drowsy or dead, yet grace demands that we live together with Him. We will be dealt with on the ground of His death, not of our deserts.

43-51 Compare Lu. 12<sup>39-46</sup>. See 2 Pt. 3<sup>10</sup> Un. 3<sup>16</sup> 15.

45 The conduct of God's slaves is most vitally affected by their attitude toward the return of Christ. If it is an imminent expectation, their course will correspond. They will act as those who are about to give account. If it is far off, the restraining power of His expected presence will be wanting.

50 We, also, must appear in front of the dais of Christ that each should be required for that which he puts into practise through the body (2 Co. 5<sup>10</sup>), but, though fire will be testing the kind of work we have done, we shall all be saved (1 Co. 3<sup>15</sup>). In Israel righteousness rather than grace will reign, so that they are subject to condemnation.

<sup>1</sup> The parable of the ten virgins applies only to the kingdom at the time specified. When the Lord comes in glory to enter into covenant relationship with Israel at the commencement of the day of Jehovah, *then* the kingdom of the heavens will correspond to a marriage feast. The Lambkin is the Bridegroom (Un. 19<sup>7</sup>), redeemed Israel is the Bride. Who are the virgins?

The wedding feast figures the millennium. The nations will be blessed through and with Israel according to the Abrahamic covenant. Hence they are represented as virgins, invited to share the blessings provided for the holy nation by the Lambkin. As in the parable of the sheep and the kids at the close of this chapter, the place of the nations in that day will depend on their treatment of Israel. Those that are sufficiently illuminated to await Messiah's coming will participate with the Bride in the feast that follows. They are invited to the wedding banquet of the Lambkin (Un. 19<sup>9</sup>Ps. 45<sup>14</sup>). The action of this parable is limited to the period immediately preceding the coming of the Messianic kingdom. To "apply" it to individuals or classes at any other crisis is confusing and corrupts the Scriptures.

The blessing which will come to the nations as brides-maids of Israel is in striking contrast to the present era of grace. They will wait until Israel is blessed and share her blessings with her. Now Israel is forsaken and divorced. She has no marriage feast to which we could be invited. She has no blessings to share with us. Our supernal bliss comes while she is thrust aside, and depends on her apostasy. Our felicity far transcends not only that of the virgins who attend the Bride, but that of the Bride herself. We have a nearer and dearer place than that which is figured by the marriage bond. We are members of Christ's body. Men may or may not love their wives, but no one ever hated his own flesh. So, in the very nature of things, we are dear to Christ as His own body. We are not called upon to *watch* for signs of His coming, but to *wait* for God's Son from heaven. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing among the celestials (Ep. 1<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>13</sup> See 244<sup>2</sup>Mk. 13<sup>33-37</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> See 201-1<sup>6</sup>Lu. 19<sup>11-27</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> A talent was a large sum of money, variously estimated at from one to two thousand dollars of our present currency. There is doubtless an intended reference to the well-known money-making propensity which the Jew has developed since this parable was spoken. Especially at the time of the end, many of the apostate nation will be immensely wealthy, while the faithful remnant will be poor in this world's coin. So the Lord confides to them large sums of spiritual currency, to be used in His service. He to whom God has given one precious truth may double it by communicating it to another.

There is nothing in this parable which can be applied to Christ's dealings with us in this present secret administration of God's grace. It fits perfectly when connected with the kingdom of which He was speaking. He was about to leave them. The nations were not called until long after He had left. There would be no point to His departure if we should seek to apply it now. Nor is it agreeable to the present grace to require service in this manner. And it is most thoroughly out of harmony in the case of the slave who received a single talent. No one who is now called into God's grace could think or act as he did, and no one who has a deposit from God will be condemned for his failure to be faithful. There was a Judas among the twelve apostles but there was no such character among those apostles who were associated with Paul in his later ministries. An administration which is an admixture of faith and works will also have a sprinkling of unbelievers. But an economy of purest grace can lead no one to such an outcome as the slave who hid his talent and hated his lord. For us there is no condemnation (Ro. 8<sup>1</sup>). We are not only saved *by* grace but *for* grace (Eph. 2<sup>8</sup>). No one who has ever known Him in this day of salvation will be thrust into outer darkness with lamentation and gnashing of teeth.

As our salvation is not based on work, the awards for service at the dais of Christ do not affect our destiny (2 Co. 5<sup>10</sup>). Our deeds will be tested by fire, to determine their quality. Yet even if our work burns up, we shall be saved, even though it be through fire (1 Co. 3<sup>13-15</sup>).

<sup>29</sup> See 13<sup>12</sup>Lu.8<sup>18</sup>Jn.15<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> See 19<sup>28</sup>Mk.8<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> The many judgments in the Scriptures should be carefully distinguished as to time and place and participants and the attending circumstances. There is no "general judgment", for the saints are judged in the cross of Christ. The individual judgment of the unbeliever for his sins does not take place in this life, but in resurrection. All mankind except those who are Christ's will be raised from the dead to stand before the great white throne, which is not set up until after the coming kingdom eon has run its course (Un. 20<sup>11</sup>). The judgment here presented differs in time, in place, in character and in purpose. It occurs at the commencement of the kingdom, at His coming in glory, while the great white throne session does not take place until after the thousand years. This judgment is on the earth. The earth will flee before the great white throne (Un. 20<sup>11</sup>). Living nations will appear before the Son of Mankind, but only the dead come before the later tribunal. The nations are judged as such, not for their sins, but according to their treatment of Israel during the time of their affliction.

When God is judging the earth no greater act of righteousness can be done than to feed and shelter His oppressed people. Each faithful Israelite stands in the place of Christ toward the nations. Those who help them do so at the greatest risk, for they may be called to account by the powers that oppose them. This tribunal is not concerned with their ultimate destiny, but with their place in the kingdom. The kingdom will be comprised largely of gentiles, subordinate to Israel politically and religiously, but nevertheless the recipients of much blessing. All that they receive comes to them through Israel, while the present grace which we enjoy comes to us because Israel as a channel is choked, yet the superabundance of the grace overflows all barriers. We have every reason to treat the Jews with the utmost grace, but our conduct toward them is not a factor in our destiny. We do not enter the kingdom, because we have a higher and more honorable allotment among the celestials.

<sup>40</sup> See 10<sup>42</sup>.

## Matthew 25:29-26:6

<sup>40</sup> The "brethren" of Christ, in the kingdom, are His fellow Israelites, in contrast with those of other nations. These do not appear before this tribunal. Their judgment is dealt with in the preceding parables.

<sup>41</sup> The Slanderer and his messengers will be the chief instigators of the fearful anti-Semitic outbreak of the end time. It will be the greatest of all pogroms, and men will be urged on by malignant spirit powers to do all that is possible to exterminate the people who refuse to worship Satan's christ, or to bow down to his image. Being superhuman, the wild beast and the false prophet will have their portion in that lake of fire into which the Slanderer is cast more than a millennium later (Un. 20<sup>10</sup>).

<sup>46</sup> Eonian chastening is here limited to the nations who will not succor the faithful of Israel in their time of sore distress. It has no bearing on the sins of individuals. The justice of fire eonian is disciplinary and corrective (*cf* Jude 7).

<sup>1-5</sup> Compare Mk.14<sup>1,2</sup>Lu.22<sup>1,2</sup>. See Ps.2<sup>2</sup>Ac.4<sup>25-28</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> What a transition from the coming glories to the cross of shame! He has been filling their vision with pictures of Himself as an honorable Lord, a happy Bridegroom, a resplendent Sovereign attended by hosts of angelic servitors. No doubt they had little difficulty in accepting such scenes, for such were the characters of Christ which they could understand. All these portrayals are fulfillments of the festival of Trumpets and of Tabernacles, still six months away, suggestive of the long interval which has already intervened between His sayings and their still future realization. But the Passover was not so far away! It must be fulfilled first! The suffering must precede the glories. Only two days and the first great festival of the Jewish year would find its fulfillment in Him. Already the chief priests were choosing the passover Lamb. They do not want to do it in the festival, but that is the time ordained for the slaying of the type and that is the time when the Antitype must suffer. What a marvelous manifestation of God's wisdom, power and love is concentrated about the cross of Christ!

<sup>6-13</sup> Compare Mk.14<sup>3-9</sup>Jn.12<sup>1-8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> The Lord was twice anointed during the last week of His life, first, six days before the Passover, and on this occasion. One woman anointed His feet, this woman poured the attar on His head. This occurred in connection with His presentation to Jerusalem as the King. When a king was crowned in Israel he was anointed with attar. He came, but no one thought of anointing Him. His very disciples resented it. They grudged the price of the attar for the anointing of Messiah! So He applies it to His burial. Yet this unnamed and unknown woman gives Him the honor He deserves!

<sup>14-16</sup> Compare Mk.14<sup>10,11</sup> Lu.22<sup>3-6</sup> Zech. 11<sup>12,13</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> What a contrast! The woman "wastes" in value much more than what Judas receives for his Lord. This shows their relative estimates of His preciousness. Nothing is wasted which is for His honor. Philanthropy finds its highest expression in the worship of the Man Christ Jesus.

<sup>17-19</sup> Compare Mk.14<sup>12-16</sup> Lu.22<sup>7-13</sup>. See Ex.12<sup>6-18</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> "The first [day] of the unleavened [bread]" is explained in Mark as the day on which the passover must be sacrificed (Mk.14<sup>12</sup>). Hence it is not the first day of the festival of Unleavened Bread spoken of in the law (Lev. 23<sup>6</sup> Nu.28<sup>17</sup>), for that did not come until the day after the Passover proper. It seems that the question was asked at the beginning of the fourteenth of Nisan, just after sundown. As they had little to do in its preparation, but partook of it as guests of an unknown host, there was little time needed to prepare. So that same evening they celebrated it the last time before He Himself became the Passover on the same calendar day. The Jewish days began in the evening and ended the next evening (See Gen. 1<sup>5</sup>). The passover lamb must be slain on the fourteenth of Nisan "between the evenings" (Lev. 23<sup>5</sup>, see verse 32). Hence the Lord fulfilled the law in a double sense. He observed the Passover and was slain as the Passover, all within the limits allowed by the law of Moses. The very wording of the precept was modified to suit the great Antitype.

<sup>20-25</sup> Compare Mk.14<sup>17-21</sup> Lu.22<sup>14,21-23</sup> Jn. 13<sup>18-30</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> See Ps. 41<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> See Ps.22 Isa.53 Dan.9<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> The case of Judas has an important bearing on the ultimate destiny of the human race and all creation. If it were well for Judas if he had not been born, then there can be no justification of all mankind (Ro. 5<sup>18</sup>) or reconciliation of all creation (Col.1<sup>20</sup>). If he is ultimately justified and reconciled it is well that he has been born. The solution of this difficulty will help us to see the bias which pervades our translations. They deliberately recast the sentence and give it a meaning quite foreign to the text. The Lord speaks of Himself as "Him", and of Judas as "that man". It were ideal for the Lord if Judas were not born. The Lord's impending suffering is in view, not the punishment of Judas, whose ultimate destiny is not under consideration.

<sup>26-29</sup> Compare Mk.14<sup>22-25</sup> Lu.22<sup>19-20</sup> 1 Co. 11<sup>23-26</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> The account given here is for the Circumcision. It is seen as a part of the Passover festival and concerns the new covenant for Israel and the pardon of sins. Were it not that it was given to Paul by a special revelation (1 Co. 11<sup>25</sup>), after he had been separated to his special ministry (Ac. 13<sup>2</sup>) among the nations, and with the particular provision that it should continue until the Lord's coming, we would be tempted to class it with the observances intended only for the Circumcision.

<sup>26</sup> In Greek, the present tense of the substantive often indicates a figure of speech. If the Lord were speaking literally of His actual body and blood, He would have omitted the word *is*. It is a metaphor, in which one thing is not merely stated to be *like* another, but to *be* another. It is freely used in interpreting parables, as, "the field is the world" (Mt. 13<sup>38</sup>). Usually it is not used in stating matters of fact. It may be correctly rendered, *means*, or *represents*, in practically every place where it occurs. This distinction cannot be carried over into English, for we always express the verb.

<sup>28</sup> See Ex.24<sup>8</sup> Lev.17<sup>11</sup> Jer.31<sup>31-34</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Compare Lu. 22<sup>15-18</sup>.

<sup>30-32</sup> Compare Mk.14<sup>26-28</sup> Lu.22<sup>39</sup> Jn.16<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> See Zech.13<sup>7</sup> Isa.53<sup>4-11</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> See 28<sup>7-16</sup>.

33-35 Compare Mk.14<sup>29-31</sup> Lu.22<sup>31-34</sup> Jn. 13<sup>36-38</sup>.

33 The Lord had said distinctly that *all* of them should be snared. Peter's fall began by refusing to believe that the Lord's *all* meant *all*. Of course, it could not include him! By exalting himself above the rest he invited the fate of all who walk in pride, who must be abased. The same spirit is rampant today. We hear the loudest protestations of loyalty and devotion to Christ, which, if carried out, would transform the whole world in one generation. There is no doubt that it is honest. Peter fully intended to stand by his Lord to the very death. But he did not know himself or the impotence of the human will. It is the creature and the sport of circumstance. No man can use the emphatic *I*, as Peter did, and not fall.

36-38 Compare Mk.14<sup>32-34</sup> Lu.22<sup>39,40</sup> Jn. 18<sup>1,2</sup>.

36 How different it was with our Lord! He was about to brave the most awful battle with the hosts of darkness and their human minions, yet not a boast proceeds from His lips. He shrank from it. He implored to be spared. It was not His will. Hitherto His will and the Father's had been in perfect accord. He acquiesced in it even though it meant failure and defeat. He delighted in it though it brought Him opposition and hate. Yet with all His unparalleled loyalty and devotion, the terrors of the curse, the abandonment by God, were beyond the concurrence of His will. But there is a deeper and more powerful force than this. The heart can subdue the will. Christ had not come to do His own will. So He prayed the prayer that befits us far more than Him, "Not as *I* will, but as Thou!" No man can use the emphatic "*I*", without the negative, and carry out his vaunting. It is the symbol of defeat, "*not I*" the banner of victory, though it should lead through the deepest depths to God.

Gethsemane should prepare our hearts for the deep unfoldings of the cross. It transforms it from a mere manifestation of human and satanic hate into a deliberate and foreordained act of God. Our Lord did not beg the chief priests for mercy, or Pilate for clemency. He recognized the fact that God alone could deliver Him from their power, and, since this was not His will,

He makes not the slightest effort to appease them. Without in the least minimizing the guilt of man or the sin of Satan, we may look beneath all their hateful deeds and see God using them as His puppets in the preparation of the great Sacrifice which had been promised from the beginning. Though apparently and consciously doing their utmost to oppose the will of God, they were carrying it into effect with the same precision as their Victim Who had renounced His own will in favor of His Father's.

The cross of Christ is the touchstone of humanity. Not only is the cowardice of Pilate and the perfidy of the priests exposed to the gaze of all, but His own little band all find their true value in its vicinity. What should we not expect from His own apostles who have been with Him and have seen His mighty power and have felt the attraction of His love? Judas, who was entrusted with the funds, turns traitor. Boastful Peter forswears his Lord. And all the rest, who but a short time since were loud in their protestations of loyalty, desert Him at the first approach of danger.

39-41 Compare Mk.14<sup>35-38</sup> Lu.22<sup>41-46</sup>. See Heb.5<sup>7</sup> Jn.6<sup>38</sup> Phil.2<sup>8</sup>.

42-46 Compare Mk. 14<sup>39-42</sup>.

45-46 Compare Lu. 22<sup>45,46</sup>.

47-50 Compare Mk.14<sup>43-46</sup> Lu.22<sup>47,48</sup> Jn. 18<sup>2-9</sup>.

47 Judas, one of the twelve. It is necessary that snares should be coming (18<sup>7</sup>). The Lord deliberately chose one of His apostles for the essential duty of betraying Him. He knew from the beginning that Judas was a traitor.

50 See Ps.41<sup>9</sup> 55<sup>12-14</sup>.

51-52 Compare Mk.14<sup>47</sup> Lu.22<sup>49-51</sup> Jn. 18<sup>10-11</sup>.

51 It is most difficult to receive evil from the hand of God. The disciples evidently could not understand how this could be of God. Their highest thought was to escape evil through divine protection. But our Lord assures them that, however easy it might be to enlist the legions of heaven, it is not His present plan to escape the clutches of His enemies. Evil must needs be, and God controls it so as to accomplish His beneficent purpose.

53 See 2Ki.6<sup>17</sup>.

55-56 Compare Mk.14<sup>48-52</sup> Lu.22<sup>52,53</sup>.

55 In the daylight they were afraid. They wanted the mantle of darkness to hide their evil deeds. Nothing could have been simpler than to have the temple guards arrest Him in the sanctuary. Why all this show of force to take an unarmed Man Who never did anything but good? It is often difficult to account for the foolishness of human wisdom and action. Yet here we have the key. The Scriptures of the prophets must be fulfilled. And they are given for the revelation of God. Every human action will one day be accounted for and justified by putting it in its right relation to God.

62 Can there be any greater contrast than comes before us in this scene before the chief priest? Christ, the Chief Priest after the new order of Melchisedec, sworn in by God Himself, holy, harmless, undefiled, and higher than the heavens, is about to offer Himself for the sins of the world. Yet He stood alone, forsaken even by His own, charged with blasphemy and liable to death. Caiaphas was appointed for political reasons by the Roman power. He was crafty, deceitful, blasphemous, unfit to officiate at God's altar. Yet such a man dares to condemn the Son of God! Quite shamelessly he seeks for testimony against Him, and accepts what everyone knew was false. No one had heard Him say that *He* would destroy the temple of God. He said that *they* would do it. And now their very accusation is itself the crime with which they charge Him! They tried to fasten on Him the destruction of the empty house on mount Moriah. They actually accomplish the destruction of the true Temple, His body.

57-60 Compare Mk.14<sup>53-64</sup> Lu.22<sup>54-71</sup> Jn. 18<sup>12-24</sup>.

61 See Jn. 2<sup>18-22</sup>.

62 As the Sacrifice, the Lord was a sign to the priests, for He acted as the animal they were accustomed to lead to the altar (Isa. 53<sup>7</sup>):

He is hard pressed, and *He* is humiliated,

Yet He is not opening His mouth:  
He is fetched as a flockling to the slaughter,

And as a ewe before its shearers is mute,

So He is not opening His mouth.

63 See Lev.5<sup>1</sup>.

64 See 24<sup>30</sup> Ps.110<sup>1</sup> Dan.7<sup>13</sup> Ac.7<sup>55</sup>, 56 Un.17.

64 When the chief priest invoked the presence of God, Christ was not slow in testifying to the truth. So that all the actual testimony against Him was the great truth to which the priests themselves and all their service in the sanctuary and the temple testified. But we must not forget the divine side. The Scriptures must be fulfilled. God's purpose must be served. The business of the priesthood is to slay the sacrifice. All the victims hitherto had been vain repetitions that could only cover sin. They could not take it away. Shall not the priests, therefore, slay the great Antitype, the Lamb Whose blood will yet change all sin into righteousness, all enmity into reconciliation? In the wisdom of God their hatred and malice are simply a knife to slay the true Sacrifice. Can we not see that, in a very real sense, they were carrying out the will of God? And if this is true of the sin of sins, is it not quite possible that God will justify all sins in the same way?

65 See Lev. 21<sup>10</sup>.

66 See Lev.24<sup>16</sup> Jn.19<sup>7</sup>.

67-68 Compare Mk.14<sup>65</sup> Lu.22<sup>63-65</sup>. See Isa.50<sup>65</sup> 53<sup>3</sup>.

69 Poor Peter! Where is his bravado now? He was quite ready to defend his Lord against the world—but not against a serving maid. His very vehemence betrays him. Now was his opportunity of witnessing for his Lord, and of standing by Him in His trial. He should have shouted "Yes!" and moved forward to take his place beside his Master. But no. He refuses to acknowledge Him. He slinks back to the portal to escape further questioning. But another maid awaits him there, so he adds an oath to his denial, and by his Galilean brogue betrays himself again. And then his exasperation is so great that he actually damns and swears that He is not at all acquainted with the Lord. The cock crows. Its simple sound is the voice of God to Peter. He becomes acquainted with himself, and is sadly disillusioned. Instead of the brave, trusty, faithful disciple and apostle he thought he was, he finds himself to be a cringing, craven coward. He laments bitterly.

69-74 Compare Mk.14<sup>66-71</sup> Lu.22<sup>54-60</sup> Jn. 18<sup>15-27</sup>.

75 Compare Mk.14<sup>72</sup> Lu.22<sup>61,62</sup>. See 34.

1-2 Compare Mk.15<sup>1</sup> Lu.23<sup>1</sup> Jn.18<sup>28-32</sup>. See Ps.22.

3-8 The chief priests, by *buying* the freehold, which had previously been *acquired* by Judas, but not paid for (Ac. 1:16-19), join the betrayer of our Lord in an unlawful act which manifests their lack of faith in God. True believers, who were looking for the kingdom and the consequent redistribution of the land, would not waste money on a freehold which would be worthless in that day. Instead, they *sold* their freeholds (Ac. 4:34), and gave the money to the apostles. The account in Acts views this transaction from the standpoint of Judas, and tells why he was rejected from being an apostle. He made arrangements not only to betray His Lord (Who, he supposed, would use His power to circumvent His enemies), but he arranged to use the "wages of unrighteousness" for buying a freehold, contrary to the law. The chief priests and elders, instead of repudiating this illegal act, confirm it by hypocritically refusing to put the money in the temple offerings, and by using it to complete the purchase which Judas had begun. The death of Judas is likewise passed over briefly in Matthew, but elaborated in Acts. He hanged himself, but the rope broke and he fell so hard that his bowels spilled out. Thus worked the woe pronounced upon him by the Lord.

5-8 See Ac. 1:18, 19.

9 See Zech. 11:12, 13.

11 Compare Mk. 15:2-5 Lu. 23:2-12 Jn. 18:33-38. See 1 Ti. 6:13.

11 The priests should have been models of justice and truth, for they had the form of truth in the law. The governor had no divine light to guide his steps. Yet Pilate is far more just than the priests. He knew very well that they would not demand the death of a Jew who conspired against his government. They would aid him. His suspicions of their motive were confirmed by the Lord's silence. No ordinary man would stand and hear such charges against him without a reply. At no time did the chief priests deceive Pilate. He thought the easiest way out would be to put it to the people, who, he supposed, would release the prophet. He was so sure of their verdict that he was caught in his own device.

15-18 Compare Mk. 15:6-10 Lu. 23:18-17 Jn. 18:38, 39.

17 Bar-Abbas is another contrast with Christ. A murderer, a leader in sedition, he was just what the chief priests represented the Lord to be. His name is very striking. In Aramaic it means "son of the father". Christ was the Son of the Father, God. Bar-Abbas was the son of another father, the Slanderer.

19 Of all the actors in this tragedy, only one really pleads the cause of Christ, and this one is the most unlikely that could be. It seems almost incredible, when His own nation is against Him, His own disciples afraid to speak a word in His favor, that an alien woman steps in to plead the cause of a just man she may never have heard of before. True, it was the direct effect of divine intervention. But every other act and attitude in this scene can, in its last analysis, be traced to God's foreordination. It must remain a marvelous intimation of God's ways that she alone should voice a solemn protest against the travesty of justice in which Pilate was weak enough to become involved.

20-23 Compare Mk. 15:11-14 Lu. 23:18-23 Jn. 18:40. See Ac. 3:14.

20 The chief priests were aware that they had failed to convince the governor by fair argument, so now they propose to foil his plan of freeing the Lord by persuading the people. It is not necessary to have facts or truth to move the mob. It is the most unjust and unreasonable appeal possible. Had the priests not interfered they undoubtedly would have shouted for His release, as Pilate anticipated.

23 Now that the priests have caught him in his own device, he tries to persuade the mob. Evil or no evil, they want His blood.

24 See Deut. 21:6, 7.

24 Pilate had the power to release Him, but expedience and selfishness are always more potent in human governments than justice.

25-38 Compare Mk. 15:24-28 Lu. 23:32-43 Jn. 19:18-24.

25 See Deut. 19:10 Ac. 5:28.

25 The Jews today have good cause to shudder when they read these lines. There is a reason for their terrible history from that day to this.

26 Compare Mk. 15:15 Lu. 23:24, 25 Jn. 19:1.

27-31 Compare Mk. 15:16-20 Jn. 19:12, 16.



<sup>29</sup> See Ps. 69<sup>19</sup>, 20 Isa. 53<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> See Isa. 50<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> See Isa. 53<sup>7,8</sup> Phil. 29<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> In mockery, our Lord went through the mimic ceremony of being invested with imperial dignity. The shining attire with which Herod clothed Him (Lu. 23<sup>11</sup>) may have been intended to mark Him as a candidate for royal honors. Pilate's soldiers put on Him the scarlet mantle, a sign of His having attained the imperial throne, and add the crown of thorns and the reed for a scepter, and offer Him the homage due to such exalted rank. Little did they dream of His high honors as earth's Suzerain and heaven's supreme Head! And little do His saints discern that this *is* the essential ceremony of investiture for the King of kings and Lord of lords. He never could assume the place supreme unless He had descended to the depths. Suffering and shame are the divine preliminaries to joy and honor. Those who suffer—they shall reign.

<sup>32</sup> Compare Mk. 15<sup>21</sup> Lu. 23<sup>26-31</sup>. See Heb. 13<sup>12,13</sup>.

<sup>33-34</sup> Compare Mk. 15<sup>22,23</sup> Lu. 23<sup>33-36</sup> Jn. 19<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> See 48 Ps. 69<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Compare Ps. 22<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> The crucifixion of Christ is a holy of holies, where speech seems sacrilegious, and silence sacred.

<sup>38</sup> See Isa. 53<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>30-44</sup> Compare Mk. 15<sup>29-32</sup>; Lu. 23<sup>35-43</sup>. See Ps. 22<sup>7,8</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> The whole scene is vibrant with the presence of God, not only in the Victim and the feeble few who followed, but in the very words of those who hated Him. They spoke great truths which they could not comprehend. *They* were demolishing the true Temple of God. *They* needed salvation. But it could never come if He saved Himself or descended from the cross. The chief priest could not have uttered a more pregnant or more precious truth. How gladly we echo their words! We only change the note of derision into a song of triumph. "*Others He saves: Himself He cannot save!*" Surely they were inspired!

<sup>40</sup> See 26<sup>61-64</sup> Jn. 21<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> There were four others crucified with Christ. Two were malefactors. Two were robbers. One of the male-

factors believed on Him. The robbers reproached Him.

<sup>45-53</sup> Compare Mk. 15<sup>33-38</sup> Lu. 23<sup>44-46</sup> Jn. 19<sup>25-30</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> The dread darkness was but an indication of the withdrawal of the divine Presence from the silent Sufferer. This was incomparably more awful than the opposition of His enemies or the desertion of His friends. Until this darkness enveloped Him, He had always lived in the light of God's smile. Now He was hanging on a tree, and became accursed of God (Gal. 3<sup>13</sup>). Sinless, He became sin (2 Co. 5<sup>21</sup>). Then it was that fire from *above* entered into His bones (Lam. 1<sup>13</sup>). Then the Lord bruised Him (Isa. 53<sup>10</sup>). It was the travail of His soul in these dark hours which settled the question of sin. It is only as we see God against Him then that we can appreciate how much He is for us now. Crucified by man at the behest of Satan, and abandoned by God, He was the most forlorn and forsaken creature in the universe. Only after it is past and the light returns is He able to cry to God. And then He utters that most incomprehensible of all questions, unless, indeed, He suffered for the sins of others. For His own sake God would never have abandoned Him. For my sake (and yours, beloved reader), He endured, not merely the physical pain, the mental torture, the moral degradation which men inflicted, but the deeper, direr despair of the awful enmity of God.

<sup>46</sup> See Ps. 22<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> See Ps. 69<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> His death was different from all others. He did not linger until life ebbed away, but laid down His soul while still strong by committing His Spirit to God. His body was laid in the tomb. His soul went to the unseen. His work was done, and death was His portion until His resurrection.

<sup>51</sup> See 2 Chr. 3<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> The flesh of Christ was figured by the curtain in the temple which hid the presence of God from the holy place. God was not manifest in His flesh, but in its rending. Our union with Christ does not commence until His crucifixion. We were crucified, entombed, raised, and are ascended and seated in Him.

54-61 Compare Mk.15<sup>39-47</sup> Lu.23<sup>47-56</sup> Jn. 1938-42.

54 The kingdom proclamation closed with the acknowledgment of Peter that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God (16<sup>16</sup>). His priestly ministry closes with the centurion's declaration that He is the Son of God. Thus we are given a foretaste of the final effect of both of these ministries. In the day of His return, Israel will exultantly acclaim Him King and the nations of the earth will acknowledge Him their Lord.

55 See Lu. 8<sup>2,3</sup>.

56 See 13<sup>55</sup>.

57 The shame and ignominy, as well as the sufferings, are now over. Though they appointed His grave with the lawless, God put Him in a rich man's tomb. The Romans would have left His body till it wasted away or was devoured by birds of prey. The Jews would have put it in a felon's grave. God indicated His mind by providing two honorable men, Joseph and Nicodemus (Jn. 19<sup>39</sup>), to attend to His entombment. Joseph of Arimathea, translated, means "He adds the heights."

62 The morrow after the preparation was the great sabbath which began the festival of Unleavened Bread. But the religious leaders did not rest nor did they allow Pilate peace. They now realized that they had only fulfilled His own predictions, and that, should He rise from the dead, or even appear to do so, they would be in a worse predicament than ever. From the divine side it was important that they should have ample assurance of His resurrection. Nothing could be more convincing than the story of the guard. Their plan was an excellent one to prove, not disprove, His return to life.

63 See 16<sup>21</sup> 17<sup>23</sup> 20<sup>19</sup>.

64 Twelve times we are told that He would rise "the third day". Why do they tell Pilate "after three days", and then set the guard hardly more than a day after His death? Pilate was a Roman. They used the Latin idiom. Mark, who wrote for Romans, also uses this form (Mk. 8<sup>31</sup>; 9<sup>31</sup>; 10<sup>34</sup>). In Greek it is literal, "the third day". In Latin it is idiomatic, "after three days". In Hebrew it is an idiom which accords with all their chronological computations, "three days and three nights".

## Matthew 27:54-28:4

66 The "detail" of soldiers, was a small squad which, in Latin, was called a *custodian*. From this we get our word custody. Pilate uses the Latin military term for which the Greek had no exact equivalent. Hence it is transliterated, rather than translated in the sublinear rendering.

1 Compare Mk.16<sup>1-4</sup> Lu.24<sup>1,2</sup> Jn.20<sup>1</sup>.

1 The enigmatical phrase, "the evening of the sabbaths," when the Roman watch was set, is the key to a problem which astute theologians have declared to be unsolvable. The Hebrew day, in starting at sundown, commenced in the middle of an "evening". The evening of one day lasted till sundown, after that it was counted as the evening of the next day. Thus each day had two evenings, one at its commencement and another at its close. Each evening was in two days. The evening when the watch was set was in two sabbaths. One, the first day of Unleavened Bread, was a special sabbath, coming but once a year. The other was the usual weekly sabbath. The conjunction of these two at their common evening satisfies the phrase "the evening of the sabbaths," and furnishes the key to the chronology of the passion week.

1 "One of the sabbaths" is the only correct translation of the phrase usually rendered "the first day of the week". The word *first* is not there. It is simply *one*, and is applied to the *eleventh* hour (Mt.20<sup>12</sup>), which, in that case, was last, not first. The word *day* is not in the text at all. The word "week" is in the plural, and is precisely the same as the form in the preceding sentence. If it is rendered "sabbaths" there it must also be "sabbaths" here. So there is no recourse but to translate "one of the sabbaths."

The key to this expression lies in the law of the Firstfruits (Lev. 23<sup>9-14</sup>). Ending with the day before Pentecost there were seven sabbaths (Lev.23<sup>15</sup>) from the day before the waving of the "sheaf". These are referred to in the phrase "one of the sabbaths". Every mention of this phrase places it between the Passover and Pentecost, (1 Co.16<sup>2</sup> and 8 Acts 20<sup>1</sup> and 6). And the other occurrences refer to our Lord's resurrection (Mk.16<sup>2</sup> Lu.24<sup>1</sup> Jn. 20<sup>1-19</sup>). He was raised on a sabbath, not the first day of the week, which would be our Sunday. His res-

urrection on the sabbath is a token that His work was complete. Redemption is now a matter of entering into His stopping, not the beginning of a new week of toil and labor.

5-8-Compare Mk.16<sup>5-8</sup> Lu.24<sup>3-11</sup>.

9-10 Compare Mk.16<sup>9-11</sup>. See Jn.20<sup>17</sup>.

18 This account is principally concerned with the rejection of the kingdom. How fitting that it should close with a preview of its establishment in the coming eon! The place is significant. Satan took Him to a high mountain to show Him the kingdoms of the earth. The transformation was on a mountain. The place speaks of His exaltation. This will not be realized until He comes in glory. He has not yet taken His great power (Un.11<sup>17</sup>). The apostles never went out to all nations.

On the contrary, Peter was opposed when he went to the proselyte Cornelius (Ac.11<sup>3</sup>). They never baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit. They used the titles of Christ intelligently when they baptized. They used "Jesus Christ" in baptizing Israelites, "Lord Jesus" for Samaritans (Ac.8<sup>16</sup>). They never used "Christ Jesus," the title of His present heavenly glory. They never used the formula here given because they knew that it was reserved for the future kingdom proclamation. They never disciplined the nations, as such. The Lord was not with them till the conclusion of that eon, but left them soon after, when He ascended. This commission cannot be carried out until His return in power and glory to bless all nations through His people Israel.

## MARK'S ACCOUNT

MARK makes us acquainted with the model Servant. It presents a scene of intense activity. No sooner is a deed done than "straightway" we are engaged with another. The Servant is introduced without a genealogy, for His deeds are sufficient credentials. His birth, His childhood, and His youth are passed over, for in them He was not equipped for service. The account begins with His induction into active ministry by the forerunner, John the baptist.

In Matthew His regal relation to the royal nation, Israel, is emphasized. They are to rule the other nations. Luke's account is wider in its sympathies, and brings blessing to all mankind through the favored people. The scope of Mark is still broader, for it reaches out to all creation. Wherever there is work to be done He is ready with untiring zeal and humble obedience. Seldom is He called "Lord", for here He is in the place of a servant.

We are not so much engaged with Him as with His work. We are told what He did, and why and how. His own feelings are directly related to the results of His acts.

It is generally supposed that Mark is the writer of this account. If so, it is a striking instance of God's grace and wisdom, for Mark himself, as a servant, was the most notable failure of our Lord's followers. Though the son of a very godly mother, in whose home in Jerusalem the disciples met for worship and prayer (Ac. 12<sup>12</sup>), and the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4<sup>10</sup>), and probably a convert of Peter (1 Pt. 5<sup>13</sup>), and once chosen to accompany Barnabas and Paul on their missionary journey, yet he deserted them at Perga and returned to Jerusalem. When he proposed to join their second journey, Paul would not have him and chose rather to separate from Barnabas than to take him along (Ac. 15<sup>26-38</sup>). Thus the traitorous tax gatherer Matthew tells us of the King; the selfish John gives us the loving Son; the unsuccessful physician Luke portrays the sympathetic Healer; and the discredited

servant Mark sets forth the true and faithful Servant of Jehovah.

But we must look beyond Mark's failure to see its true significance. It was used by God to separate Paul from association with Jerusalem. When again they became friendly, Mark represented the Circumcision body of believers (Col. 4<sup>10-11</sup>) which were then joined to the Uncircumcision to form the joint body (Ephesians 3<sup>6-13</sup>) which was introduced through Paul, which ignores all physical distinctions, and which is the truth for the present time.

This account, then, presents our Lord as a Servant of the Circumcision for the sake of the truth of God, to confirm the patriarchal promises (Ro. 15<sup>8</sup>). He never leaves the land. He does not give the children's bread to puppies (7<sup>27</sup>). Very few crumbs fall from the table for feeding those outside the narrow pale of Israel. And yet *through* them, after His resurrection, He reaches out with blessing for the whole creation.

Mark's account is characterized by some significant omissions. Except on two special occasions, the Servant is never addressed as Lord. Only after His resurrection is he so styled (16<sup>19,20</sup>). The word "law" does not occur, for though His service conforms to the law it is not measured by it but exceeds all legal demands. The Servant does not set forth the manifesto of the kingdom as in Mt. 5-7, and has no "Lord's prayer". The parables are fewer. Passages which set forth the majesty and glory of the Lord are omitted or abbreviated.

The Servant's shrinking from public notice is very evident in Mark as in such passages as 1<sup>38</sup>7<sup>24,36</sup>8<sup>26</sup>. This is exquisitely brought out in 9<sup>16-25</sup>. From the adoration of the overawed throng who perceive some lingering glory of the transformation on the mount He turns in the unrelenting continuity of filial service to heal the boy before a great multitude gathers, and then speedily withdraws to the privacy of the house. In this account His greatest glory is His humility, making Him the perfect Servant of Jehovah.

<sup>2-3</sup> Compare Mal. 3<sup>1</sup> Isa. 40<sup>3</sup> Mt. 3<sup>3</sup> Lu. 34-6 Jn. 115-23.

<sup>4-8</sup> Compare Mt. 3:1-12 Lu. 3:1-18.

<sup>4</sup> John the baptist was the son of a priest, so that he was entitled to exercise the priestly office and enjoy all its privileges, which assured him a life of ease and comfort. Yet, under the urge of the holy Spirit, which filled him even before he was born, he gave up all this for the lowly and austere life of a Nazarite (Nu. 6<sup>2-7</sup>). He was not permitted to eat anything which came of the vine, the symbol of that which cheers the heart of God and man (Jud. 9<sup>13</sup>). Like Samson, he let his hair grow long, a symbol of weakness and dishonor (1 Co. 11<sup>14</sup>). Instead of the linen ephod he wore coarse camel's hair. Instead of living of the altar and eating the best of the sacrifices, he subsisted on locusts and wild honey.

John the baptist was a continual contrast with the Lord. Christ was not a Nazarite. He drank wine, dressed as others did, never wore long hair, and dwelt with His parents until the time for His ministry arrived. John came in the spirit of Elijah, but when the Lord's disciples wished to call down fire from heaven and consume the Samaritans for offending them, as Elijah had done to the men who were sent against him (2 Ki. 11<sup>0-12</sup>), He rebuked them. Christ did not come in the spirit of Elijah at that time. Elijah was an austere proclaimer of righteousness. Christ's message mingled grace with truth. He came, not to condemn sinners, but to save them. In Him conviction was coupled with compassion.

<sup>6</sup> See Lev. 11<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Compare Jn. 1:15, 26, 27.

<sup>9-11</sup> Compare Mt. 3:13-17 Lu. 3:21, 22 Jn. 1:32-34.

<sup>10</sup> The dove is a symbol of peace, of judgment past (Gen. 8<sup>12</sup>) and of sacrifice. (Wherever we read "pigeon" in the versions of Leviticus it should read "dove" as in all the other occurrences.) This is an index of the ministry to which it was the introduction. In contrast to John's fierce denunciations of judgment, He went about a meek, harmless, unresisting victim, until He is finally offered up to God. It was in this that God could delight. He was His Son, not merely by birth, but in His likeness to His Father.

<sup>12-13</sup> Compare Mt. 4:1-11 Lu. 4:1-13.

<sup>12</sup> The wilderness trial was especially intended to test His loyalty to God in connection with His royal claims to David's throne and as the obedient Man. Hence Matthew and Luke enlarge upon it. As it is not a record of service for others, Mark mentions it most briefly.

<sup>14-15</sup> Compare Mt. 4:12-17.

<sup>14</sup> Before this our Lord had performed miracles, such as that at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, and had gathered a following of disciples, but He waited until John's ministry was ended by his imprisonment before beginning His first evangelistic tour.

<sup>15</sup> The era of the nations' rule over Israel was nearing its end, as foretold by Daniel the prophet. Nearly four hundred and eighty years had run their course since Daniel had predicted that four hundred and ninety years should be "cut out" before the fulfillment of his vision (Dan. 9<sup>24</sup>). Normally, not much more than ten years would bring them into the kingdom, but this depended on the attitude of the nation.

It is true that Daniel cut the era into periods, and that there is very evidently some delay after the sixty-ninth heptad, in which Messiah was to be cut off. But no intimation is given that this would be any considerable length of time. So that we may consider that our Lord's ministry as a whole was, from the prophetic viewpoint, within something over seven years of the kingdom. This is the force of the oft-repeated expression which was the burden of His proclamation, "The kingdom of God has *drawn near*." The sixty-ninth heptad of Daniel ended with His triumphal entry (11<sup>8</sup>). Only seven more prophetic years remained, which begin with the confirmation of the covenant with the coming prince (Dan. 9<sup>27</sup>). That it did not come does not in the least disprove the fact that it was near. Epaphroditus *draws near* unto death (Phil. 2<sup>30</sup>) but he did not die at that time. This word is very carefully chosen. The Lord did not predict positively that the kingdom was "at hand" so that it must come in a short time, but relatively, that it needed little time to make it a reality.

<sup>18-20</sup> Compare Mt. 4:18-22 Lu. 5:1-11.

<sup>19</sup> Before a net is used it is important that it is not badly tangled or snarled. The work of these fishermen is a graphic commentary on the word "adjust," which has been rendered by such a variety as *mend, perfect, fit, perfectly join, restore, prepare, and frame*. We have used *adjust, adapt, and attune*.

21-23 Compare Mt.4:13-16 Lu.4:31-32.

<sup>24</sup> It is usually supposed that evil spirits would be the last to acknowledge the Lord, or make Him known, and that we should welcome any agencies if they only bear witness to the truth. But our Lord would not have the testimony of demons and bids them be still. It is no test of an evil spirit if he knows and acknowledges Him. A little later (<sup>34</sup>) we are told that He did not let the demons talk, not because of their ignorance of Him, but because they were aware that He is the Christ.

It is astonishing how much of demon possession was in the land in our Lord's day. We are tempted to suppose that there was unusual activity in the unseen world because of His presence and the nearness of the kingdom. A special outburst of demonism is due in the last days, and is undoubtedly present with us now. Their tactics are the same. They do not deny Christ, but seek rather to associate themselves with Him. Hence they have made marked inroads into the household of faith, under the guise of the holy Spirit of God. Let us beware of every revelation or leading which displaces the Word of God or is in the slightest degree out of harmony with His written revelation.

23-28 Compare Lu.4:33-37.

<sup>27</sup> The Lord's authority over unclean spirits, even more than His control of disease, was the marvel of the people and the means of spreading His fame throughout Galilee. None of their teachers had done anything like this.

29-34 Compare Mt.8:14-17 Lu.4:38-41.

<sup>32</sup> The intense heat of an Eastern day was quickly over once the sun had set. Then it is that the town springs into life, the women go to the well for water and the men come in from work. On this occasion they probably waited until the sabbath was over at sunset before carrying the sick to Him.

35-39 Compare Lu.4:42-44.

<sup>38</sup> Curiosity probably drew many to see Him on the morrow after He did so many wonderful deeds. Yet our Lord did not come to be gazed at but to serve. Hence He eludes them. While it is yet night He leaves the town for private communion with God in preparation for the duties of the day. Nor does He return thither to receive the plaudits of the multitude. He goes on to new fields of labor.

40-45 Compare Mt.8:2-4 Lu.5:12-16.

<sup>40</sup> It would be natural to suppose that the Lord's first efforts to proclaim the kingdom would be among the priests in Jerusalem. They were the religious leaders, and were of great political influence as well. Having gained their support He might hope to reach the lesser lights and the common people. Such would be man's way. But our Lord began with the people. He seemed almost to ignore the priests. But this incident shows the way in which He testified to them. Many lepers were cleansed by Him and His disciples. They would all report to the priests and tell the story of their cleansing.

As leprosy is a type of sin, and the priests were continually occupied with the typical covering of sin, it would require but little spiritual insight for them to recognize the One Who cleansed the lepers as the true Sacrifice Which could eliminate sin altogether. The Lord did not by any means leave the priests without a witness, even if He did not personally perform many miracles in Jerusalem.

44 See Lev. 14:1-32.

<sup>44</sup> We cannot help sympathizing with the mistaken zeal of the healed leper. He knew Christ as his Saviour, but hardly as his Lord. He has many followers, who have zeal without knowledge. They say "How can we help telling abroad what is so precious to us? Surely the Lord will not be displeased, even if He has forbidden it!" What was the result? The Lord could not enter the cities as He had planned, but had to remain outside, to their inconvenience and His discomfort. Alas, that we serve Him so stupidly in return for His grace!

1-12 Compare Mt.9:1-8 Lu.5:17-26.

<sup>4</sup> Eastern houses have flat roofs with battlements, easily accessible from the ground, and a place of resort, especially in the evening. The roof usually was covered with quite a thickness of earth, laid on wooden supports. All this could readily be replaced. The point in this story seems to lie in the contrast between the physical weakness of the paralytic and the efficacy of faith. A strong man might not have been able to force his way into the Lord's presence, but the faith of his friends is sufficient to bring him to a most favorable audience with Him. In response to this, the Lord seems to ignore the feebleness of his physical frame, and proposes a blessing in correspondence with their faith. Hitherto He had proven His power over demons and disease; now He first proclaims the pardon of sins. The scribes are quick to note this advance. They had not grasped the significance of His power over the spirits or over the ills of humanity, and did not see that they necessarily involved the operation of God's spirit, or they would have been prepared for the next step, the pardon of sins. It is not enough to bind Satan and remove ill health to establish the millennium. Sin must also be quelled. So long as sin separates man from God, the kingdom of God cannot come.

<sup>7</sup> See Isa. 43:25.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the Lord announces His authority as the Son of Mankind, to pardon sins. Sin paralyzes. The best sign that He can offer of His power to pardon it is to remove the physical paralysis, which the scribes can see with their physical eyes, and thus, if possible, open their spiritual eyes to the pardon of sins. No wonder that all were amazed and glorified God, for they had never perceived anything like this before. Let us note, then, that the pardon of sins followed the faith of the paralytic.

<sup>13-17</sup> Compare Mt. 9:9-13 Lu. 5:27-32.

<sup>14</sup> The previously chosen apostles, Peter and Andrew, James and John, were ordinary fishermen. After the pardon of sins is first proclaimed our Lord goes lower in the social scale, and chooses Levi Alpheus, who is usually named Matthew, a collector of tribute for the Roman government. Patriotic, respectable citizens would have no con-

nection with him or his kind, so he is forced to be friendly with sinners. It is impossible for us to apprehend the intense dislike of the Jews for those of their own nation who debased themselves by collecting tribute from their fellow countrymen for the Roman power which oppressed them. Besides, under these conditions, no patriotic and self-respecting Jew would do this work, so that, as a class, they were truly contemptible, though their extortionate methods made them well-to-do. Their only motive for engaging in this opprobrious occupation was sordid avarice.

The choice of Levi and the subsequent feast is a well-considered effort on the part of our Lord to gradually introduce the great truth that the nation needed a Sacrifice more than a King. To the religious heart His announcement that He came to call sinners, not the just, was incomprehensible. Only the just will have a place in the kingdom, according to the prophets. Sinners will be destroyed in the judgments that precede it. Yet the Lord seemed to teach the opposite. He seeks to open their hearts to see this by comparing sin with disease. He was not needed by the strong. On the part of those who think themselves just there is no conscious desire for the pardon of sins. The kingdom will not come until the whole nation has learned to say (Isa. 53:6):

*All we, as sheep, are straying;  
We countenance our own way to a  
man,  
And Jehovah intercedes in Him for  
the lawlessness of us all.*

<sup>18-22</sup> Compare Mt. 9:14-17; Lu. 5:33-39.

<sup>18</sup> The general impression that John's ministry was the same in spirit and method as that of our Lord has no foundation in the Scriptures. It was right for his disciples to hunger. But it was most unfitting for the Lord's disciples to fast while He was with them. John came in the spirit of stern Elijah (Lu. 1:17), but the Lord did not come in the spirit of Elijah (Lu. 9:54).

<sup>21</sup> This is used to press home the difference between John's ministry and that of our Lord. But it may be applied with far more force to the futility of seeking to combine the truth for the present with that for the past.

23-28 Compare Mt.12<sup>1-8</sup>Lu.6<sup>1-5</sup>.

23 In the law it was written, "For you shall come into that which was raised by your associate and pluck snips with your hand, yet you shall not swing a scythe on that which your associate raises" (Deut.23<sup>25</sup>). The disciples were perfectly justified in plucking the grain and eating it. What the Pharisees objected to was that they did this work on the sabbath. They had innumerable traditional by-laws as to what could or could not be done on a sabbath, making it a day of restraint rather than repose. The sabbath is for man's benefit, not man for the benefit of the sabbath. The Son of Mankind is Lord of the sabbath.

25 See 1 Sam.21<sup>1-6</sup>.

25 It is notable how little the letter of the law was observed in the presence of God. The priests in the sanctuary profane the sabbath in their ministrations, yet are faultless (Mt.12<sup>5</sup>). David took the show-bread, fresh from the holy place. All this makes it evident that the law was not meant for those in His presence. It was not meant for the righteous, but sinners. Now the Pharisees are standing in the presence of the Lord of the temple and the Lord of the sabbath. It is they who are at fault with their impudent importation of the law into the precincts of the living Temple of Jehovah.

26 See Lev. 24<sup>5-9</sup>.

1-6 Compare Mt.12<sup>9-14</sup>Lu.6<sup>6-11</sup>.

1 As the Pharisees are blind to His glories, He chooses another and a simpler method of enforcing the truth as to the sabbath. Here is a man who cannot work on the sabbath or any other day, for his hand is withered. Such was the sabbath keeping of the Pharisees, a withered, shrunken, spiritless, soulless form, of no benefit to either God or man. As the great miracle of the restoration of Israel takes place in the great sabbatism of a thousand years, of which all other sabbaths were but a type, and thus it is vital to the kingdom that Jehovah should do good on the sabbath, the Pharisees should have known and believed on Him because so many of His signs were done on that day.

6 See Mt. 22<sup>15-16</sup>.

6 Now that the Pharisees had made up their minds to destroy Him, they are reminded of their own impotence. The governor would never countenance an assassination on purely theological grounds. The Jews were always quarrelling about their religious differences, and it would hardly do to make heresy a capital offense, for the various parties all hated one another. The Pharisees were against the Herodians, who were loyal to the base Idumean usurpers, who were foreigners quite as much as the Romans so far as their right to reign was concerned.

But what they needed was a *political* charge. If they could prove Him to be opposed to the powers in possession of the government, it would not be difficult to get Him out of the way. So they lay aside their differences with the Herodians and consult with them how best to accomplish His destruction. Just as Pilate and Herod were reconciled by their common condemnation of Christ, so those who were at enmity among themselves make common cause against Him.

7-12 Compare Mt.12<sup>15-21</sup>Lu.6<sup>17-19</sup>.

13-19 Compare Mt.10<sup>1-4</sup>Lu.6<sup>12-16</sup>.

14 This first kingdom commission should be carefully compared with the creation commission at the close of this account. As twelve is the number of administration or government, there are just twelve chosen to proclaim the coming kingdom. And, when Judas Iscariot is deprived of his place, Matthias must be chosen to keep the full number (Ac.1<sup>26</sup>). But the creation commission is given to the eleven (16<sup>14</sup>). The kingdom heralds are limited to the land and the nation of Israel, the preachers of the creation message go into all the world (16<sup>15</sup>). The former was confined to the apostles. In the latter the signs followed in the case of all who believed (16<sup>17</sup>). The first was never completed. The last was proclaimed everywhere (16<sup>20</sup>).

14 The chief and foremost object of choosing the apostles is usually overlooked, yet it was deemed essential when a new one was to be chosen to take Judas' place. It was *that they might be with Him*.

16 See John 14<sup>2</sup>.

16 See the various lists of the twelve apostles given in the note on Mt. 10<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>18</sup> Simon was called "the Cananite" or "the Zealot" (which means the same) in order to distinguish him from Simon Peter. The term "Cananite" is easily confounded with "Canaanite", an inhabitant of Canaan. But no alien could possibly have been chosen to be an apostle.

<sup>19</sup> The choice of Judas Iscariot seems to be a mystery to many. But it is merely one manifestation of the wider problem of evil. Some have supposed that the Lord did not know at the time how he would turn out. But the Scriptures assure us that the Lord was not ignorant and knew from the beginning that Judas was to be His betrayer (Jn. 13<sup>21</sup>). It must needs be that offenses come. It was part of God's plan that Christ should be betrayed, for it had already found a place in the prophetic Scriptures. Why, then, should He not choose the instrument?

<sup>22-27</sup> Compare Mt.12<sup>24-30</sup> Lu.11<sup>14-23</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> It is significant that scribes from Jerusalem commit the "unpardonable sin", or, as it is also called, the eonian sin. This consists in ascribing the casting out of unclean spirits to their head, the chief of the demons. In the evangel of the kingdom there is not the appeal to pure, unsupported faith which characterizes the evangel of God or the conciliation, which is the evangel for today. A foretaste is given of the powers of the coming eon, by means of signs, which prove the ability of Christ to cope with the powers of darkness and disease, which must be overthrown before the kingdom can come. But if these are ascribed to the unclean spirits themselves, there is no possibility of repentance and pardon because of its very nature. The sin is eonian. It cannot be corrected for the eons. Such as committed it will have no place in the millennial reign or the subsequent kingdom of the Son in the new earth during the last eon. Their salvation waits until the eons are past. The "unpardonable sin" is not one of such enormity as to be beyond the ability of grace. In this economy grace has no limits. Where sin increases, grace superabounds (Ro. 5<sup>21</sup>). Grace reigns, and no sin is sufficiently heinous to dethrone it. Its character is what determines the "unpardonable", eonian sin.

<sup>28-30</sup> Compare Mt. 12<sup>31-32</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Compare Lu. 12<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>31-35</sup> Compare Mt.12<sup>46-50</sup> Lu.8<sup>19-21</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> The Lord's brothers would hardly have *summoned* Him had they believed on Him, or recognized His true dignity. We are not even told that He met them. Instead, He turns our thoughts to others who are summoning Him, and whose call He cannot but hear. He claims kinship with all who serve God and is too busy serving them to be drawn aside by natural ties.

<sup>1-9</sup> Compare Mt.13<sup>1-9</sup> Lu.8<sup>4-8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> We now come to a distinct change in our Lord's ministry. He begins to use parables in speaking to the throngs. It is erroneous to suppose that He does this in order to illustrate and simplify the truth. The parable is used in order to put the truth into such veiled and obscure form that those who are not spiritual can never comprehend it. Even His disciples could not understand His parables until He explained them.

<sup>3</sup> The parable of the sowing is a resumé of His ministry hitherto. He Himself was the Sower. The four classes were those in Israel who heard His word.

The usual trinity of evil, Satan, the flesh and the world, hinder its fruitfulness. Only one class out of the four, represented by His disciples, was really fruitful, and only a few of these in abundant measure. A farmer would say that this was a very poor crop. The proclamation of the kingdom has failed to produce the effect necessary for its realization.

His miracles and signs now take on a new note. There is often delay or danger, to indicate that the kingdom is no longer so near, and that it will not be established for some time, and then only after suffering on the part of the disciples.

<sup>9</sup> The formula "who has ears to be hearing, let him be hearing!" is also significant. Though openly and apparently He speaks to all, it is couched in such language that only those who have spiritual perception will apprehend what He is saying. The rest hear the sound but do not grasp the sense. Parables are puzzles which only they can solve who have the key.

10-13 Compare Mt. 13<sup>10-17</sup> Lu. 8<sup>9-10</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> The kingdom of God had been foretold and typified in their sacred Scriptures, but now the Lord is unfolding a phase of its history which was unknown to the prophets. It is not a *mystery*, in the sense of something mysterious or inexplicable, but merely a *secret*, easily understood once we are initiated into it. The disciples imagined that the Lord's proclamation of the kingdom would continue until He would gain the support of the populace and then seize the sovereignty for Himself. He could not keep on proclaiming the kingdom and at the same time openly teach that the proclamation would be rejected, so He conveys this important fact to His disciples and those spiritual enough to understand, yet conceals it from the multitude by speaking in parables.

<sup>12</sup> It cannot be reiterated too often that parables were not used by our Lord in preaching the evangel that they might receive the pardon of sins, but for the very opposite end. He spoke in parables *lest* the penalty of their sins should be pardoned. It is not gospel, but judgment. To "apply" it to the evangel for this day of grace is utterly contrary to the spirit of the conciliation which we should preach (2 Co. 5<sup>19</sup>). We seek to assure men that God is not imputing their offenses to them. We do not veil our message in figures which they cannot understand. The Spirit of God has told us explicitly, not in veiled figures, that this economy will end in apostasy (1 Ti. 4<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>13</sup> The twelve apostles themselves did not perceive the significance of the parable, so He explains its symbols to them. Every detail of the picture He paints was most familiar to them all. In the East there are no fences and the roads go right through the fields of grain. There is but one Sower, the Lord Himself. The figure is important, for it postpones the kingdom until the harvest. He has not been reaping, as the apostles supposed. The end is still far off. By that time three classes who have heard the word will fail of fruition. It is the old kingdom refrain: those who endure to the consummation shall be saved.

14-20 Compare Mt. 13<sup>18-23</sup> Lu. 8<sup>11-15</sup>.

21-23 Compare Mt. 5<sup>14-16</sup>; Lu. 8<sup>16, 17</sup>; 11<sup>33</sup>.  
<sup>21</sup> It is evident that the light He has just given them is the lamp of which He speaks. He would not have them hide the light beneath self-satisfaction or indolence, which are suggested under the figure of a measure or couch. It would be very fine for them to enjoy the measure which had been given to them and repose in the illumination which had been granted to them, but that is not the purpose for which He had given them the light.

24-25 Compare Lu. 8<sup>18</sup>. See Mt. 7<sup>2</sup> Lu. 6<sup>38</sup> 19<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> In this parable He carries on the previous thought concerning the measure. As they impart to others what they had received their own measure will be increased. Spiritual blessings, unlike the physical, increase the more they are distributed.

<sup>25</sup> This enigmatical statement can only be understood in the light of the circumstances in which it was spoken. Those who had received spiritual blessing from Christ were to receive more: those who received none would lose even the physical privileges which they had as Jews.

<sup>26</sup> Here they have an even more emphatic hint that the kingdom would not come immediately, but by a gradual process like the growing of grain. Later on in His ministry He postpones the harvest to the conclusion of the eon (Mt. 13<sup>39</sup>). The disciples were anxious to put their sickle to the grain while it was in the blade. Even after His resurrection, when the grain was in the ear, the pentecostal era showed that it was not yet ripe. The kernels will not be full until the end time.

30-32 Compare Mt. 13<sup>31</sup> Lu. 13<sup>18, 19</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Ordinarily, wild mustard does not assume such dimensions, but, under favorable conditions, it might well grow into a tree. It was the smallest seed sown by the farmer and became the greatest of all his garden greens. This quick growth is quite in contrast to the previous parable, and the pungent mustard is not food, like grain. The flying creatures of heaven have a sinister significance, being interpreted as Satan in the parable of the sowing. Is not this a forecast of that false premature phase of the kingdom spoken of under the figure of great Babylon?

33-34 Compare Mt. 13<sup>34-35</sup>.

35-41 Compare Mt.8<sup>18-27</sup> Lu.22<sup>22-25</sup>.

37 The lake of Galilee is subject to sudden squalls when the wind sweeps down from the mountains on the east. In a short time it changes from a placid mirror-like surface to a leaping, boiling cauldron, in which a small ship could hardly live. There must have been a marvelous calm in His own heart or He would have been roused by the pitching of the ship, or at least He would have been disturbed by the terror of His disciples. No mere man could have preserved his calmness in such danger. And how foolish for a mortal to take the wind to task and talk to the sea! But the wind and the waters were obedient to His will!

Again we have a picture of the career of the kingdom, now that its proclamation has not been received. The sea speaks of the nations (Un.17<sup>15</sup>), the storm of the time of the great affliction, the wind of the spiritual powers which will stir up the nations at the time of the end to persecute and destroy the people of the kingdom. When He comes to rescue His saints then He will say again, "Be still!" And there will be the millennial calm.

1-17 Compare Mt.8<sup>28-34</sup> Lu.8<sup>26-37</sup>. This thrice-told story shows the fiercest display of the enemy's power entirely subject to the Lord. Mark dwells more fully than Matthew on the desperate condition of the man, in accord with the scope of this account in which service rendered to man is portrayed.

1 The name of this place is so variously given in the MSS. that we have appealed to the topography of the country to settle it, and come to the same conclusion as the editor of *Sinaiticus* (2<sup>a</sup>). *Alexandrinus* has it *Gadarenes*, *Vaticanus* has *Gerasenes*, and also *Sinaiticus*, before being edited. This is probably a variant of *Gergesenes*. *Gadara* was a well-known Greek city, celebrated for its temples, its theater, and its warm baths, but it was several hours distant from the southern shore of lake Galilee. The little town of *Gergesa*, the ruins of which the Arabs call *Chersa*, is "on the other side" from Galilee, and is the only part of the shore line which combines all the features necessary to the narrative. A steep mountain dips almost immediately into the lake, with hardly any beach. Tombs are cut in the rock above the city. Every natural feature accords

with the inspired account. Hence we have chosen *Gergesenes* as the true reading.

8 It is the unusual which should strike us in each of our Lord's signs and miracles, for therein lies the special lesson each of His recorded acts is intended to teach. Here we find a man obsessed with many demons, who do not come out at His first command, and they are sent into the sea. On another occasion the Lord speaks of Israel at the end time as possessing seven times as many demons as formerly (Mt.12<sup>43-45</sup>). Their last state will be much worse than their first. This is suggested here by the legion of demons who infested the unfortunate demoniac. A Roman legion was about six thousand strong. Israel has kept herself from idolatry for many a century, but when the great image is set up, many will worship the wild beast (Un.13<sup>8</sup>). The first proclamation of the kingdom is unheeded even as His first charge to the legion who were in the demoniac. But subsequently they find their way into the sea, just as Satan will be sent into the abyss.

15 The previous condition of the demoniac, restless, insubordinate, self-torturing, corresponds to their history under the law. The chains and fetters of the law never were strong enough to hold them. They were often engaged in insane internecine wars among themselves. Judah was fighting against Israel, one party was pitted against another, and to this very day they are inclined to torture themselves. What a change when they, like the demoniac, find rest and righteousness and reason at His feet in the day of the Lord!

16 It is quite probable that there were other herds of hogs being kept contrary to the law, and that their owners feared that they, also, would be destroyed if the Lord remained in that country. It will be noted that the Lord's purpose was to send the demons into the abyss, but they begged to go into the hogs. He only gave His permission, for it was not a part of His mission at this time to enforce the law of Moses. Yet, by that inscrutable law of God which always conspires to carry out His will, both the keepers of the hogs and the demons were judged in accord with His purpose.

18-20 Compare Lu. 8:38, 39.

18 Though they did not desire the Lord's presence in that region, He did not leave them without a witness, but sends the demoniac back among them to bear testimony to His mercy. Decapolis was a considerable district in the allotment of Manasseh, reaching as far as Syria, embracing ten cities of some size, the largest, according to Josephus, being Scythopolis (Wars of the Jews, 3, 9, 7). Gadara, Hippos, and Pella were also of the number.

21-24 Compare Mt. 9:18, 19 Lu. 8:41, 42.

22 Again we are treated to a delightful presentation of the course of the kingdom proclamation in an aspect hitherto untouched. The redemption of Israel in Egypt was by blood and by power. They were shielded from God's judgments by the blood on the door posts (Ex. 12:7). They were delivered from Pharaoh by the waters of the Red Sea. It is possible to have one without the other. The lack of response has made it evident that there will be some delay in the setting up of the kingdom. This is pictured by the time it took Him to reach the home of Jairus. But during the interval He gives us a type of blood redemption. While Israel as a nation lies dead, awaiting His coming, a remnant from among them, who, by faith, come into vital contact with His righteousness, receive the salvation of their souls long before His return in power to raise the nation from death.

25-34 Compare Mt. 9:20-22 Lu. 8:43-48 Lev. 15:19-27.

26 Israel had many physicians that promised to cure her. The various sects, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes, all claimed to have a sovereign remedy for her ills. Time after time a saviour arose to deliver her from her enemies, but it always led to more bloodshed and severer tyranny.

The difference between this woman and the crowd which jostled Him and crowded Him on all sides was a conscious knowledge of her uncleanness according to the law and her faith. They could come into violent collision with Him and receive no benefit. She barely came into contact with His cloak and instantly received the boon which she craved. So today, His grace abounds to those who know their need.

The time and method and character of her salvation are most significant at this juncture in our Lord's ministry. It is, perhaps, the clearest intimation yet given that, while the nation will linger and die, and cannot be raised until His return, a remnant among them will have faith for the salvation which comes by blood, and know the blessedness and power of a personal contact with the Christ Who has not yet arrived at His intended goal—the resurrection of Israel.

Meanwhile, as in Lazarus' case, the delay is fatal. All hope of saving the life of the little girl is gone. He told His disciples that Lazarus was reposing. So here He tells them she is drowsing. He views it from the divine side, but they from the human. To the God of resurrection death is no more than sleep. His voice can as easily rouse the dead as we can awaken those who are slumbering.

There is a sharp contrast between these two miracles in all their details, all of which are suggestive of the differences between the salvation which comes to the faithful before His future advent and that which He will bring with Him when He comes. In one case there was diffident yet insistent faith, and the salvation is definitely founded on it. In the other, the little girl was beyond believing, and her father's faith was feeble, while the attendants were plainly dubious. In the former the woman pressed through the throng to reach Him. She comes to Christ. In the latter He goes to the little girl. Christ comes to her. In the former the healing is instantaneous. Such was the salvation by faith through His blood which His disciples enjoyed even though the kingdom did not come. In the latter the blessing was delayed until His arrival. Such will be the case when Christ comes again to restore all that the prophets have foretold.

We do not in the least lose our appreciation of His power and mercy as displayed in these signs when we see in them an intimation of much greater and more glorious achievements. To "apply" them to His present work of grace can only lead to confusion. Much of the action can have no proper parallel in His dealings with sinners today. He does *not* expect the sinner to come to Him. He actually prays the sinner to be conciliated (2 Co. 5:20). He

does not delay conferring salvation until His coming. All these things are significant only when we associate them with the future course of the kingdom proclamation which He was then preaching.

35-37 Compare Lu. 8:49-50.

38-43 Compare Mt. 9:23-36; Lu. 8:51-56.

1-4 Compare Mt. 13:53-57; Lu. 4:16-30.

1 On a former occasion (Lu. 4:16) He had gone to Nazareth to speak, and found His old neighbors and friends actually hostile to Him, so that they sought to push Him over the precipice near which the city was built. At that time He simply walked away through the midst of them. Now He returns. They have doubtless heard of His fame and marvel at His wisdom. Yet such is the perversity of human nature that they could not bring themselves to believe that their townsman and relative could possibly be the Elect of God. It is even so with others who seek to speak the word of God. Spiritual values are at an enormous discount among famil-  
iars.

3 See Jn. 6:42; Ga. 1:19.

3 There is a delightful contrast between our Lord, the Servant of the Circumcision (Ro. 15:8) and Paul, His minister for the nations (Ro. 15:16). Christ was a carpenter, Who built permanent habitations on earth, since the Circumcision, to whom He ministered, will have their eonian dwellings on the earth. Paul was a tent maker, for those to whom he was sent have no allotment down here, but are merely camping, waiting for their eonian dwelling in the heavens. In fullest harmony with this is the fact that we do not know Christ according to the flesh. We are not related to Him by physical ties (as the Circumcision were) nor do we enter any but a purely spiritual association, not on earth, but in the heavens. How fitting, then, that we should make His acquaintance, not on earth, in humiliation, but in the heavens, whither we shall go to meet Him. God has wisely planned that all of these physical details shall be counterparts of spiritual truths. Even Paul's own career changed from an itinerant ministry, to an epistolary, spiritual one.

4 See Jn. 4:44.

5-6 Compare Mt. 13:58.

7-13 Compare Mt. 10:5-15; Lu. 9:1-6.

8 See Lu. 22:35.

8 The wisdom of these instructions is not apparent to us of the West. They were going to their fellow countrymen in the neighboring villages, and it would be much the best way to get to their hearts and gain their confidence to throw themselves wholly on their hospitality. It was a point of honor to entertain wayfarers. The villagers would gladly provide them all with bread, they were not to collect anything by begging, and even small sums of money would be refused for such hospitality as they would receive. An extra pair of sandals would only be a burden, and, as they slept in the same tunic which they wore during the day, one would suffice. Their main equipment was the lack of encumbrances which we regard as necessities.

10 Indeed, so hospitable were the villagers, that each one wanted the privilege of entertaining a guest, and so much time would be wasted in useless entertainment, as each new host would insist on some special token of hospitality. So the Lord limited them to a single home in each village. Later, our Lord asked them if they had wanted anything, and they answered, "Nothing" (Lu. 22:35).

11 See Ac. 13:51; 18:6.

13 See Ja. 5:14.

14 Compare Mt. 14:1,2; Lu. 9:7-9.

14 John the baptist did not perform miracles or wonders. He came in the spirit and power of Elijah. Now, if he was empowered to perform mighty deeds such as Elijah did, Herod might well be afraid. In that case fifty men might be sent to behead him and lose their lives in the attempt. It was well for Herod that John did no mighty deeds, since the baptist had not been slow to denounce him for his sins, and would not have hesitated to judge him accordingly. It seems that John himself was disappointed in the outcome of his work, especially that he should be imprisoned by the man whom he had denounced. He was an intermediate between the sternness of the prophet and the grace of Christ.

15 Compare Mt. 16:14.

15 Even the disciples did not distinguish His gracious spirit from Elijah's stern and destructive ministry. No wonder some thought Him the greatest prophet of their history.

17 Compare Mt. 14:5-15; Lu. 3:18,20.

<sup>18</sup> It was contrary to the plainest precepts of the law to marry the wife of a brother (Lev. 18:16; 20:21). This Herod was usually surnamed *Antipas*, being the son of Herod the great and a Samaritan woman named Malthace. First he married a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, but he repudiated her, which brought on a war with Aretas. His marriage to Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip, and granddaughter of Herod the Great, brought on him the denunciation of the baptist. This woman caused his ruin, for she induced him to go to Rome to obtain the title of king, for he was only called king by courtesy, being the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. Instead of receiving added honors he lost his office and was banished by the emperor Caligula to Gaul, where he probably died.

<sup>21</sup> Compare Mt. 14:6-9. See Gen. 40:20.

<sup>23</sup> See Esther 5:3-6; 7:2.

<sup>21</sup> This is a royal scene. The tetrarch and the government of Galilee are present. It is doubtless inserted here to provide a contrast to the rightful King Who had been gathering His aides about Himself, and Who was proclaiming the kingdom of God. Herod demeans himself to such an extent as to have his own daughter dance before them. Such entertainment was usually provided by low class girls, for a self-respecting woman was not supposed to be seen in a company of men. The dancing consisted largely in a series of postures and attitudes which were often indecent. And, because this pleased the coarse taste of his guests, he promised the half of his kingdom! That kingdom could not have been worth much! Nor was the king worth any more. Instead of ruling his realm in righteousness, he himself was ruled by his passions and his pride. On account of his bombastic boast, he is afraid to do what is right. What a coward! What a contrast to that uncrowned King Who walks about his realm, unspotted, unafraid! He provides no entertainment but the truth. He attracts by His holiness. Instead of sacrificing a righteous man on the altar of His folly, He becomes the great Sacrifice for sinners.

<sup>23</sup> This was only a vain-glorious boast. He could not dispose of the least part of his kingdom, for he was a vassal of Rome.

<sup>27-29</sup> Compare Mt. 14:10-12.

<sup>30</sup> Compare Lu. 9:10.

<sup>30</sup> As Mark is especially concerned with service, it is in keeping with its character to give some details that particularly pertain to the servants' work. They acknowledged their Lord, as all good servants should, by giving Him a full account of their actions. He, as a reward for their labors, suggests retirement and rest. He and they would leave the multitude, and seek seclusion and refreshment in the wilderness. It is most significant to follow this thought, and see that, when they came to the private place, there were about five thousand men there, and, instead of finding leisure to eat, they feed this vast throng, and, rather than rest themselves, the people repose on the grass and the disciples wait on them. The Lord found rest and refreshment in serving others. Typically, this takes us to the time when the labors of the apostles will be over, and when they, as good shepherds, not only rule over the tribes of Israel, but lead them to verdant oases and to waters of rest. So great is His compassion that He will not refuse to serve until they are satisfied. In that day there will be scant dependence on human provision and foresight. The blessing of God will displace the arduous efforts of men. The very orderliness of the scene suggests the presence of a government which functions perfectly. The numbers used recall to mind the thousand years of His millennial reign, for there was one cake for each thousand men. But, more than all, we must note that the miracle is no strain on His beneficence. His resources are not exhausted by the effort. The fragments which remain fill twelve panniers, incredibly more than the five cakes with which He began. So the millennial blessings are by no means the limit of God's power. They are but the prelude to greater glories in the succeeding eon, which will culminate in the consummation at its end, which will be the final demonstration of God's power and man's impotence. During the eons man toils to provide his own necessities but sinks into defeat and death. And it is in death alone that God can act unembarrassed by the aid of His creatures, and unhindered in the activities of His heart.

<sup>31-39</sup> Compare Mt. 14:13-21 Lu. 9:10-17 Jn. 6:1-13.

<sup>43</sup> To fully appreciate the import of this sign, it must be compared with a similar one which occurred some time later. The cumulative contrast cannot be fully seen in an inaccurate version, but is readily observed when it is noted that the numbers are confirmed by the kinds of "baskets" and that the twelve large panniers which were left after feeding five thousand with five cakes were *packed* (Jn. 6:13) while the seven smaller hampers left after feeding the four thousand with seven cakes, were simply *full*. And yet, after seeing both of these signs, the disciples worry because they forgot to get bread! It is almost impossible for us to believe that God can do most when man's aid is least.

45-51 Compare Mt. 14:22-33; Jn. 6:14-21.

<sup>45</sup> There is a new setting of the scenes. The separation from the disciples and ascent into a mountain for intercession with God pictures His ascension and priestly mediacy for Israel during their apostasy. Their torment in rowing corresponds to the fearful affliction of the time of the end, such as has not yet occurred, neither will occur again. The contrary wind gives us the cause of their torment, the terrible, yet unseen spiritual powers which will seek to destroy them, by stirring up the nations against them. His walking on the sea symbolizes His control of the turbulent upheavals of mankind. When He comes to them the wind dies down. When He comes to Israel the spiritual powers are seized and Satan is bound.

It is blessed to see, in this miracle, a proof of His power over the wind and the waves. It is wonderful to see Him walk on the water. But is it not more marvelous to see in all this a *sign* of His far greater power over the rebellious hordes of the unseen world and the surging masses of mankind? When He comes again, then He will indeed speak peace to the trembling hearts of His terrified disciples. Such scenes as this will give confidence to His saints in that awful time of trouble which is impending over the earth today. The powers of evil may swoop down upon them. They may stir the nations into still greater hatred of the Jew. Yet those of them who know Him will wait for Him to arise and calm His creatures.

53-56 Compare Mt. 14:34-36.

<sup>53</sup> The lake of Galilee was so named from its western shore, but it was also called Tiberias, for the city of that name, and Gennesaret, from the region on its northwestern strand. Josephus is eloquent in his praises of the natural advantages of this part of Galilee. Though far below sea level, the climate seems to have been most equable. All sorts of fruits flourished in its fertile soil. It was abundantly watered from copious springs and streamlets. Does not this suggest that this is another prophetic preview of the kingdom, in which the whole earth will produce abundantly of all good things? He has come down from above and rescued His own from the wind and the sea, just as He will save Israel from the clutches of Satan and the nations. Now the time of blessing is due. Hence we find Him in fertile and flourishing Gennesaret, carrying health and blessing wherever He goes. Happy, indeed, was that land, for He Who had stilled the fears of His people, now lays His healing hand on their afflictions, a prophecy of the day when the Sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2). The merest contact with His robe brings salvation. Touching the tassel entitles all to participate in His finished righteousness.

1-13 Compare Mt. 15:1-9.

<sup>1</sup> It was the custom to eat with the fingers. No forks or spoons were used in conveying food to the mouth. Yet the Pharisees were not worried about cleanliness or table manners, but about conformity to tradition. Instead of cleansing the inside of the hands which touched the food, they rinsed the outside, clenching their fists when they washed. Going to market involved contact with others, which they deemed contaminating, hence they would not eat until they had been sprinkled. The baptizing of cups and ewers and copper vessels and couches, was not for cleanliness, but ceremonial purity, and the most perfunctory application of water in almost any way was deemed highly devout. The word baptism is really Greek, and differs from sprinkling or washing or bathing only in the fact that it was ceremonial rather than practical. Its cleansing was spiritual, not physical.

6-7 Compare Isa. 29<sup>13</sup>.

6 The religious Jew delighted in forms and ceremonies, pious ejaculations and protracted prayers, yet at heart he was not vitally concerned with the things of God. No better test could have been made than to bring them into the presence of Him Who was the Image of God and the Word of God. Instead of worshipping, they criticised Him.

7 The writer of these notes cannot help uttering a heartfelt prayer that they will never be taken for more than what they are intended to be—suggestive thoughts which lead to and not from the sacred text. He would rather they would all vanish than that they should stand between any one and the living oracles. May we never be tainted with the spirit of the ancient Rabbis who did not scruple to place their words above the Sacred Scrolls. In the Talmud we read: "The words of the scribes are more noble than the words of the law; for the words of the law are both hard and easy [to understand], but the words of the scribes are all easy." Another traditional saying was "He who deals with scripture does a thing indifferent; he who reads the Mishna has a reward; but he who devotes himself to the Gemara is most meritorious of all." In the same way the commentaries and confessions and creeds of Christendom have a stronger hold on the hearts of many of His saints, than the inspired Scriptures. May He grant that many will return to the fountain undefiled!

8 Sad to say, even in this day some of the saints have been led to practically repudiate God's word for the tenets of those who propose to explain it. No teacher is worthy of the name who supplants the Scriptures.

9 The "Corban" was the approach offering, by means of which the offerer sought the favor of God. All a young man had to do to be free from the support of his parents was to say this word and he was free from all further obligation. In theory he was giving God a greater place than his parents. In fact, he was not only dishonoring his progenitors, but God, and invalidating His law.

10 Compare Ex. 20<sup>12</sup>; 21<sup>17</sup>.

14-23 Compare Mt. 15<sup>10-20</sup>.

20 The supercilious Pharisees, who were so concerned lest they should be contaminated by contact with their inferiors, or by eating food with hands ceremonially unclean, were themselves the most contaminating of all. Their pride and evil reasonings were most defiling even when they complained of the disciples who ate with unwashed hands.

24-30 Compare Mt. 15<sup>21-28</sup>.

24 Our Lord now comes near the borders of the land. This is most instructive and interesting to all who are outside the pale of the promises. Hitherto He had been blessing His own people and proselytes to Judaism. Now He comes into contact with a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician woman. How will He act in the presence of this foreigner? He shows none of the arrogant hatred of the Jew, yet insists that she take the place to which the prophets assign the nations. She has no right at the table or to the food on it. This is for Israel. Our Lord was a Servant of the Circumcision (Ro. 15<sup>8</sup>). He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He had nothing for this alien. Instead of defending her nation and claiming equality with the favored Jew, she acknowledges their priority and superiority. But she was satisfied that His blessing was so bountiful that Israel could not contain it, and would leave an overplus for the nations. Thus she glorified God and believed His word. Such is the blessing of the nations in the kingdom.

Even during Paul's itinerant ministry, the nations partook of Israel's spiritual things. They were debtors (Ro. 15<sup>27</sup>). In the millennium they will be blessed with and through Israel. But, now that the secret of the present administration of grace has been revealed, we are no longer guests. We are not puppies, glad to get the scraps, but members of God's family (Eph. 2<sup>19</sup>). The Syro-Phoenician woman's place was far below Israel's. The transcendent riches of God's grace which are ours in Christ Jesus place us immeasurably above them. During the period from the call of Saul to his imprisonment in Rome the nations were Israel's guests, but gradually, as Israel's provision failed, they were given food of their own, until they needed none from Israel.



31-37 Compare Mt. 15:29-31.

<sup>32</sup> The meeting with the Greek woman of Syro-Phoenicia suggests a phase of kingdom service for which Israel, in our Lord's day, was utterly incapable. In Jehovah's day the Lord's word will go forth from Jerusalem. The evangel will be proclaimed in every corner of the earth. The knowledge of Jehovah will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. It will be the greatest missionary program the earth has ever seen, and the first to be fully successful.

But the nation of Israel in our Lord's day was no more fitted to proclaim the evangel than a deaf-mute. They did not hear Him themselves, and they would not proclaim His message because they could not hear. This is the setting which suggests itself when they bring the Lord a deaf-mute, and He heals him. The peculiar method of healing has remained quite a mystery to theologians, who are at a loss why He should not heal him with a word, instead of putting His fingers in his ears and touching his tongue. Some have suggested that saliva is a healing agent! But the saliva was not put on his tongue. Little significance can be gathered from His actions unless we interpret their symbolism along rational lines.

There are three elements in their preparation for the millennial ministry: His works, His words, His sufferings. His works will force themselves on their attention. This is signified by His thrusting His fingers in the deaf man's ears. His words are signified by the saliva which came out of His mouth, and, accompanied by the touching of his tongue, enable them to talk. He will put His words in their mouths. His groans are the signs of His sufferings. Through them Israel will be saved. And the unrestrainable proclamation was but a small rehearsal of that glorious day when the glad tidings will be heard in every land. The Jews are the great missionary nation. They are now being schooled in the great university of experience for the future evangelization of the world. They are inured to every climate, familiar with every language, at home in every country. Sustained by the authority of the King of kings, they will carry out the first successful world missionary movement.

1-3 Compare Mt. 15:32-34.

<sup>1</sup> Why were there two different occasions on which our Lord fed a great company of people? Why five cakes in one instance and seven in the other? Great as is the miracle performed on these two occasions, we are not satisfied until we can read the *sign*. What did it signify?

Man shall not live on bread only, but on every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God. The written and the living Word are the true bread of God. The living Word cannot be divided. But the written word is composed of separate books. These may well be represented by the cakes given to the multitude.

These signs are in the wilderness, hence cannot be in the kingdom, but give us His provision for His people before the kingdom comes. The kingdom testimony is divided into two distinct periods, one, in the first century, which is past, and one, still to come, at the end of the eon, which is future. The first sign, where there were five cakes, brings before us the past means of subsistence, of the kingdom saints, the first three "gospels", Acts and Hebrews. (John is intended for the kingdom itself.) It was this spiritual food that sufficed for so many, and left such an abundant surplus. May we not distribute these scraps to the nations, according to the previous sign? Nothing is said of what was done with them, but we know that the nations came in for some blessing, as recorded in the book of Acts.

God has made provision for the future wilderness needs of His kingdom people by means of seven epistles, corresponding to the seven cakes in the second sign. These are James, first and second Peter, first, second and third John, and Jude. Though the scraps are not so abundant, we know that there will be some among the nations who will find some crumbs even at that time.

6-10 Compare Mt. 15:35-39.

11-21 Compare Mt. 16:1-12. See Lu. 12:1-3.

<sup>12</sup> After giving them this marvelous sign they ask for a sign! His exclamation shows how hopeless He thought them. Suppose He should? They would not recognize it. It is useless to speak to the deaf or put a picture before the eyes of the blind.

19-20 See 641-4487-9.

<sup>19</sup> The comparison here suggested by our Lord is most striking and important. He is seeking to show them that God's blessing comes in *inverse ratio* to human provision. This is the highest mathematics, and quite beyond the powers of the unspiritual mind. If reasoning could devise a way to satisfy five thousand with five cakes and leave a remainder, then the remainder would be *smaller* than seven divided among only four thousand. But the opposite is true. Every word used, when carefully translated, emphasizes the great truth that the less of man's work in God's operations the greater the work and the larger the excess. The following list of words will help to fix this on our minds and in our hearts:

five cakes	seven cakes
five thousand	four thousand
twelve panniers	seven hamper
packed (Jn. 6:13)	filled

Let us not be like the apostles who failed to figure out the formula for these equations, and could not apply it in their own experience.

<sup>22</sup> Many explanations have been offered for this most peculiar method of healing, all of which seem to be no clearer than the sight of the blind man at first. It is questionable whether any explanation can or ought to be offered on natural grounds. The Lord could have healed him completely in an instant, but He did not choose to do so. It is evidently another sign, and we will find its meaning in the restoration of Israel's spiritual sight. The cure was accomplished by that which proceeded out of His mouth—the word of God. As was so often the case there was an interval. At first the blind man's sight was blurred. Later he saw clearly. So it was with Israel. In the past they saw that there would be a gradual growth, like a tree, until the kingdom. But it will take another application of His hands in the future to restore them. Then they will no longer be puzzled by the course of events. Throughout the past proclamation of the kingdom, especially in the Pentecostal era, the prospect of the kingdom was vague. It will not be so at the time of the end.

<sup>27-31</sup> Compare Mt.16:18-21/Lu.9:18-22.

<sup>29</sup> Here we find the first sharp distinction between the unbelieving nation and the little band of believers, represented by Peter. This marks the great crisis in His ministry. Henceforth He is no longer concerned with proclaiming the kingdom to the nation, but is teaching His own disciples concerning His sufferings. In fact, He warns them not to tell that He is the Christ. The nation has rejected Him and His proclamation. The kingdom that drew near is now receding. The result of His labors lies in the confession of a few, of whom Peter is the type, who recognize Him as the Messiah, and as the Son of God. Now He begins His new ministry, and, strange to say, His message is immediately opposed by Peter. Notwithstanding all that He taught them concerning His sufferings in the period now begun, it was not till after they were over that the apostles received and believed His words. They wished to persist in proclaiming the kingdom. A similar condition exists today. The kingdom was once more proclaimed during the period covered by the book of Acts, and once more rejected. Still some persist, like Peter, in keeping up its proclamation.

<sup>32-33</sup> Compare Mt.16:22,23.

<sup>33</sup> The term "satan", here applied to Peter, is Hebrew for *adversary*. It is a common noun except when used of him who is otherwise called the Serpent and Slanderer.

<sup>34-38</sup> Compare Mt.16:24-27/Lu.9:23-26.

<sup>34</sup> Not only does the Lord now look forward to sufferings for Himself, but His followers also must taste of His cup. While proclaiming the kingdom, they anticipated wearing a crown. Now they must renounce all of self and bear a cross.

<sup>35</sup> *Soul* never means *life*. Life depends on spirit. Soul is the conscious sensation resulting from the union of the body with the spirit. He who wants to save his soul, will seek his own pleasure and comfort and shrink from self-denial and cross-bearing. In the kingdom there will be every delight the soul can crave. Hence the disciple that does not suffer for His sake and so loses his place in the kingdom, saves his soul for the time, but loses it in the kingdom. Anyone who should gain the whole world, yet not be able to enjoy it, loses his soul.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Mt.16<sup>28</sup>Lu.9<sup>27</sup>2 Pet.1<sup>16-18</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> It is most fitting that the kingdom proclamation should close with a demonstration of its glory and power. It should have come immediately and for all, yet now it is put far into the future. Some should live to see it. This is shortened to six typical days, a week of work, leading up to the seventh day, or sabbatism, as the kingdom is called. Only Peter, James, and John are taken, for they represent three different classes in Israel who will enter the kingdom. James stands for those who died in faith in the past, for he was assassinated by Herod (Ac. 12<sup>1</sup>). Peter, by his epistles, ministers to those who will be in the great affliction of the end time. He also dies a martyr. John suggests those who will live through the end time and enter the kingdom alive (Jn. 21<sup>18-23</sup>). These all enter the kingdom and behold His glory, and meet Moses and Elijah, representatives of the two ministries, the law and the prophets.

The glory of the kingdom did not consist in the lightnings of Sinai, or spectacular scenes of bliss, but in the transformation of Christ. No longer was His glory veiled beneath the form more marred than any man's, but the immanent splendor of His person shone through His glistening garments.

<sup>2-10</sup> Compare Mt. 17<sup>1-9</sup>; Lu. 9<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Alas, poor Peter! The presence of Moses and Elijah, who were held in highest veneration by the Jews, quite overcame his reason. The solitary sublimity of the transformed Christ should have so filled his vision that Moses and Elijah would hardly appear. The kingdom is not going to be a triumvirate. Moses and Elijah will be completely eclipsed by Christ. It is the same error that the unbelieving nation has made. They thought Him a prophet or even Elijah. Why should Peter put them on a level with Him? There must be only one tabernacle in Israel, and that one is Christ Himself, the embodiment of the complement of the Deity (Col. 2<sup>9</sup>). No wonder a cloud blotted out the vision, and a voice corrected his misconception. No longer were they to hearken to the prophets. "This is My Son, the Beloved. Hear Him!"

<sup>11-13</sup> Compare Mt. 17<sup>10-13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> The Minor Prophets close with the promise (Mal. 4<sup>5,6</sup>):

Lo! I send you Elijah the prophet  
Before the great and fearful day of  
Jehovah comes  
And he restores the heart of the  
fathers to the sons,  
And the heart of the sons to their  
fathers.  
Lest I should come and smite the  
earth to its doom.

John the baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, and would have done his work had the people repented. But he did not exercise the destructive power of that prophet. So Elijah must come again, before the kingdom is established. There is little doubt that one of the two witnesses of the end time is Elijah (Un. 11<sup>3-12</sup>), for they perform similar prodigies. Both cause a drought for three and a half years. Both destroy their enemies by supernatural fire. Elijah did not die, but was taken up heavenward in a tempest (2 Ki. 2<sup>11</sup>). His appearance on the mount, an actual spectator of Christ's glory, qualifies Him for the testimony which the two witnesses will uphold.

<sup>13</sup> See Mt.11<sup>14</sup>Lu.1<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>14-27</sup> Compare Mt.17<sup>14-21</sup>Lu.9<sup>37-42</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Having descended from the mountain, the Lord now faces Golgotha. Instead of the power and glory, He speaks of weakness and shame. He will not allow them to even mention what they have seen, until the time to proclaim the kingdom once more arrives. The first symptom of this change has already been made manifest to the disciples He has left behind. They are unable to cast out the demon from the dumb boy. Their power over the unseen world is on the wane! The demons have perceived the unbelief of the nation, and are well aware of the great change which is coming over His ministry. He no longer wishes to display His power, or that of His apostles. Rather, He is laboring to teach them a far more difficult lesson—that of His weakness and death. He does not wish them to go about proclaiming the kingdom, so He withdraws the power that they had received over demons.

<sup>19</sup> It is not that they had not faith enough to cast out the demon, but they refused to recognize the change which

His new attitude involved, which would keep them from attempting such a miracle. The great lesson in this sign is that the demon will not come out of Israel under the ministry of the apostles, as set forth in the book of Acts. Their effort is a failure. Even after that there is a delay, during which there are convulsions. The demon will go out of the nation in the midst of the severest throes, leaving it almost lifeless. The experience of the demoniac is a parallel to the experience of Israel, beginning with the renewed proclamation of the kingdom by the apostles, during the Lord's absence. Hence there is such insistence on faith and such a protracted period taken up in his healing. We may be sure that the apostles did not understand the significance of their own failure, neither could He explain this to them at that time without revealing secrets God had reserved. Had they known it they could not have entered wholeheartedly into their Pentecostal ministry. It is just such scenes as this, so meaningless and tedious to unbelief, yet so significant to the anointed eye, which overwhelm us with a sense of the divine presence on the sacred page.

30-32 Compare Mt.17<sup>22,23</sup> Lu.9<sup>43-45</sup>.

30 How unlike His former journeys which were crowded with the powers of the coming eon! He spread abroad blessing with a lavish hand. The sick sought Him and were cured. The unclean spirits left at His slightest word. He scarcely had time to eat or sleep, so fully was He occupied in relieving the infirmities of the people. There is a season for every act under the sun; a time when it should, and a time when it should not be done. It had pleased God to testify to the proclamation of the kingdom by appropriate powers and signs. But now that season is past. The heralding has been hushed. The signs cease. He walks a lonely Wanderer, rejected, proscribed, threatened. Seeking to enlist the sympathy of His disciples, His words thrust them from Him, for they cannot comprehend, and His manner makes them afraid to ask. Lonely in the midst of His people! Lonely in the midst of His intimate friends! And so He sets His face toward the cross whose chill shadow is already casting its pall about Him.

33-34 Compare Mt.18<sup>1</sup> Lu.9<sup>46</sup>.

34 While the Son of God was in sad contemplation of the deep humiliation of the cross, His disciples were puffed up with pride, arguing about their own greatness. They could hardly have been further removed from Him in spirit. He Who had been above all was now sinking beneath all. Higher than the archangels was His primeval position; lower than the lowest of sinners is the appalling place to which His path is winding. Higher! is the selfish shout of man, intent on his own exaltation, though he tread his fellows under foot to reach his proud pinnacle. Lower! was the cry of Christ, intent on the weal of others, though He be trodden in the mire to serve them. True greatness can never be attained by striving for self. It lies only in service for others.

35-37 Compare Mt.18<sup>2-6</sup> Lu.9<sup>47,48</sup> 22<sup>4-30</sup>.

38-41 Compare Lu. 9<sup>49-50</sup>.

38 It was not long since the disciples had failed to cast out a demon. They were doubtless jealous of this man, for they wished to monopolize all the privileges of discipleship. The spirit of this act of the apostles has been a curse in Christendom. We are apt to think that only those who follow with us are countenanced by the Lord, or have a right to a place in His service. But the incident seems to point to a wider thought. The Lord evidently was not present when John used his authority to stop the offending miracle-worker. So, after His ascension, a whole group of men arose with Paul at their head, who did not follow with the twelve. It took much careful work to persuade the apostles that he had a ministry from the Lord as well as they (Gal. 2<sup>2</sup>). There was a great work done, including the actual casting out of demons (Ac. 16<sup>18</sup>), in which the twelve apostles had no part. We are not associated with the twelve apostles, but with this group. Because the believing Jews would not allow the nations a place in the kingdom or the pardon of sins, their own pardon was recalled. The work here hinted at and commended by our Lord in time displaced the ministry of the twelve apostles. It is only by a grasp of their dispensational application that we may read these signs.

<sup>40</sup> See Mt.12<sup>30</sup>Lu.11<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> See Mt.10<sup>40-42</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> Compare Mt.18<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Compare Mt.5<sup>30</sup>. See Deut.13<sup>6-11</sup>Isa.33<sup>14-68</sup>24.

<sup>45</sup> Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom just below Jerusalem, must not be confounded with the lake of fire, or Tartarus, or the unseen, commonly called "hell" or hades. Its fire and worms were quite as literal as can be, for the city of Sodom was burned there. No living beings were cast into this incinerator. It is the worms, which feed on the carcasses of criminals, who do not die. The fire was kept burning at all times. This will be the place where bodies of executed malefactors will be cast during the kingdom era.

<sup>49</sup> Since the kingdom has been rejected, entrance into it is necessarily a path of judgment. Salt is a preservative. During the kingdom era corruption will be stayed. The salt that counteracts the corruption of that day will be fire, a judgment. As already elaborated, nothing that offends can enter that kingdom. It must be judged. If not, it will drag down those who harbor it into Gehenna and its fires.

<sup>47-48</sup> Compare Mt.5<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> See Lev.2<sup>13</sup>Eze.43<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> See Mt.5<sup>13</sup>Lu.14<sup>34,35</sup>Col.4<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1-12</sup> Compare Mt.19<sup>1-12</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Our Lord is now in Perea, over which Herod held sway. Herod had dismissed his wife for no other reason than that he wanted to marry Herodias, his brother's wife. It was John the baptist's protest against this which really cost him his life. Hence the Pharisees hope to put the Lord on the horns of a dilemma. If He countenances Herod's act, that could easily be used against Him. If He condemns it, that could be used to inflame the Herodians, if not Herod himself. But the Lord is equal to the occasion. He is greater than Moses. He knew the hardness of their hearts. He, therefore, revokes the law, and bases the union of man and wife on the original creation. Adam was both male and female in one body when he was first created (Gen.1<sup>27</sup>). Later God took from Adam, not a rib, but an angular vault to build the woman. Marriage is the reversal of this. A male and a female are joined together to make one complete human being, as Adam was at his creation. God, Who took Eve out of Adam, and

thus made the separation, yokes them together again in marriage. They become a physiological unit. No man should destroy such a union. Only one cause was given by our Lord as a ground for divorce (Mt.5<sup>32</sup>). In this day of grace even this is not valid. Only desertion by an unbelieving husband or wife breaks the bonds of matrimony (1 Co.7<sup>15</sup>). The reason for this lies in the character of this economy. It is the opposite of the administration of a stony law over hard hearts. God is now dealing in pure, unadulterated *grace*, which forgives offenses and pleads for reconciliation in the most desperate circumstances. This should be reflected in all our social relations, especially in the marriage bond.

<sup>4</sup> See Deut.24<sup>1</sup>Mt.5<sup>31,32</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> See Gen.1<sup>27</sup>5<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> See Gen.2<sup>24</sup>Lxx 1 Co.6<sup>16</sup>Eph.5<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> See Lu.16<sup>18</sup>Ro.7<sup>31</sup>Co.7<sup>10,11</sup>.

<sup>13-16</sup> Compare Mt.19<sup>13-15</sup>Lu.18<sup>15-17</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Children were not supposed to be capable of understanding Him, hence, hardly candidates for the kingdom. But they had the very essential which was so lacking among His disciples at this time. They had implicit faith in what they were told, and trusted those who told them. The disciples, alas, were also immature in understanding. They did not apprehend the need of the cross which He was seeking to sink into their hearts. Yet they lacked the child-like faith which believes, though it cannot comprehend.

<sup>20</sup> The incident of the rich man contains the line of thought suggested by the little children. He was their opposite. He had confidence in himself, in his accomplishments, in his ideas. He wanted to work his way into the kingdom. As a matter of fact what he had done so far had resulted in a condition quite the opposite of the kingdom. His many acquisitions, the result of his activities, meant so much loss to his poorer neighbors. He had been anything but *good* to them. Had the kingdom come at that moment, he must have lost all except his own allotment. If then, he really had faith in that kingdom, and wished to enter it and enjoy eternal life, the only practical way to prove it would be to do all he could to bring about kingdom conditions. It would be absolutely impossible to hold on

to his lands in that day, for it will be redistributed according to each one's need. The disciples in the Pentecostal era acted on the principles of the kingdom. They did not sell their own allotments, but disposed of the allotments of others which they had acquired, using the proceeds to help those who were in need (Ac. 2<sup>45</sup>).

<sup>15</sup> See Mt.18<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>17-22</sup> Compare Mt.19<sup>16-22</sup> Lu.18<sup>18-23</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> See Ex.20<sup>12-16</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> See Mt.6<sup>19-21</sup> Lu.12<sup>33,34</sup> 16<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>22-27</sup> Compare Mt.19<sup>23-26</sup> Lu.18<sup>24-27</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> All human kingdoms have a high place for those who have wealth. They have no difficulty in entering. Indeed, it has come to the point where the wealth of the world is the controlling factor in government. Policies are dictated, laws are passed, treaties are made, wars are fought, all to protect invested capital or to promote the accumulation of wealth. The majority of mankind have become the slaves of the minority, who hold them by bonds of gold. There is no human remedy. In God's kingdom all this will be reversed. No rich man, as such, will enter, for his riches will have been destroyed in the previous judgment era, or will not be recognized. But the greatest hindrance is the lack of confidence in Christ.

<sup>24</sup> See Job 31<sup>24</sup> Ps.49<sup>6-9</sup> 1 Ti.6<sup>17-19</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> See Jer.32<sup>17</sup> Lu.1<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>28-31</sup> Compare Mt.19<sup>27-30</sup> Lu.18<sup>28-30</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> This has proven a stumbling block to many, who seek to apply it to the present grace. They have left all, but do *not* receive either a hundred fold or indeed a hundredth part of what they have lost. The reference is strictly confined to the Jewish disciples in the era in which the kingdom was proclaimed. After Pentecost the disciples had all things in common, so that all had an interest in and enjoyment of hundreds of houses and fields (Ac. 2<sup>44-45</sup>), being bound by more than natural ties to thousands of fellow believers, who cared for their welfare, so that there were none indigent among them (Ac. 4<sup>34</sup>). There was a daily dispensation which took in all, even the widows who might have been in sore straits under any other dispensation. But today there is no temporal profit in standing true. Our greatest priv-

ilege is to suffer. Our reward is in the heavens. It is most mischievous to "appropriate" such promises, for they cannot be fulfilled. The motive that underlies them is utterly foreign to the truth for today. Present advantage is not a bait to catch the unbeliever now, and future reward is not in lands, but in the celestial realms.

<sup>31</sup> See Lu. 13<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Those who forsook all their worldly properties and prospects were the poorest and last, yet these are the ones who will become first in the kingdom. Even in the Pentecostal era this was true. Peter could truly say "Silver and gold I do not possess" (Ac. 3<sup>6</sup>). No one had less of wealth. The high priests controlled great stores of treasure beside their personal fortunes. Yet who was lower than they? Material and spiritual values are usually in inverse ratio.

<sup>32-34</sup> Compare Mt.20<sup>17-19</sup> Lu.13<sup>31-34</sup>.

<sup>35-41</sup> Compare Mt. 20<sup>20-24</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> There were only two places of great honor next to the king in an eastern monarchy. One was at his right and the other at his left. But among our Lord's apostles three were foremost and privileged. These were Peter, James, and John. This is evidently a piece of petty diplomacy on the part of John and James, intended to prevent Peter from getting the first place. Such selfish insistence completely dissipates the usual conception of the "sons of thunder", as our Lord called them. John was not at all the meek, mild, gentle, amiable character he is popularly supposed to be. He was loud, egotistic, selfish. His writings do not reveal his natural characteristics, but rather the power of grace to counteract them. Would the apostle of love seek to supplant Peter? Yet the exquisiteness of that same grace is seen when it takes the boastings of the flesh and makes them good. They were not able to drink the cup which He was drinking. Yet the spirit later made them able. James was assassinated by Herod (Ac. 12<sup>2</sup>). It is quite possible that this passage supports the tradition that John also was killed by the Jews. The fact that his written ministry applies to the time of the Lord's return does not allow of a record of his death in the Scriptures. See Jn. 21<sup>20</sup>.

What makes this request so terribly atrocious is its utter antagonism to the Spirit of Christ, at this time.

<sup>41</sup> The other apostles are no better than the sons of Zebedee. They all want place, power, prestige. They little know the kind of kingdom they are to enter. They dream of some oriental despotism in which the whims of the ruling class, and their desires, are the only law. But in the kingdom all sovereignty will be based on service. None will rule there who have not suffered. They will rule the people as a shepherd tends his sheep. They will lead them and feed them and protect them. So the great King and Shepherd served them when He suffered for their ransom.

<sup>42-45</sup> Compare Mt.20<sup>25-28</sup> Lu.22<sup>24-27</sup>.

<sup>46-52</sup> Compare Mt.20<sup>29-34</sup> Lu.18<sup>35-43</sup>. See also Mt.9<sup>27-31</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> There were probably four blind men healed at Jericho, one as He was nearing the city (Lu.18<sup>35</sup>), Bar Timeus, at His going out, and two more, at about the same time (Mt.20<sup>29</sup>). To the spiritual mind there is a delightful harmony between all our Lord's words and ways. He did not go down to Jericho, the city of the curse (Josh.6<sup>26</sup>) until He had been rejected. It is most fitting that He should pass through it on this journey. The contrast between the single blind man before He entered the city and the three after leaving it is very suggestive. So far as we know, only Mary, of all His disciples, had her eyes opened to the truth that He was to enter the place of the curse and die (Mt.26<sup>12</sup>). But, after He had passed through, the eyes of many were opened.

To this very day an accursed Christ, a suffering Saviour, is distasteful to the human heart. As a Leader or Example He is welcome and is accorded the place supreme among the sons of Adam. As such, He supports the self-righteous attitude of the sons of Cain. They are glad to enlist under His banner, as one like Him, ready to fight an external foe. But to find that foe in themselves, to see in His humiliation and shame an intimation of their own, and acknowledge His accursed death as their deserts, requires a miracle on God's part greater in its way than any He ever wrought. And he who knows the power of this in his own heart cannot doubt the lesser miracles of Holy Writ.

<sup>1-7</sup> Compare Mt.21<sup>1-7</sup> Lu.19<sup>28-36</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Strange as it may seem, there are only seven recorded visits of Christ to Jerusalem. And it was the temple rather than the city which drew Him, for He came only to fulfill the law, and to keep the festivals. The first was His own dedication to God (Lu.2<sup>22</sup>). The second was at twelve years of age, when He became "a son of the law" (Lu.2<sup>42</sup>). The third and fourth were for the Passover festivals at the beginning of His public ministry. Then we find Him in the temple for the festival of Tabernacles (Jn.7<sup>2,10</sup>) and Dedications (Jn.10<sup>22</sup>). The last occasion, here referred to, was for the Passover festival. Only on this last visit is He spoken of as being in the city itself, once at Bethesda (Jn.5<sup>2</sup>), and again in the upper room (14<sup>15</sup>). At His first visit a sacrifice was offered for Him, at the last He Himself became the Sacrifice.

<sup>2</sup> The animal on which our Lord is mounted is always in keeping with His immediate concerns. When He will come forth to battle with His enemies, He will be seated on a white horse, at once a symbol of exalted rank and of war (Un.19<sup>11</sup>). Indeed, His very lack of a mount on His journeys is in harmony with His humiliation. Now He, for the first time in His career exercising the right which is accorded to every oriental king, commandeers a colt for His entry into Jerusalem. But kings do not ride on colts. Nothing less than a chariot or a white horse befits their rank. As the prophets predicted, He is humble, riding on the foal of an ass (Zech.9<sup>9</sup>). His glory is in His humility. His majesty is in His meekness.

But there is more than lowliness. There is salvation, or rather redemption. The firstling of an ass must be ransomed with a flockling (Ex.13<sup>13</sup>). The animal He rode was a type of the ransomed who supported Him in His humiliation. Hence He does not go to the palace of the king, but to the sanctuary. There must be redemption before there can be a righteous reign. Herein lies the point of the whole picture. As King He comes with *salvation*.

<sup>8-10</sup> Compare Mt.21<sup>8</sup>,<sup>9</sup> Lu.19<sup>37-44</sup> Jn.12<sup>12-16</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> See Ps.118<sup>25,26</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> See Ps.148<sup>1</sup>.

11 See Mt. 21:10,11.

12-14 Compare Mt. 21:18,19.

12 A beautiful figure of the condition of Israel at that time is found in the barren fig tree. On a fruitful fig tree the figs form before the leaves, and the first crop should be ready to eat when the tree is in full leaf. It was evidently too early in the season to expect figs, yet there was one tree which *seemed* to be in advance of its time. What a marvelously accurate delineation of the nation! God's due time had not yet come. Yet they pretended to all the righteousness and sweetness and goodness which will characterize the kingdom. They were a vain show. Love, joy, and peace were not to be found on the branches of their profession. They were a pious sham. This seems to be the only time He used His miraculous power for destruction. As we look upon Israel today, with even the leaves of their profession withered, let us remember that they are no less miracles than the fig tree by which they were prefigured. The cursing of the fig tree took place immediately after His formal presentation to Jerusalem as their King, and is a standing symbol of their rejection. The present yearning to reestablish Zion is an effort of the fig tree to put forth leaves once again.

15-19 Compare Mt. 21:12-16 Lu. 19:45-48. See Jn. 2:13-17.

15 He now gives His final judgment of the spiritual side of their apostasy by entering the sanctuary and driving out the traders as He had done at the beginning of His ministry (Jn. 2:13). Covetousness is leaven and idolatry (1 Co. 5:10 Col. 3:5). The Passover was approaching. So He cleanses His Father's house from leaven and rebukes them for worshiping money instead of praising God.

17 Compare Isa. 56: Jer. 7:11.

20-23 Compare Mt. 21:20-22. See Mt. 17:20 Lu. 17:61 Co. 13:2.

20 There is a close connection between the fig tree—Israel politically—and the mountain—Rome's oppressive tyranny—as well as between the cursing of the fig tree and the removal of the mountain into the sea. If Israel had believed, the Roman oppressors would have been scattered among the nations, whence they came.

24 See Ja. 1:5, 5:1 Jn. 5:14, 15.

24 Whatever prayer is offered in accord with the will of God will be answered in His time. Whatever is not in line with His purpose need not expect to be fulfilled.

25 See Mt. 6:14, 15 18:35 Col. 3:13.

25 We have the forgiveness of offenses according to the *riches* of His *grace* (Eph. 1:7). There are no conditions, no qualifications, no demands that we cannot fulfill, in God's dealings with us. But with Israel nationally, forgiveness was on a much lower level. It depended on their response and could be revoked. The confusion which exists today would be largely dispelled if we would get a grasp of our own transcendent position in grace and revel in it, and refuse to drag it down to the precarious position here indicated. This is not grace, far less the rich and redundant favor which is ours in Christ Jesus.

26 See Ja. 2:13.

27-33 Compare Mt. 21:23-27 Lu. 20:1-8.

27 The chief priests were in supreme authority in the sanctuary. They should have cleansed its courts of this pernicious traffic. But it was probably their own covetousness that countenanced the desecration. They feel that He has gone beyond His rights, and think they can curb Him by demanding His credentials. But they were not only hypocrites, but cowards. He knew that they would not dare to question His acts if He were popular with the people. He knew that they would not dare question the authority of John the baptist, for the people never lost their faith in him. So He exposes their hypocrisy by a simple question. The proud priests confess that they are afraid to answer Him. Yet worse than this, they convict themselves of the utmost incapacity for their office. They should be able to discern whether John's baptism was of God or not, for it was their function to know the mind of God and to teach the people. Seeking to undermine His authority they effectually destroy their own. Man's every attempt to deny the authority of conscience or revelation can end only in the eventual unmasking of his own pretensions. His defiance only strengthens his ultimate conviction of the supremacy of God.



1-12 Compare Mt.21<sup>33-46</sup> Lu.20<sup>9-19</sup>.

1 This was a most familiar illustration for His hearers. Vineyards were usually planted on stony ground. After clearing, the stones were built into a broad stone fence, sometimes not much more than a carefully piled heap, without cement. The vat, into which the grapes were cast for pressing, was usually cut in the natural rock on a hillside, with an opening in the bottom for the juice to escape. When the grapes were ripe a watchman was on guard at all times, being stationed on the tower, which overlooked the whole vineyard.

Israel is the vineyard of Jehovah (Isa. 57). The parable describes the treatment accorded God's messengers and prophets, whom He sent to recall them to their duty to Him. It was one long story of rebellion and violence. Each generation prided itself that it would not persecute the prophets as its fathers had done, yet, when put to the test, exceeded them in their mistreatment of His slaves. The priests and scribes and elders were the farmers to whose care the vineyard had been committed. The Lord boldly predicts their course with regard to Himself, and, incidentally, He answers their question as to His authority. They were simply hirelings, with no authority whatever when He was on the scene. The vineyard was His Father's. They were answerable to Him. Perhaps nowhere is the darkness of man's mind and the hardness of his heart more apparent than when, in stubborn rebellion against God, he carries out the revealed will of God. Though this was a parable, they knew that He was speaking of them. Why, then, did they persist in doing what He said they would do? They will have no place or power in the kingdom.

10 Compare Ps. 118<sup>22,23</sup>. See 1 Pt. 2<sup>4-8</sup>.

10 The capstone of the corner is usually the most ornate on a building. The very finest block of stone would ordinarily be reserved for it. But the rulers in Israel refused to give Him any place in the edifice. He was rejected and despised. But when it is finished He will have the highest and most glorious position. How blind they must have been, after this plain prediction, to go on in senseless rage to fulfill His words to the letter!

13-17 Compare Mt.22<sup>15-22</sup> Lu.20<sup>19-26</sup>.

13 There were many insurrections and disturbances in Palestine during the first century due to hatred of the foreign domination, and especially because of taxation. The poll tax was a practical pledge of allegiance to Cæsar, or rather a badge of subjection. Some of the Jews were in doubt whether it was right to pay it. But it was a most dangerous dilemma in which they hoped to place Him. His followers would soon desert a Messiah Who openly counseled subjection to a gentile tyrant, and the authorities would make no delay in executing any popular leader who spoke against the poll tax. The crafty hypocrites who planned this trap were careful to keep clear of it themselves, for they were afraid it might lead them into complications. So they sent some of the two opposing parties, one of whom, they were sure, would cause His downfall.

He first tears off their hypocritical mask. "Why are you trying Me?" Each word is worthy of separate emphasis. Their motive was wrong. They were not conscientious patriots seeking counsel from the true King of Israel, but false traitors seeking to assassinate Him. How pathetic was His next appeal! Cæsar was collecting coffers on coffers of denarii, yet He did not number a single one among His acquaintances! The usurper is satiated with tribute; the rightful Sovereign is penniless.

By accepting the Roman currency, they virtually acknowledged their subjection to Cæsar. It was only just that they should fulfill their obligations to him so long as it was God's will that they should suffer for their insubordination to Him. But the rest of the reply was not demanded by the question. It may refer partly to the payment of the temple taxes (Mt. 17<sup>24-27</sup>; Ex. 30<sup>11-16</sup>) for the services of the sanctuary, but, in a broader sense, included all their obligations to God. This would, of course, first of all involve paying Him the loyalty and honor due Him as God's King. They sought to show that He was a traitor to Rome. He exposed their disloyalty to God.

18-25 Compare Mt.22<sup>23-30</sup>. See Lu.20<sup>27-36</sup>.

18 See Ac. 23<sup>8</sup>.

19 See Deut. 25<sup>6,8</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Now that He has answered the hardest question of the Pharisees and Herodians, the Sadducees bring Him their best argument against the truth of resurrection. There is the constant tendency, even among the household of faith, to present practical difficulties in order to discredit the truth. And the answer is always the same. Those who do not believe God are deceived because they are not acquainted with the Scriptures or the power of God. The difficulties are of their own making. The marriage state is not carried over into the resurrection.

<sup>26-27</sup> Compare Mt.22<sup>31-33</sup> Lu.20<sup>37,38</sup>. See Ex.3<sup>e</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> According to the Sadducees, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will never be raised from the dead, hence will never live, and God is the God of the dead. The Lord does not affirm that they are alive, for then they would not be raised. His argument demands that they be dead, and that resurrection be a necessity to bring them back to life. There were those in the Corinthian ecclesia who followed the Sadducees on this very subject (1 Co.15<sup>12-28</sup>). They denied the resurrection of any: Paul proves the vivification of all. Not only will all be raised from the dead, but all will be given life beyond death at the consummation. Then it will be seen that God is indeed a God, not of the dead, but of the living. This could never be true if there were no resurrection. Far less could it prove the necessity of resurrection if there were no death.

<sup>28-34</sup> Compare Mt. 22<sup>34-46</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> We would expect the Lord to choose one of the "ten commandments". But not one of these compares with the one He selected. Mere negative precepts—*thou shalt not*—are not in the same class with this positive, lofty conception of conduct based on love. The second would displace all human legislation, were it possible to enforce it. But how much better is the grand truth that we rest on His love to us, not ours to Him! He loves us with all the ardor of His heart. This is unutterably better than the best precept.

<sup>29</sup> Compare Deut. 6<sup>4,5</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> See Lev.19<sup>18</sup> Ro.13<sup>8-10</sup> Ga.5<sup>14</sup> Ja.2<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> See Deut.4<sup>39</sup> Isa.41<sup>6-14</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> See 1 Sa.15<sup>22</sup> Hos.6<sup>6</sup> Mic.6<sup>6-8</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Compare Lu. 20<sup>39,40</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Compare Mt.22<sup>41,45</sup> Lu.20<sup>41-44</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Now that the Lord has answered all His opposers, He propounds a question which they do not attempt to answer. The Messiah was the great central figure of prophecy. The scribes had many traditions about Him. Perhaps the best known title given Him was Messiah ben David, for the son of Jesse was the greatest national hero, and to him was given the kingdom covenant. But they utterly failed to see that He was also the Son of God, and was identical with the One David called his Lord. None of the theophanies, or manifestations of God, in ancient times could have been appearances of the one invisible God (Col.1<sup>15</sup> 1 Tim.1<sup>17</sup>). No one has ever seen God: the only begotten God... He unfolds Him (Jn.1<sup>18</sup>). Jacob saw Elohim at Peniel face to face (Gen.32<sup>30</sup>). Isaiah saw Jehovah Tsebahoth (Isa.6<sup>5</sup> Jn.12<sup>41</sup>). These and others of like nature can be no other than the One Who is the Image of the invisible God (Col. 1<sup>15</sup>; 2 Co. 4<sup>4</sup>). The God of the Scriptures is one God. He has His Spirit, which is identical with Him in personality. Otherwise Christ had two fathers, for He is the only-begotten of the Father (Jn.1<sup>14</sup>) and of the holy Spirit (Mt. 1<sup>18</sup>). Just as a man and his spirit are one, so God and His Spirit are one. The Son of God is a distinct personality, as David shows when he says "The Lord said to my Lord." Yet there is the closest unity, the same as exists between an idea and its verbal expression, a person and his statue or image. God can be known to human creatures only through His Word and His Image, Who is Christ, the Son of God.

<sup>36-37</sup> See 2 Sa.23<sup>2</sup> Ps.110<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>38-40</sup> Compare Mt.23<sup>1-14</sup> Lu.20<sup>45-47</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> While the scribes were degrading Christ to the level of a mere descendant of David, they were seeking to exalt themselves in the eyes of the people.

<sup>41-44</sup> Compare Lu. 21<sup>1-4</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> See 2 Ki. 12<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> The magnitude of a gift to God is not measured by its size but by the remainder which is left. True giving is a venture of faith.

<sup>44</sup> See 2 Co. 8:12.

<sup>1-8</sup> Compare Mt. 24:1-8; Lu. 21:5-11.

<sup>2</sup> It took forty-six years to build the temple (Jn. 2:20). Our Lord had already hinted that it would be razed to the ground. While He was within the sacred precincts, it was the abode of God. Now that He has left it for the last time, it is a tenantless shell, forsaken by Jehovah. Hence He foretells its destruction. In the spiritual habitation which takes its place, Peter speaks of the saints of the Circumcision as living stones (1 Pt. 2:5). Hence these stones of the temple may well stand for the whole structure of the priesthood, for not only the sanctuary, but the whole Levitical system was demolished at the siege of Jerusalem, about four decades later.

<sup>5</sup> It must be remembered that the present interval of God's transcendent grace was an absolute secret, concealed in God (Eph. 3:9) and that even the times and eras of the kingdom could not be revealed at that time (Ac. 1:7). If these are left out of sight, the events here spoken of by our Lord go right on from His time to the time of the end, just before the kingdom comes. We are in the interval between the demolition of the sanctuary (about 70 A. D.) and the still future course of events which are given in fuller detail under the first four seals in the Unveiling.

The white horse rider (Un. 6<sup>2</sup>) is the false messiah who comes in His name, the fiery red horse brings on the battles, the black horse corresponds to the famine here foretold, while the fifth seal brings us the fate of those who testify in that day.

<sup>10</sup> This is not the evangel of God's grace which we proclaim, but the evangel of the kingdom, which will be heralded once again in the great judgment era which immediately precedes the coming of Christ to reign over the earth. It will be carried on by an elect company in Israel who, like the two witnesses (Un. 11:3), will be upheld by divine power. His coming for us is not contingent on any missionary program of the "church".

<sup>6</sup> Compare Un. 62. First Seal.

<sup>7</sup> Compare Un. 64. Second Seal.

<sup>8</sup> Compare Un. 65-8. Third and Fourth Seals.

<sup>9-13</sup> Compare Mt. 24:9-14; Lu. 21:12-19.

<sup>11</sup> The method of salvation varies according to God's administration. To say that it is for those who endure to the end, in this economy of pure unmixed grace, would be most misleading. Only at the time specified, just before the consummation which ushers in the kingdom, is salvation accorded to those who endure. The same is true of preparation in speaking. It has no reference to the preaching of the evangel today, but to the defense of those who answer for their lives in the great affliction.

<sup>12-13</sup> See Lu. 12:51-53.

<sup>14-17</sup> Compare Mt. 24:15-22.

<sup>14</sup> See Dan. 9:27; 12:11.

<sup>14</sup> The great chronological monument for the time of the end is the middle of the seventieth heptad, when the prince breaks his covenant with Israel, the daily offering ceases and the detestation of desolation is given (Dan. 12:11). This marks the beginning of the great unparalleled affliction, such as has never yet been known even to the persecuted Jew. So terrible will it be that not a soul would be saved through it if God did not cut it short. There seems to be some asylum for those who flee into the mountains of Judea. In the Unveiling this flight is spoken of as if by a woman. "And the woman fled into the wilderness, there where she has a place made ready by God, that there they may be nourishing her a thousand two hundred sixty days" (Un. 12:6). To the wild fastnesses south-east of Judea they fly before the fury of the Satanic onslaught, with no preparations, no provisions, nothing to preserve them alive for their three and a half years' sojourn. Yet they will be miraculously fed and sheltered, as they were once before in the forty years' wanderings in the same wilderness. In the inclement weather of a Palestine winter such a flight would be beyond endurance, especially to those not inured to hardship. Yet amidst it all, their safety is assured, for God has already predicted their preservation and salvation, and He is well able to care for His own.

<sup>15</sup> See Lu. 17:31-33.

<sup>19</sup> See Dan. 12:1; Un. 69-11. Fifth Seal.

<sup>21-23</sup> Compare Mt. 24:23-28. See Lu. 17:22-24.

<sup>21</sup> The coming of Christ for His body, the ecclesia to which we belong, will

take place more than three and a half years before this time, possibly as many as thirty-seven or sixty-seven. But no one will be able to say when He will come to Israel until the abomination of desolation is set up and the great affliction begins. Then all may be assured that He will not come for three and a half years. By this they will recognize the many false messiahs who will rise at that time.

But after three and a half years marvelous portents in the sky will herald the advent of the long-desired Messiah. He will come as a lightning flash, clothed in glorious majesty and might. His first act will be to gather the trembling outcasts of Israel from all quarters of the earth about Him, for theirs is the kingdom for the eons of the eons.

<sup>23</sup> See 2 Pt. 3:17.

<sup>24-27</sup> Compare Mt. 24:29-31 Lu. 21:25-27 Un. 6:12-17. Sixth Seal.

<sup>26</sup> See Dan. 7:13, 14 2 Th. 1:7-10 Un. 1:7.

<sup>28-32</sup> Compare Mt. 24:32-36 Lu. 21:29-31.

<sup>28</sup> The fig tree is political Israel. None of the signs here spoken of have yet occurred, so that we cannot say that its leaves are sprouting out. But much that has occurred in recent years indicates that its boughs are becoming tender. The Zionist movement, the Balfour declaration, recognizing the right of the Jews to their ancient homeland, the British mandate, under which there was a greater exodus to Palestine than under Moses, the Jewish colonization, the new Hebrew university on mount Scopus, the change of attitude on the part of many Jews toward Christ—all these acts and facts indicate that Israel is a manmade political unit with a land, a flag, a national anthem, a patriotic spirit—but without Messiah. It is time for the fig tree to put forth its leaves! Before that era Christ will come to the air to catch us away to be with Himself. Before He can declare war with the earth His ambassadors of peace must be withdrawn.

<sup>30</sup> These things *should* have occurred in that generation. Yet He warns them that no one knows the time. It is a secret which God has not confided to men, nor to His heavenly messengers—not even to the Son. The reason is clear. Had the apostles known all that

was to intervene they never could have carried on their Pentecostal ministry, and God could not have used Israel's defection as the basis of a much greater and grander exhibition of grace than the kingdom contemplates.

<sup>35</sup> While the Son did not know the day or hour, we can now see that He was aware that there would be a delay. He is the light of the world. His absence is night. He might have come at evening. This probably refers to the early Pentecostal proclamation (Ac. 3:20). The great crisis, or midnight, was when Israel was repudiated (Ac. 28:26, 27). Perhaps the present awakening in Israel is the cock-crowing. The darkest hour still lies ahead. But in the morning He will surely come. When these signs begin to come to pass then it will be possible to watch events. We, however, do not *watch* the events which accompany the wrath of God, but *wait* for God's Son to rescue us from the coming indignation (1 Th. 1:10).

<sup>33-37</sup> Compare Mt. 24:45-51.

<sup>1-2</sup> Compare Mt. 26:1-5 Lu. 22:1-2.

<sup>1</sup> The actual festival of Unleavened Bread did not commence until the day after the Passover (Lev. 23:6), but, since all leaven was removed on the day of the Passover, and it was eaten with unleavened bread (Ex. 12:8), it came to be included in "unleavened bread".

<sup>2</sup> How blind they were! The Passover *must* be killed before the festival, not because it might create a tumult of the people, but because this was God's order. They were at great pains and trouble, in their rabid rebellion against God, that they might fulfill the will of God! So it is always. God's enemies are carrying out His will in their very opposition. The Lamb must be slain on the fourteenth, and God can use the fearfulness of the priests to fulfill it, so long as He cannot use their faithfulness.

<sup>3-9</sup> Compare Mt. 26:6-13; Jn. 12:1-8. See Lu. 7:36-38.

<sup>3</sup> How precious to the heart of our Lord must have been the intelligent, sacrificing worship of this woman! She alone seems to have understood Him concerning His impending death, or appreciated, in some measure, its preciousness. It is the time, the effort,

the treasure, that we "waste" in our worship of Him that gains His gratitude and touches His heart. "Practical" religion provides for the poor; spiritual worship lavishes its all on Him. Benefactors receive their reward in the gratitude of those whom they help. But when has even such a costly gift been so richly rewarded? Men have given as much as a million times the sum she did for philanthropy. But whose name can be mentioned with hers? Yet she simply did with what she had. We do not need to have much, but only give our best and our reward will be beyond all calculation.

<sup>10</sup> The woman *gave*, Judas *got*. They resented the woman's act and would have taken her treasure from her had they known. The chief priests rejoiced and promised Judas a substantial reward. Who would like to earn thirty pieces of silver? Religious men who know not Christ are always ready to pay for His betrayal.

<sup>10-16</sup> Compare Mt. 26:14-19; Lu. 22:3-13.

<sup>12</sup> "The first day of the unleavened bread" was not, as might be supposed, the first day of the festival of unleavened bread (Lev. 23<sup>7</sup>), but the day before, the day of the Passover proper. Similarly, the term Passover was often applied to the festival which followed.

<sup>12</sup> The passover must be sacrificed on the fourteenth day of the first month "between [not in] the [two] evenings [of one day]" (Ex. 12<sup>6</sup>). This made it possible for our Lord to eat the passover and be the Passover all in one day, between the sunset which began the fourteenth of Nisan, and the sunset which closed it.

<sup>13</sup> Bearing water jars was "women's work" and it was a singular sight to see a man with a water jar. There probably was not another in all Jerusalem. His household must have been small, hence he could accommodate so many extra guests at the Passover. It was the custom for families to join into groups large enough to eat a whole lamb (Ex. 12<sup>4</sup>).

<sup>17-21</sup> Compare Mt. 26:20-25 Lu. 22:14, 21-23 Jn. 13:18-30.

<sup>17</sup> With what mingled feelings would our Lord eat this passover! Joy to see the fruit of His labors, sorrow at the treachery of Judas, while over all was the shadow of the cross.

<sup>21</sup> So atrocious was the treachery of Judas Iscariot that we sympathize with those who find it difficult to see how God's grace can ever reach him. But Paul was a greater sinner (1 Tim. 1<sup>15</sup>). Judas did not commit his crime until after the Slanderer had put it into his heart (Jn. 13<sup>2</sup>). He regretted his action (Mt. 27<sup>3</sup>). Not so Paul. We can have no sympathy, however, with the attempts to twist the translation to agree with their thoughts. The phrase "that man" refers to Judas in one sentence, so must also refer to him in the next. The Lord is thinking of His own sufferings and Judas' share in them, not of Judas' fate.

<sup>22-25</sup> Compare Mt. 26:26-29 Lu. 22:15-20 1 Co. 11:23-25.

<sup>22</sup> It is notable that in this account, as in Matthew, the last dinner is considered a part of the Passover and no mention is made of any memorial for their future observance. The simple figure of speech here used has caused much misunderstanding. The Greek and Hebrew substantive, *to be*, is not expressed when dealing with matters of fact. But when a figure is intended, the verb must be used. "This IS My body" means that the bread represents His body. "This My body" (without *is*) could be used only when He was actually speaking of His own physical frame. The sustenance and joy of all believers in Christ is symbolized by partaking of the bread and drinking of the cup. The flesh is benefiting nothing. The spirit is that which is vivifying (Jn. 6<sup>63</sup>). It is the spiritual and hearty appropriation of Christ's sufferings which brings satisfaction and delight. This will be ours in its fullness when we are with Him. Till He comes we are reminded of it by partaking of the broken bread and poured out wine.

<sup>24</sup> The new covenant is with the nation of Israel (Jer. 31<sup>32</sup>; 32<sup>40</sup>; Eze. 36<sup>24-30</sup>; Heb. 8<sup>7-12</sup>; 10<sup>15-17</sup>) even as the old one was. The first was dedicated with the blood of calves and he-goats (Ex. 24<sup>8</sup>), but the new with the precious blood of Christ (Heb. 9<sup>15-27</sup>). The first was conditioned on their obedience, the second on His.

<sup>26-28</sup> Compare Mt. 26:30-32 Lu. 22:35-39.

<sup>27</sup> Compare Zech. 13<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>29-31</sup> Compare Mt. 26:33-35 Lu. 22:31-34 Jn. 13:36-38.

<sup>32-42</sup> Compare Mt. 26:36-46 Lu. 22:46 Jn. 18:1, 2.

<sup>34</sup> The problem of evil is solved for us in the dark shadows of Gethsemane. No one will dispute that He did not deserve to drink the cup that His Father set before Him. No one will find fault with His will, though it was not in line with His Father's. How easily it might have passed from Him! A word would have sufficed to destroy all His enemies. But He had not come to do His own will. And now that the will of God led Him into the sorest suffering and deepest distress, He receives this evil from the hand of God, Who makes it the basis of boundless blessing, not only to mankind and all creation, but to Christ Himself and to His own glory and praise. The evil was short, sharp and temporary. The results will be without limits in time or space. The terrible treatment of the Holy One by the God Whom He so faithfully served is a far more perplexing problem than the introduction of evil into the creation. In both cases it is a temporary infliction fraught with infinite blessing for God and all His creatures.

<sup>35</sup> See Heb. 57,8.

<sup>36</sup> It was quite possible for God to have spared Christ the sufferings of the cross. But it could only be done at the cost of untold loss to God, to His creatures and to Christ Himself. God's love could never be known apart from this bitter cup. His grace could never flow forth apart from it. Let us thank Him that He is not doing merely what is possible and easy, but what is for our highest good and His greatest glory.

<sup>37</sup> The indifference of the apostles in this, His hour of deepest trial, seems unutterably sad. More and more He is becoming the Lonely One. His nearest friends are far from Him in spirit. God alone is with Him. And soon He also will abandon Him. Only the betrayer is active. He is not drowsing. Neither is the vast throng of His enemies. And then the apostles also become alert. His sufferings did not seem sufficiently serious to ward off sleep. But when they were in danger of suffering themselves, they are suddenly wide awake, and feel no more need of sleep.

<sup>43-46</sup> Compare Mt.26<sup>47-50</sup> Lu.22<sup>47,48</sup> Jn. 18<sup>3-9</sup>.

<sup>47-50</sup> Compare Mt.26<sup>51-56</sup> Lu.22<sup>49-53</sup>. See Jn.18<sup>10,11</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> The perfidious kiss of Judas was the last token of affection He received from His apostles. Judas was among those who so recently vowed to stand by Him to the death, if need be. He had been entrusted with the funds (Jn.12<sup>6</sup> 13<sup>29</sup>), though he was a thief. There is reason to believe that he was above the peasant class in the social scale, and so of superior breeding to the rest of the apostles. The betrayal of his Lord was an awful crime, and yet it seems ten times more terrible, the way he sought to conceal it under a show of affection. May God keep us from hypocrisy! It is ever so much better to be an open enemy of Christ than to cover an alien and avaricious heart with the cloak of Christianity.

<sup>47</sup> How often do the Lord's servants show such zeal! By some swift sword thrust they cut off a hearing for their message.

<sup>48</sup> See Lu.24<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> All this show of force was a symptom of fear. If they wanted to arrest Him, why did they not do it on the previous day when He was in their stronghold, the sanctuary? Nothing could have been simpler. There were temple guards, the Sanhedrin and the high priest's house were near at hand, and, if need be, the Roman soldiers were within call. That ought to suffice to arrest a harmless unarmed Man, even if He has a few followers. But they were afraid of the populace. It was a deed of darkness best done in the night. So the chief priests arm their followers, and hire the traitor, and get false witnesses, and stir up the people, and put political pressure on Pilate, all to secure the demolition of the true Temple and the murder of the true Messiah. How terrible is religion apart from the grace of God! Yet beneath it all we can see that, unconsciously, they are carrying out the purpose of God. Though they fail to worship their God, they do not fail to sacrifice the Lamb of God. It was the work of the priests. No one else could do it. Such is the wisdom of God that He uses their hatred to fulfill His will.

<sup>52</sup> Linen, used as clothing, typifies righteousness. No one could fly from Him in His hour of need without exposing his own shame and utter lack of righteousness.

53-59 Compare Mt. 26<sup>57-61</sup> Lu. 22<sup>54,55,66</sup> Jn. 18<sup>12-16</sup>.

57 The priests were the teachers of the people. We might reasonably expect the chief priest to have a measure of spiritual intelligence. No one in Israel should know more than he concerning the dwelling place of God. He alone, once a year, went into the most holy place. Yet he did not even know that it was empty! God was not there. The glory had departed. Ezekiel describes how it left the cherubim for the threshold of the house (Eze.9<sup>3</sup>), then went to the east gate (Eze.10<sup>18,19</sup>), and thence to the mountain on the east (Eze.11<sup>23</sup>). Now the glory returned, yet he did not recognize the Lord of Glory, or he would not have crucified Him. The glory returned by the same path which marked its departure. It was, in humiliation, at the foot of the mountain on the east, and came through the east gate into the sanctuary, not, as they would expect, with a marvelous display of visible splendor, amid the plaudits of the people and the praises of the priests, but as the despised and forsaken impostor. The high priest in Israel has sunk so low that he does not even recognize the Shekinah!

58 See Jn.2<sup>18-22</sup>.

58 The testimony ought to have opened the high priest's eyes, if anything could. Though paid to testify against Him, they were repeating the great truth that He was the true Temple. No man in Israel could commit a greater crime than to demolish the temple. Yet this was what the chief priests were determined to do. This they charged against Him while they themselves were plotting it.

60-61 Compare Mt. 26<sup>62,63</sup>.

62 Compare Mt. 26<sup>63,64</sup> Lu. 22<sup>66-70</sup> Jn. 18<sup>19-24</sup>.

63-64 Compare Mt.26<sup>65,66</sup> Lu.22<sup>71</sup>. See Lev.21<sup>10</sup>.

62 Christ is the faithful and true Witness. When Moses was sent to the sons of Israel, they were to recognize his credentials when he told them "I WILL BE sends me to you" (Ex.3<sup>14</sup>). So now the greater Mediator's final testimony is "I am". Then the high priest utters the blasphemy: "Lo! now you hear the blasphemy." He convicts himself of all the charges against Christ.

65 Compare Mt.26<sup>67,68</sup> Lu.22<sup>63-65</sup>. See Mic.5<sup>1</sup>.

66 Poor Peter! Recklessly brave when his courage was called into question, he finds himself a contemptible coward, in spite of all his protestations. Only a few hours before he was ready to die for His Master and was proud of being not merely one of His disciples, but one of the three most intimate with Him. Of course, all the others might renounce Christ, but not he! His thoughts should have remained fixed on the fate of his Master. Instead he is concerned about himself and does not hesitate to find comfort in the enemy's camp. He was not risking his life to save his Master, but deserting his Master to save his own life.

But let us not blame Peter too severely. He is the great and fearless apostle in the making. Satan is sifting the chaff out of him. God is teaching him the lesson of his own untrustworthy self, and leading him to confidence in Him.

66-71 Compare Mt.26<sup>69-74</sup> Lu.22<sup>55-60</sup> Jn. 18<sup>15-18</sup>.

69-71 Compare Jn. 18<sup>25-27</sup>.

72 Compare Mt.26<sup>75</sup> Lu.22<sup>61,62</sup>.

1-3 Compare Mt.27<sup>1,2,11-12</sup> Lu.23<sup>1-17</sup> Jn. 18<sup>28-39</sup>. See Ps.22.

1 The Sanhedrin had jurisdiction in religious affairs only. They did not have the power of death. That was reserved by the civil authorities. Hence it was necessary to secure Pilate's sentence in order to have Him executed. The governor was not interested in their religious differences. His only concern was to guard the state. Hence his first question was concerning His royal pretensions. Christ does not deny that He is a king. In John's account we are told that He explained to Pilate that, at that time His kingdom was not of this world, and that His deputies would not fight (Jn.18<sup>36</sup>). That was all that Pilate needed to know. If Christ was not planning violence, He was no menace to the Roman power. Moreover, when the Lord calmly told Pilate that he had no authority over Him at all except what was given him from above (Jn. 19<sup>11</sup>), He practically takes the scepter from his hand and assumes the government Himself. The despised Prisoner is kingly, sublime; the cringing governor nothing but a political pawn.

5 See Isa.53<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Bar-Abbas, which means son of the father, *had* committed the political crime against the Roman government which they tried to fasten on our Lord. He was a murderer. The Lord was a life giver. Yet, because he was the son of their father, the Slanderer (Jn. 8<sup>44</sup>), they preferred him to the Beloved Son of God. It seems, however, that the people might have made a different choice had they not been excited by the priests. So that we may trace the crucifixion of Christ backward, with varying degrees of responsibility, through Pilate, the strong governor, who weakly yielded to the people, who were swayed by the priests, who were controlled by Satan, who was carrying out the purpose of God. Most of these were bitterly opposed to God, and none of them had any desire to work His will, yet all are moved by motives of which they are unconscious, to do what He has determined shall be done.

<sup>9-15</sup> Compare Mt. 27<sup>17-26</sup> Lu. 23<sup>16-25</sup> Jn. 18<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Jn. 18<sup>40</sup>. See Ac. 3<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Compared to the malignant hatred of the priests, Pilate's weak submission to the will of the people is merely censurable. Indeed, they are to be contrasted, for Pilate, in his ignorance, was much impressed by the claims of Christ, and sought to release Him. The priests, whose whole life had been devoted to a study of God's law, were blind to the plainest indications of His messiahship. Pilate marveled that He did not reply to the priests. They should have known Him by His silence, even if they had no ears for His words, for the prophet had foretold (Isa. 53<sup>7</sup>):

He is hard pressed, and *He* is humiliated,

Yet *He* is not opening His mouth:  
He is fetched as a flocking to the slaughter,

And as a ewe before its shearers is mute,

So *He* is not opening His mouth.

His silence before the deaf leaders of religion was not dictated by haughty contempt. It was useless to speak. They could not hear. So His silence is the God-given sign which they should have heeded.

<sup>14</sup> Compare Jn. 19<sup>4-16</sup>.

<sup>18-20</sup> Compare Mt. 27<sup>27-32</sup> Jn. 19<sup>1-3</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> See Mic. 5<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Compare Lu. 23<sup>26-31</sup> Jn. 19<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>22-28</sup> Compare Mt. 27<sup>33-38</sup> Lu. 23<sup>36-43</sup> Jn. 19<sup>17-24</sup>. See Ps. 69<sup>21-22</sup> 18.

<sup>26</sup> Mark, with characteristic brevity, gives only the charge on the inscription. This was probably included in the full title, which probably read

THIS IS JESUS THE NAZARENE

THE KING OF THE JEWS

John's account has almost all of it (Jn. 19<sup>19</sup>). Matthew says nothing of the appellation "Nazarene" (Mt. 27<sup>37</sup>). Luke (23<sup>38</sup>) and Mark omit His personal name. These were written in the three languages of the day, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. It is not likely that Pilate allowed any changes to be made after he said "What I have written, I have written!" (Jn. 19<sup>22</sup>). Each account accords with its peculiar character. Mark, as befits the record of a Servant's death, gives only the charge, and says nothing of the various languages. In the inspired accounts of this inscription we have an illustration of the way in which the spirit culls only such facts for each account of our Lord's life as are pertinent to the particular aspect of His character which is being presented.

<sup>27</sup> See Isa. 53<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>29-30</sup> Compare Mt. 27<sup>39-44</sup> Lu. 23<sup>35-37</sup> Jn. 19<sup>21-21</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> How profanely silly are man's comments on the cross of Christ! He had never said that He would demolish the temple of God. They were doing that! Should He descend He could not fulfill this word that they are casting in His teeth. Likewise, the insufferable stupidity of the priests could not apprehend that, if He would save others, He could not save Himself.

<sup>33-34</sup> Compare Mt. 27<sup>45, 46</sup>; Lu. 23<sup>44-45</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> God draws the veil of darkness over the scene during the awful hours in which He abandoned His Son. Then it was that He was accursed (Deut. 21<sup>23</sup> Ga. 3<sup>13</sup>). Then it was that He pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, to put Him to grief, to make His soul a trespass offering (Isa. 53<sup>10</sup>). Here is a holy of holies into which we dare not come but with bowed hearts and unshod feet. It was the moral crisis of universal history, the grand, long-heralded event that will make this earth the shrine of all creation.

<sup>34</sup> Ps. 22<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>35-36</sup> Compare Mt. 27<sup>47-49</sup>; Jn. 19<sup>25-29</sup>.



<sup>26</sup> See Ps. 69<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>37-39</sup> Compare Mt.27<sup>50-54</sup> Lu.23<sup>45-47</sup> Jn. 19<sup>30-37</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> No man could take His life from Him. All the weariness and wounds did not exhaust His vitality. At the very last He cries out with a loud voice. He laid down His soul of His own will. No mere man could die as He did. Thus it was that the Roman centurion recognized His divinity. And thus it is that the alien nations have learned that He is indeed God's Son.

<sup>39</sup> See Heb.10<sup>19,20</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> The curtain of the temple was a symbol of His physical body. It is a mistake to suppose that God was *manifest* in His flesh (1 Tim.3<sup>16</sup>). He was veiled, just as the curtain in the holy place veiled the holiest of all from view. It was the *rending* of the curtain by God which made manifest the way into the presence of God. So His rending on the cross, not the body of His humiliation, clears the way for all into the inmost precincts of God's dwelling.

<sup>40-41</sup> Compare Mt.27<sup>55,56</sup> Lu.23<sup>48,49</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> See Lu.8<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>42-47</sup> Compare Mt.27<sup>57-66</sup> Lu.23<sup>50-56</sup> Jn. 19<sup>38-42</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> The Passover was always on the fourteenth day of the first month, and the festival of unleavened bread began on the fifteenth. The first day of unleavened bread was a special sabbath. This was followed by the weekly sabbath (Mt.28<sup>1</sup>), so that two sabbaths came together on this occasion. The Lord was crucified on the preparation day before the great sabbath and rose on the weekly sabbath which followed.

<sup>42</sup> The sufferings of Christ are over. His humiliation is past. Henceforth no honors are too high for Him, no glories too great. Even before His resurrection we see the symptoms of His exaltation. Joseph of Arimathea may be construed as "the heights shall be added". His name is a prophecy of coming glories. He comes without fear and takes the incorruptible body to the tomb. As the prophet foretold, He was given a tomb with the wicked, nevertheless, He was with the rich in His death (Isa.53<sup>9</sup>).

<sup>43</sup> See Lu.22<sup>5,38</sup>.

<sup>40-47</sup> Compare Mt.27<sup>50-66</sup> Lu.23<sup>53-56</sup> Jn. 19<sup>38-42</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Lu.23<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In the hot climate of the orient it is necessary to embalm the bodies of the dead promptly. As the first sabbath of the festival of unleavened bread was so near, in which no servile work could be undertaken (Lev.23<sup>7</sup>), they simply swathed the body in a mixture of myrrh and aloes, until the time when they could rub it with spices and prepare it properly, for they were not aware how unnecessary this was in His case, seeing that He was not tainted with corruption even in death. At first it seems very strange that they should so hurriedly buy the spices that evening, before the sabbath came, for they could not use them until the sabbath was past. We would expect them to wait until the day after the sabbath.

The reason for this lies in the fact that there were two sabbaths in conjunction. The weekly sabbath followed immediately after the first day of unleavened bread, hence they could not buy spices on it. His own teaching would give them leave to do this good work on an ordinary sabbath. Hence their haste in buying the spices on the day of preparation.

<sup>2-4</sup> Compare Mt.28<sup>1</sup> Lu.24<sup>1,2</sup>.

<sup>5-7</sup> Compare Mt.28<sup>2-7</sup> Lu.24<sup>3-7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> See 14<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Compare Mt.28<sup>3-10</sup> Lu.24<sup>8-12</sup>. See Mt. 28<sup>11-15</sup>.

<sup>9-11</sup> Compare Jn. 20<sup>1-18</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> "The first sabbath", which elsewhere is called "one of the sabbaths" was the first of the series of seven sabbaths from the waving of Firstfruits till Pentecost. Our Lord was roused from the dead on the day which denoted a finished work, not upon the day that began the weekly toil.

<sup>9-12</sup> Both Vaticanus and Sinaiticus omit the last twelve verses, but *s* tacitly admits a longer conclusion to Mark, by spacing out the text of the last few pages, and by the fact that the last four pages are "cancel leaves", written by a different scribe. The original conclusion of Mark was torn out, and a shorter one substituted for it. Likewise *B* admits a longer conclusion by leaving a blank column after verse eight, the only blank column in the whole manuscript. Our text is taken from Alexandrinus.

The reason for these omissions is plain from the character of the narrative. Failing to see the proper place of this commission, and that *the record itself says that it was fulfilled* (16<sup>20</sup>), the proclamation was found to be impracticable, hence was considered spurious. Those who took this commission on themselves found they could not cast out demons, take up serpents, drink poison, or raise the dead, though they might seem to speak new languages or help the ailing.

This commission is for all *creation*. It is not confined to Israel, or mankind, but is directed to men as a part of the wider realm of creation. Originally, Adam was on close terms with the lower creatures. This commission will be restored in the kingdom.

Paul, in his earlier ministries, had a part in this proclamation. While on the island of Melita, a viper fastens on his hand. The natives looked for him to become inflamed or suddenly fall dead, but he twitched it off into

the fire and felt no ill effects (Ac. 28 1-6). There, too, he heals the father of Publius and others in the island. The strange part of this is that this occurred after he himself had a physical disability and did not cure his friends. The reason is that this gospel was to be preached to every creature, and had not reached Melita before. When this narrative was closed it had been proclaimed *everywhere*, and was confirmed with signs following. Connected with the kingdom, it now awaits its fullest fruitage in that glorious day. Its signs reverse the curse of Eden. The serpent is rendered harmless and poison is powerless to produce death. 12-13 Compare Lu. 24<sup>13-35</sup>.

14 Compare Lu. 24<sup>36-44</sup> Jn. 20<sup>19-25</sup>. See 1 Co. 15<sup>5</sup>.

15 See Mt. 28<sup>18-20</sup> Lu. 24<sup>45-49</sup> Col. 1<sup>23</sup>.

16 See Ac. 16<sup>29-34</sup>.

17 See Ac. 28<sup>532-35</sup> Ja. 5<sup>14,15</sup>.

19 Compare Lu. 24<sup>50-53</sup> Ac. 1<sup>11-11</sup>. See Ps. 110<sup>1</sup>.

20 See Ac. 5<sup>12</sup> Heb. 2<sup>4</sup>.

## LUKE'S ACCOUNT

THE HUMANITY of our Lord is most prominent in this portrayal. Matthew's genealogy records His regal ancestry through Joseph, His mother's husband, to David and Abraham. Luke traces His descent through Mary and her father Heli to Adam and God. One places the emphasis on the King, the Son of David, the other sets Him forth as the Son of Mankind. Consequently, this life of our Lord has a scope wider than the chosen people, and its sympathies reach out to those beyond the pale of Judaism.

In the introduction to the book of Acts the author characterizes this as "the first account...concerning all which Jesus begins both to do and to teach until the day on which He was taken up". Thus this biography links up with the labors of the apostles in Acts, and leads on to Paul's special evangel to the nations, and is not eclipsed until Israel is set aside. Hence it approaches more closely to the grace we enjoy than any of the preceding accounts.

In this biography we have the ideal Man. He is a King, as in Matthew, He serves as in Mark, He is divine as in John, but these aspects are subordinated to bring into strong relief the sympathetic, gracious, human side of His character. His birth and childhood are given much place. His maturity is announced before He enters His public ministry. His kinship with the whole race is emphasized in the commission He gives His disciples.

It is the longest account we have of our Lord's life and records six miracles and eleven parables not found elsewhere. These are characteristic of the sympathetic Saviour and Healer of His people. The miraculous draft of fishes (54-11), convinces Peter of his own sinfulness and makes him a fisher of men. The raising of the widow of Nain's son (711-18), restores him to his disconsolate mother. The woman with a spirit of infirmity is released (1311-13). The man with the dropsy is healed on the sabbath (141-6). The ten lepers are cleansed and the Samaritan alone returns to thank Him (1712-19). One of those who came to arrest Him having his ear cut off by an impetuous disciple, He arrests His captors long

enough to heal it. Such scenes of sympathy and salvation pervade this portrayal of our Lord.

The author of this account was not an apostle, like Matthew and John, nor a local Jew, like Mark, nor was he an actual witness of any of the matters of which he writes, but he was closely associated with those who had been with Him from the beginning. Hence this account is in the nature of a biography drawn from existing sources and eye witnesses. Many similar accounts were written at the time, but, not possessing the vitality of a divine revelation, they were ephemeral and perished.

Luke's close connection with the apostle Paul has led some to believe that this account is really a Pauline production and sets forth the life of our Lord in accord with the teaching of the apostle to the nations. But there is only a slight element of truth in this position. Luke's commission, conveying repentance and the pardon of sins to all nations, based on the sufferings of Christ (2446-47) was used by Paul in his earliest ministry (Ac.1328, 47), when he was proclaiming Christ according to the flesh (2Co.516). Paul's later ministries, especially that for today, as set forth in his prison epistles, are based on His celestial glories, not on His terrestrial humiliation. All depends on the absence of all the features of God's operations which we find in Luke. Both cannot be true at the same time.

Luke brings blessing to the nations according to the place they occupy in the Pentecostal era. They are the Uncircumcision who are merely guests at Israel's board. The revelation of the secret administration in which we find ourselves is in gracious contrast with all this. We are no longer guests but members of God's family. We are not aliens but fellow citizens (Eph.211-22). Our blessings do not come *through* Israel but in spite of their apostasy. They are not on earth, but in the heavens.

Luke lets a little stream of blessing trickle through to the nations. Paul submerges us in celestial bliss far beyond the highest hopes held out to the favored nation.

<sup>1</sup> Many biographies of the life of our blessed Lord were composed during the lifetime of those who had known Him. Luke had exceptional opportunities for such a work and proposes to write an account which would be *accurate* and *consecutive*. Being trained as a gentile, and writing to one, he would naturally fall in line with the spirit's design to cover an aspect of His life which supplements Matthew's King and Mark's Servant and John's Son. He presented Him as God's ideal Man. He carefully checked all the material by first hand evidence. His historical references have all been found to be exact. We may rest assured that all the facts have been fully confirmed.

<sup>3</sup> The expression "from the very first" may also be rendered "from above", as when the curtain of the temple was rent from the top (Mt. 27<sup>51</sup>). It would then signify that this account was a special revelation from heaven. This is true, but it is not the point in this passage. Though inspired from above, the evidence here given is rather the human side. The expression contains the Greek element *ana up*, which also means *back*, or *anew* (Jn. 3<sup>7</sup>). Paul could not possibly mean that the Jews who hated him had a revelation of him "from above", but, rather, they knew him "from the very first" (Ac. 26<sup>5</sup>). So here, Luke could not *follow* "from above". In space, the expression means "from above"; in time, "from the very first", or "anew".

<sup>5</sup> This is Herod the Great, father of Herod Antipas (3<sup>1</sup>) and grandfather of Herod Agrippa I. (Ac. 12<sup>1</sup>) and great grandfather of Agrippa II. (Ac. 25<sup>13</sup>).

<sup>5</sup> Zacharias means "Jehovah remembers" and Elizabeth signifies "what God swears". Jehovah is now about to remember what He has sworn to do for His people Israel. The result of their union is John, "Jehovah is gracious".

<sup>5</sup> The routine or "course" of Abia, or Abijah, was the eighth of the twenty-four into which Aaron's descendants were divided (1 Chr. 24<sup>10</sup>). Each ministered in the temple for a week.

<sup>13</sup> We are not told what was Zacharias' petition because it was always the greatest desire of any man to have a son, and he, though just and blameless, had been denied this divine favor.

<sup>14</sup> We have here a marvelous characterization of John the baptist and his career. His name indicates the return of Jehovah's favor to Israel in sending them the greatest of all the prophets after His long silence. The honor of being his parents will bring joy beyond the possession of many sons.

<sup>15</sup> It is implied that John will not be great in the eyes of the world. He had none of the marks of earthly rank or power. His robes were rude, his food forbidding, his palace a place in the wilderness. The high priests were clothed in glorious garments and dwelt in Jehovah's temple, yet were contemptible in His sight. Greatness in God's sight involves meanness in the sight of men.

<sup>15</sup> John seems to have been a perpetual Nazarite, at least in the matter of wine. (Of the Nazarites an account is given in the sixth chapter of Numbers.) This involved a lonely and consecrated life until his public ministry. The Spirit of God came on the prophets occasionally, but John was filled with holy Spirit before his birth. What an equipment for his marvelous ministry!

<sup>15</sup> Nazarite is from Hebrew *nahzar*, to sequester, and has no connection with Nazareth, which means a scion. Our Lord, who is presented to us in Luke's account as "the Man Whose name is the Sprout" (Zech. 6<sup>12</sup>) was called a Nazarene, or Nazarean, being an inhabitant of Nazareth. He was not a Nazarite.

<sup>17</sup> The last of the prophets promised that Elijah should return (Mal. 4<sup>5,6</sup>).

Lo! I send you Elijah the prophet  
Before the great and fearful day of  
Jehovah comes  
And he restores the heart of the  
fathers to the sons,  
And the heart of the sons to their  
fathers,  
Lest I should come and smite the  
earth to its doom.

John the baptist was not Elijah, but came with the same spirit and power. He was capable of performing the same work. When the scribes objected, saying that Elijah must come first, the Lord acknowledged the fact (Mt. 17<sup>10</sup>). Hence he is probably one of the two witnesses (Un. 11<sup>3-12</sup>) who come just before the kingdom is established. Meanwhile, had the nation been able to receive it, his work could have been done by John the baptist.

<sup>18</sup> Zacharias does not believe the glad news. Hence he is stricken dumb, for unbelief has no right to speak of the things of God.

<sup>19</sup> Gabriel gave Daniel the explanation of two of his visions (Dan. 8:16, 9:21).

<sup>24</sup> The joyful faith of Elizabeth is in striking contrast to the doubts of Zacharias. There is also a double contrast to Abraham and Sarah, who were also denied a child until their old age. But in their case Sarah was sceptical and Abraham believed God. But in both cases the promise was performed.

<sup>26</sup> No fact in the Scriptures is more guardedly and circumspectly presented than the virgin birth of our Lord. The great issues involved, not merely the reputation of His mother, but the value of His relationship to both God and man, depend upon the question of His paternity. Once we see that He had no human father, the miracle of His sinless life, the value of His sacrificial death, the secret of His celestial Sonship are all revealed. No man, descended on both sides from Adam, has ever approached a sinless life. All deserve death and cannot save themselves, much less others. There must be a cause for His unapproachable perfection, and it is found only in the fact that He was born, not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

To protect the name of Miriam as well as to link Him with the regal line of David, He is born within wedlock, and Joseph, the husband, is assured of the facts in a dream (Mt. 1:20). Miriam is presented as chaste and God-fearing, but her most blessed place among women is not awarded to her as of merit but of divine favor.

<sup>31</sup> The name Jesus is a compound signifying Jehovah the Saviour. It is the same as Joshua, whose first name, Hoshea, *salvation*, was changed to Jehoshua, *salvation of Jehovah*. He was a type of Israel's Messiah, Who will lead them into the promised place of blessing.

<sup>33</sup> The *reign* of Christ is for the eons, a long but limited period. He then gives up the kingdom to God the Father, so that the kingdom itself is *endless* (1 Co. 15:24). The negative is the only means used in the Scriptures to denote endlessness.

<sup>39</sup> John was sent to prepare the path of the Lord, and this he does even before he is born. Miriam doubtless kept her holy secret to herself, reflecting that God would make it known to whom it was necessary in His own time. Yet the moment she comes into the presence of the spirit-filled fore-runner, unborn babe that he was, he recognized and rejoiced in the presence of his Lord. The effect of this on Miriam was wonderful. The messenger had told her of Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's words reveal the fact that she shares her secret.

In the joy and exultation of these two blessed women we have a small foretaste of what the coming of Christ means to the world. Beginning with these two Jewish mothers, its widening circle will include His faithful followers, then the whole nation, and through them all the nations of the earth. And even before this He will have gone out in grace to the nations, during the apostasy of Israel, and chosen those who will wing the exultant note to the furthest bounds of the creation. Elizabeth begins the song that swells into the anthem of the universe at the consummation.

<sup>46</sup> Miriam responds with her magnificat. Its keynote is simple, yet sublime. Those who magnify the Lord cannot be else but happy. Those who humble themselves are sure to be blessed. She takes the place of the slave and rejoices to own Him her Lord. She knows herself an obscure, despised fellaheen, and suddenly she has become the most favored of mortals, a woman to whom all women will yield the palm of blessedness! But her thoughts are not of herself alone. Her case is but a pledge that God will scatter the proud and exalt the low. He will visit down-trodden Israel and place them on the throne. Now that He has begun to show mercy to His people, He will perform all the promises made to Abraham and the prophets. For whatever promises are of God, are in Him "Yes" (2 Co. 1:20). He is the pledge of the performance of every promise God has made, for the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, and by His bruised heel bring in blessing far beyond the prophets' most entrancing predictions. The bliss begins with His mother Mary.

<sup>56</sup> Miriam remains with Elizabeth until it is time for John to be born. Though nothing further is told us of their communion, we may easily imagine the overflowing fullness of joy which characterized their intercourse. Then she returns to Nazareth.

<sup>57</sup> The birth of a boy is always the cause of great rejoicing in the East, where sons are counted the crown of the marriage relation, especially if it be the firstborn. In the case of John the baptist this was enhanced by the fact that his parents were old and had little hope of having a child. Above all this was the sense of overpowering awe inspired by the supernatural manifestations that accompanied his generation. His father remained dumb until he had learned to believe the promise of God and needed his speech to prophesy His praise.

<sup>58</sup> The eighth day after the birth of a boy was, and still is, a great event in Israel. Until then the mother is unclean (Lev. 12<sup>2</sup>). On that day the relatives gather to circumcise the infant according to the law (Lev. 12<sup>3</sup>). Then, also, they give it its given name. It was the custom to choose the name from among its ancestors or relatives, and, in this case, they concluded to give it the name of its father, Zacharias. This means "Remembered by Jehovah", most fitting for John's father, but not at all suitable for him. In him Jehovah favors Israel, hence he is named John. How his mother learned this name we are not told, unless by that spiritual intuition which controlled her greeting of Miriam. They do not hearken to her, but ask her husband. He had been commanded by the messenger to name him John (Lu. 1<sup>13</sup>), hence he confirms his wife's selection. Only the Lord knows what names to give to His instruments.

<sup>59</sup> Such marvels soon spread in a land like Israel, especially as the time for the fulfillment of the prophecies drew near. Their holy Scriptures contained many promises of future greatness for the nation, and they all converged in the coming Messiah for Whom some of them were looking. It was well known that Elijah would come even before the Messiah, to prepare His path (Mal. 4<sup>5</sup>). It was a day of expectation.

<sup>60</sup> Never, in the temple worship, had Zacharias intoned a psalm of praise so full of goodness and glory for the people of Israel as burst from his spirit-filled lips when his tongue once more found utterance. First, like a true priest, he leads his hearers' hearts to worship Jehovah. Then he turns to his own child and portrays his mission. He begins with a tribute to the Messiah, yet unborn, Who, though He will follow John, was before him. This is very fine, and shows the touch of the divine Spirit. Merely human knowledge and devotion would have caused him to pen a paean of praise in honor of his son, the greatest of all the prophets. Yet the moral greatness of John is most clearly revealed in his constant note of abnegation. "I must be inferior", was his insistent claim for himself. And here we see his father before him forgetting for a while his great son, to celebrate the praise of his son's greater Lord.

The nation of Israel is continually before him in this psalm. The Lord is the God of Israel. The redemption is for the same people. The salvation is national, arising from the house of David. It is from their enemies, the Romans, who rule them with rigor, and who even interfere with their religion. His highest hope, as a priest, is to fearlessly offer divine service to Jehovah in benignity and righteousness all his days (<sup>75</sup>). That was the worst feature of the Roman rule. The worship of God in the temple was always in danger of interruption or restraint. Now he begins to see the dawn of a day when His worship will be fearless and free from foreign domination. The chief priest was being continually displaced by another who was more favorable to the ruling power.

<sup>76</sup> No longer is Zacharias unbelieving. The messenger's announcement of John's ministry is reiterated in his description of his son's mission. It is the custom, in the East, to prepare the roads for the passage of a great potentate. His most trusted servant goes before to see that it has been repaired. So John was sent to prepare their hearts for the Prophet of the Most High. He was the greatest of all the prophets before the coming of Messiah.

<sup>1</sup> We have here a most notable example of God's overruling providence. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, and Christ must be born in Bethlehem. How is this to be brought about? Little did Cæsar dream that this is the real reason for his arrogant decree to register the entire earth. He had no right to make such a decree and could not enforce it, for his dominions did not include the entire earth. To the north Ireland and Scotland were not his. Nor did his sway reach to farther Germany or India. He would like to have enrolled all men in his empire, but Rome never was a world kingdom such as Alexander and Nebuchadnezzar ruled. So Cæsar, at exactly the right time, orders Joseph and Miriam to journey to Bethlehem, that the Scriptures may be fulfilled, as it is written (Micah 5<sup>2</sup>):

And *thou*, Bethlehem Ephratah,  
Too mean to be among the thousands  
of Judah,  
From you He comes forth to Me to be  
Ruler in Israel  
And His coming forth is from former-  
ly, from eonian days.

It seems most probable that Christ was born in a limestone cave used as a cattle shed in the courtyard of the caravansary at Bethlehem. Salmon and Rahab, the parents of Boaz, seem to have been the first to settle in Bethlehem, and may have built this place, where David was born. The king seems to have given it to Chimham (2 Sa. 19<sup>37-40</sup>) as a reward for his father's faithfulness, and his descendant converted it into a khan. Thus it was that David's Lord was born in David's home.

<sup>8</sup> From David's day to the present, the country about Bethlehem has had its hardy shepherds, who guard their flocks from the wild beasts which infest the deep ravines and gorges leading to the Dead Sea on the east and the plains of Philistia on the west, as well as the wilder robbers from the desert and raiders from the coast. At night the flock is driven into an enclosure surrounded by a wall of loose stones and the shepherd closes the entrance with his own body, thus becoming the door (Jn. 10<sup>7</sup>). Such were guarding their flocks on the night of the nativity, when the great Shepherd of Israel was born.

<sup>9</sup> When the darkness is suddenly illumined by a celestial splendor and the Lord's messengers stood by them, their courage fled and they were afraid. But the messenger reassures them and announces the great event which has occurred. Men may sleep, utterly oblivious of the birth that brings blessing to all mankind, but the heavenly hosts hail His humanity with exultation and cannot contain their joy.

<sup>14</sup> The far-flung effects of the incarnation are not confined to humanity. They reach from the highest of heaven's hosts to the lowest of humankind. It is the ultimate that is in view here. Peace has not yet appeared on earth, or delight among men. Even the heavenly hosts have had but a beginning of the glory that shall be. The messengers may not have known the method, they may not have understood the long delay, but they gained a glimpse of the goal. Through the birth of this Babe all God's great purposes of blessing will flow to the utmost bounds of creation. It is the pledge of all that heart can wish or God desire.

<sup>15</sup> The shepherds did not delay, but hurried to confirm the marvelous message which they had heard. What a contrast with the wonderful words was the humble scene they witnessed! No pomp, no state, not even a human habitation! They found the lowly family, and the Babe cradled in a manger! Such glory as was there was spiritual. Heaven alone celebrated the Saviour's birth. The magi who saw His star in the East did not offer their oblations until a later date.

<sup>21</sup> In all things the Lord fulfilled the law. Even in His infancy its letter and spirit were observed. Not only was He circumcised, but the special statutes for the firstborn were respected (Ex. 13<sup>2</sup>). After the season of forty days for purification were observed (Lev. 12<sup>2-4</sup>), they brought an atonement for Miriam for a sin offering. Had they been able, they doubtless would have brought a lamb for an ascending offering (Lev. 12<sup>8</sup>). But such was their poverty, that they used the substitute provided for the poor. And, indeed, no lamb was necessary, for the true Lamb would be offered in due time.

<sup>25</sup> Simeon signifies *to hear*, and is representative of those in Judah whose ears were open to the law of the Lord and who looked for the fulfillment of the prophetic promises. As the years spoken of by Daniel the prophet had nearly elapsed, and the sixty-nine heptads had almost run their course (Dan. 9:25-26) it was time for Messiah to appear, and such aged saints as Simeon would seek no greater boon than to set their eyes on the Lord's Anointed before they fell asleep. We may compare them with those in these dark days who see the signs of His impending presence, and pray for the privilege of surviving for His advent. There is no hope or consolation in anything, but He will transcend all our expectations.

<sup>28</sup> The faith of Simeon was Abrahamic in its scope: He saw Israel, not merely blessed, but a blessing to the other nations. Not only was he not so narrow as the nation and their hopes, but he was aware of their apostasy. Hence he intimates something of the sufferings of Christ and His rejection by the unregenerate nation. Thus, even in His infancy, the somber shadows of the accursed tree loomed up in the distance. Few, indeed, were there like Simeon who could see it afar.

<sup>35</sup> The sufferings of Miriam, the mother of our Lord, are merely hinted on occasion, and can be better imagined than described. She harbored in her heart all the glorious things that were said of Him. The messenger's first announcement, the dream of Joseph, the salutation of Elizabeth, the story of the shepherds, the solemn words of Simeon, the later visit of the magi, and the warning which sent them into Egypt all conspired to raise high hopes in her heart, yet left her without a full comprehension of His mission. When He was left behind in the temple, she sought Him sorrowing. His reply that she should have known that He must be in that which is His Father's shows that she could not understand Him. Later, in His ministry, when she sought to see Him, He almost disavowed all physical bonds for spiritual ties. This must have seemed hard for her. And, after all her high hopes, to stand beneath His shameful cross—surely then it was that a saber passed through her suffering soul!

<sup>36</sup> Anna, or Hannah (1 Sa. 1:20), meaning *gracious*, being of the tribe of Asher, probably represents the remnant in Israel who were true to Jehovah, as Simeon represents those of Judah. This is further intimated by her long life of celibacy after the death of her husband. It was exceedingly rare for a widow to remain unmarried, and it reflects great credit on her spirituality and desire to serve God. Like her, the ten tribes had long been without a husband. They were divorced (Hos. 2:2) and were to abide many days before they could be His again (Hos. 3:3; Jer. 3:1). As Anna responded to Simeon's utterance, so will Israel be joined to Judah in the days of their restoration.

<sup>39</sup> Between the presentation in the temple and the return to Nazareth the events recorded in Matthew's account probably took place. The visit of the magi and the sojourn in Egypt must have come after the fortieth day, when they went into the temple, for they could not and would not have come from Egypt as long as Herod sought the life of the Babe. These incidents, however, have no bearing on Luke's biography, but pertain to the kingdom account, as given by Matthew. The magi sought the King of Israel. Herod did not fear Him as a man but as a prospective King. Each account selects only such incidents in His life as pertain to its peculiar theme.

<sup>39</sup> Only in this account, as is fitting, do we find any reference to His youth and private character. Matthew hurries us on to His proclamation of the kingdom, Mark begins with His baptism and ministry, and John omits His early life. It is well that His varied glories should each have a separate presentation, for even thus He is too glorious for our grasp.

<sup>41</sup> Up to twelve years of age a Jewish youth was not expected to be present at the Passover in Jerusalem or answerable for his acts. At twelve years, however, he became "a son of the law", and must keep the festival, and assume a direct relationship to the law as an individual. This is why, at that age, He went with His parents and acted independently of them by associating with the teachers of the law in



the temple, and did not return with them after the seven days of the festival were over. He was now free to begin His preparation for His future ministry. He must, at some time, begin the breach which would bring Him entirely under the will and work of God, and this was the time and place to do it most delicately and effectively.

<sup>48</sup> Though Herod was dead and Archelaus had been banished by this time, the absence of their Son no doubt revived the dread, inspired by the massacre of the babes of Bethlehem, which caused them to dwell in Nazareth. This may have been the first time they had taken Him outside Galilee, since their return from Egypt, for fear that His royal rights would endanger His life. Hence His absence would mean much more to them than that He had been lost among the thousands who crowded the roads from the holy city. And, indeed, His astonishing discourse with the doctors could easily have reminded some of the previous prodigies and predictions that accompanied His infancy. But, no doubt, He was already conscious of God's will for Him, and that His time had not yet come. So He returns to Nazareth until His majority, or about thirty years of age. Not till then could He take up His public ministry.

<sup>1</sup> This is the most precise chronological memorandum in the scriptures. Yet, even so, the various chronologies are only approximately agreed, partly because, in expressing years in figures, no account is taken of their overlap. Assuming that John the baptist began his ministry at thirty years, according to custom, our Lord's age at this time would be six months less, or twenty-nine and a half. This makes the fifteenth year of Tiberius and the twenty-ninth year of our Lord the same for more than half of their extent.

According to Roman reckoning, the first year of Tiberius was probably 765, two years before the death of Augustus in 767. This would make the fifteenth of Tiberius 780 A.U.C. Pilate was governor from 779 to 789. Herod, tetrarch of Galilee was in power from 750 to 792, while his brother Philip continued to his death in 786.

2-11 Compare Mt.3:1-10 Mk.12:5 Jn.1:6-8, 19-23.

<sup>3</sup> At this time John had attained his majority, and, according to the law (Nu.18:24) was entitled to the easy, comfortable and honorable career of a priest, ministering one week in twenty-four in the temple service, clothed in the sacred vestments, fed at the altar, and supported by the tithes of the people. He, however, forsakes the forms and ceremonies of divine worship for those vital functions in which the priesthood had failed. They should have brought the people to repentance and prepared them for Messiah. Instead, we find them His sorest opponents.

John's work was to smooth the path of the coming Christ. In a most serious sense, it was not a success. Though he made many disciples, and baptized multitudes more, when Christ came His path was far from smooth, His road was very rough.

John's gospel was essentially one of works. He looked for fruit. When he was asked, What shall we do? he did not urge them to believe, but advised them as to their conduct. He aimed at a reformation in the nation, similar to that demanded by the prophets that went before him. He had no illusions as to the effect of his baptism. Unless accompanied by heartfelt repentance it would be useless. He had no difficulty in getting them to submit to baptism, but was furious in his denunciation of those who wished it without conforming their lives to its spiritual import. The cleansing of baptism in water is external and ceremonial: the purification he wished to produce was internal and spiritual.

<sup>10</sup> The lack of love among the people seems to have led to unlawful selfishness. The poor were not being provided for. Hence he exhorts them to observe a measure of that commandment which bade them love their associate as themselves.

<sup>12</sup> The tribute collectors were notably unjust in raising their assessments to their own profit. They kept the peasants impoverished.

<sup>14</sup> The soldiers took advantage of their position to extort money by force or blackmail, and thus harassed the people.

15-18 Compare Mt.3:11,12 Mk.17:8 Jn.1:15,26, 27,30-34.

<sup>15</sup> John was a faithful forerunner who refused to receive the glory due to his Master. He often seems to have insisted that he was *not* the Christ. The difference between them was expressed in the two baptisms, his in water, and that in holy Spirit and with fire. Water failed to separate the true from the false. But spirit makes them manifest. The Lord Himself never baptized in water, but left that for His disciples. He did not baptize in spirit until after His ascension.

<sup>19</sup> Compare Mt.14<sup>3</sup>-5Mk.6<sup>17</sup>,<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Herod's treatment of John is here inserted ahead of time to close the account of John's ministry before opening that of his Master's.

<sup>21-22</sup> Compare Mt.3<sup>13-17</sup>Mk.1<sup>9-11</sup>Jn.1<sup>32-34</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Maturity and sonship, as distinguished from nativity and minority, were not attained at birth, but waited until the thirtieth year. The genealogy here given does not deal with birth or begetting, but with sonship. Hence it is not introduced until He arrives at His full manhood, and God Himself claims Him as His Son. The following pedigree is hardly intended to prove Him a descendant of Adam, but rather to show that this line, through which He came as to flesh, was absolutely incapable of producing the Sinless One, apart from His divine paternity.

<sup>23</sup> This genealogy gives us the "Seed of the woman" (Gen.3<sup>15</sup>) Who shall crush the serpent's head. Unlike Matthew's pedigree, it does not trace the physical male ancestry, but the legal line, through Mary back to Adam.

Christ is first proclaimed as the Son of God. Then He is shown to be the legal (not physical) son of Joseph. Joseph, also, is not the offspring of Heli, whose son he is said to be, for in Matthew we read that he was begotten by Jacob. He was, therefore, the son-in-law of Heli, by his marriage with Mary, Heli's daughter. As Heli had no son of his own his allotment passed to his daughter's husband (Nu.27<sup>8</sup>) and so Joseph is the legal son of Heli and the physical son of Jacob.

<sup>27</sup> The lines meet in Zerubbabel and Salathiel (Mt.1<sup>12</sup>), just after the captivity, because the line of Nathan died out in Neri, so that Jechoniah's son

Salathiel was also the legal son and heir of Neri. From thence it is traced back to the second surviving son of Bathsheba the wife of David. From David back to Abraham this corresponds with Matthew's genealogy.

When Eve bore Cain she supposed that he was the promised Seed, so she said "I have acquired a man, Jehovah", and she names him "Cain", that is "Acquired". But before his brother Abel was born she realized her mistake, and called him "Abel," Vanity. The Seed was *not* to be the seed of Adam, but the Seed of the woman. This lesson is emphasized again when the male line dies out in Neri, and the allotment passes through a woman to a legal son, and this is repeated when Joseph becomes the son of Heli through his wife Mary. Not a single man in the whole list was capable of generating the One Who was to bruise the serpent's head. It is a broken, sinful pedigree. Hence the absolute necessity that He should be begotten, not of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God, and that a *virgin* should bring forth Emmanuel.

<sup>36</sup> As this Cainan is not found in the Hebrew text and seems to have been unknown to some of the early fathers, some are inclined to regard it as a very early corruption of the text. But, if we retain it we have the notable number, seventy-seven, as the full total, and, when all names found also in Matthew's genealogy are omitted, we discover three groups of exactly twenty names each.

<sup>1-13</sup> Compare Mt.4<sup>1-11</sup>Mk.1<sup>12</sup>,<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The Slanderer is the suzerain of the kingdoms of the earth. Before proclaiming the kingdom it was necessary that he should be met and overcome. He took the dominion away from mankind through his deception in the garden (1 Ti.2<sup>14</sup>).

Adam was in no need of food, yet he sinned. Christ was famished from a forty-day fast, yet He withstood the temptation to provide Himself with food. Adam was in a beautiful garden, the head of all creatures on earth, yet he yielded to Satan. Christ was in a wilderness among the wild beasts, yet He refused to do homage even though it should give Him the headship which was rightfully His.

Adam questioned God's goodness and offended Him by seeking that which He withheld. Our Lord refused to doubt His love, though every token of it seemed to have vanished. He would not put it to a test. On every point in which the first man failed, the second Man, though tempted many times more searchingly, stood the test triumphantly. No mere son of Adam could have stood. Had He not been the Son of God the stress would have been too great.

<sup>8</sup> "It is written" is the sword of the spirit, that destroys the insinuations of the Slanderer. And if he counters with a passage (for error is best supported by an appeal to Holy Writ), the only defense is another stroke of "It is written!"

<sup>9</sup> A wing of the sanctuary overhangs the steep and deep declivity looking down into the vale of Kedron. This dizzy depth, rather than an eminence on the temple building is intended. The "sanctuary", including the whole temple area, must always be distinguished from the temple proper.

14-15 Compare Mt.4:12 Mk.1:14,15.

<sup>14</sup> At this point Luke, Matthew and Mark entirely omit any mention of events covering about one year, including the miracle at Cana of Galilee, the meeting with the Samaritan woman and the healing of the nobleman's son, which are recorded in John's account. Most of this time was spent in Capernaum, which became His own city during His ministry after His expulsion from Nazareth.

<sup>16</sup> The greatest Prophet of all did not receive recognition in His own city. It seems to be human nature to find God only in that which is far off and dim. When He returned to the people with whom He had lived and toiled most of His life, He seems to have had no expectation of a hearing from them and spoke accordingly. But their terrible treatment of Him on this occasion did not deter Him from visiting them again a year or so later (Mt. 13:53-58; Mk. 6:1-6). Then He was able to heal a few of the sick, but could do no mighty deeds because of their unbelief and hardness of heart. All that His adopted city gave Him was a despised name. He was the only good that ever came out of it.

<sup>18</sup> What more blessed or precious portion could the Lord have read than the passage from Isaiah? Perhaps nowhere else is such a delightful portrayal of His mission (Isa. 61:1,2). No wonder they marveled at the gracious words which came from Him! But even more marvelous is the message conveyed by His silence. Had He read another sentence, He would have plunged them into "The day of vengeance of our God". The two are closely allied—much closer than appears, except in the prophecy. God's vengeance will be visited on His enemies when He redeems His people. But Christ's ministry was confined to the proclamation of the acceptable year. Let us note the contrast between the acceptable *year* and the *day* of vengeance. God is swift in judgment, but delights to delay in blessing. He might have used the last two thousand years for vengeance, for the prophet gives no hint of aught else before His glorious appearing. Instead, He fills it with transcendent manifestations of His grace.

<sup>23</sup> The fame of Christ's miracles in Capernaum had reached His own neighbors. They were jealous in their unbelief. With marvelous skill He touches the sore spot and shows how thoroughly in accord with their own Scriptures His ministry is. Even in the prophets blessing broke forth to outsiders when those within the covenant were in want. Sidon and Syria had no claim on Jehovah's mercy. Yet Elijah and Elisha, at a time of great need in Israel, are sent to convey God's mercies to the despised aliens. No doubt His language implied that there was a famine in Nazareth just as there was in Israel in Elijah's day (1 Ki.17), only that then heaven was locked three years and six months and physical sustenance failed, yet now heaven is opened for a like period (for Christ's ministry seems to have been about this length) and they famish in the midst of plenty. So, too, His words hinted that there were lepers in Nazareth as in Israel in Elisha's day (2 Ki.5), yet they are not cured, though a greater than Elisha is in their midst. How pitiful is their prejudice and impotent rage! He does not flee from them, but fearlessly wends His way through their very midst.

31-32 Compare Mt.4:13-17 Mk.1:21,22.

31 His rejection in "His own country" led to His making Capernaum "His own city". From this as a base, He circled about on His evangelistic tours, returning thither at their end. Much of His work was done in it, for it was on some of the main highways of traffic.

33-35 Compare Mk. 1:23-26.

33 Since the serpent deceived Eve in Eden, man has been subject, to some extent, to the spirits of the unseen world. One of the most marked features of the millennial eon is the absence of the evil influences which now actuate mankind from without. Satan will then be bound. Subordinate spirits will not be able to prey on humanity. To inaugurate this kingdom Messiah must be able to cope with demons and destroy their power over its subjects. Hence, every time that He cast out demons by His word, it was a sign that the kingdom of God was near, and that the King was present to dispossess the evil powers that opposed Him.

34 It is a sad commentary on the darkness of the human heart, when the demons show an intelligence far superior to the people who possessed the special revelation which was given to identify the Messiah. They wondered and questioned, but the demons knew Him and dared not disobey His word. Peter needed a special revelation from God to teach Him who Christ was, yet these wicked spirits knew and acknowledged that He was the Christ, the Son of God. So far is spirit superior to flesh that these demons readily recognized His divine Sonship, while few of His professed followers fully entered into His messianic glories.

38-39 Compare Mt.8:14,15 Mk.1:29-31.

38 A fever usually runs its course. Indeed, it is dangerous to stop it. So the ills of mankind will never be cured of a sudden until the great Physician speaks the word. When He appears again Israel will be in the most awful pressure, but will be relieved the moment He arrives. Then they will serve Him as never before. Not only will bodily ills be healed, but the social and political diseases that mar man's day will disappear when He is on the scene.

40-41 Compare Mt.8:16,17 Mk.1:32-34.

42-44 Compare Mk.1:35-39.

44 No one who attentively reads the accounts of our Lord's ministry will fail to wonder why He confined Himself to Galilee and never evangelized the cities of Judea. Except for His seven visits to Jerusalem and journeys to Bethany beyond Jordan, it appears as if He absolutely ignored the most important section of the nation in His heralding. On His journeys to and from Jerusalem He taught and healed, but, in accepted texts and versions, we have no account whatever of any proclamation in the synagogues of Judea. The solution of this lies in the reading we have followed in this passage. Both of our best manuscripts read *Judea* here instead of Galilee. The fact that Matthew and Mark speak of a journey through Galilee at about this time is no clear proof that He did not visit Judea also. These so-called parallel passages explain why some manuscripts have the reading Galilee. It is an attempt to "harmonize" what appears to be a discrepancy. It is not at all likely that it would be changed to Judea when the other accounts read Galilee. The editor has personally checked the reading in the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus MSS. That these two great manuscripts should have this reading unchallenged by correctors or editors seems to be proof sufficient to sustain it. It is a relief to know that He did not absolutely ignore that part of the country which, in some respects, had the greatest claim on His ministry. Our Lord sprang from the tribe of Judah, and could hardly complete His course without proclaiming to His own tribe.

1-3 Compare Mt.4:18 Mk.1:16.

4 See Jn. 21:1-8.

4 There are three principal methods of fishing spoken of in the Scriptures. There was the hook and line (Mt. 17:27) with which Peter caught the fish that had the poll-tax money in its mouth. There was the seine, or drag net (Mt. 13:47), which was played out from a boat and dragged to the shore. Then there were other, smaller nets, operated from boats. These had to be used at night. It was considered foolish to even attempt to net fish in the day time. Hence Peter's mild remon-

strance. If they could not catch any fish at night, why even try in broad daylight? But Peter is impressed by the One Who spoke as no man ever spoke, and did as he was bid, without the least expectation. It would be difficult to imagine his awe and consternation at the enormous catch. To fill two boats with a single catch would be almost a miracle at night. It certainly demonstrated that the Man Who bade them do it was the most remarkable Fisherman they had ever seen! And this was the purpose of the miracle: to portray Him as the great Fisher of men, and to set forth His ministry. The fish represent the disciples that He caught during His proclamation of the kingdom. The broken net pathetically pictures His sufferings for their sakes. Even the action of Peter and John in salvaging the fish and the submergence of the ships are significant of their ministries in the eras that followed His death.

8-11 Compare Mt.4:19-22 Mk.1:20.

11 This is the marvelous manner in which He recalls them. In a few minutes He gives them a preview of the mission which they are to fill, and then summons them to go fishing with Him. Henceforth they will catch men.

12-14 Compare Mt.8:1-4 Mk.1:40-44.

12 What a series of striking contrasts do we see in this scene! A loathsome leper with a vigorous and wholesome spirit, which does not doubt the Lord's ability, yet leaves Him to work His will. Whoever should touch him would be defiled and unclean. Instead, the One Who touches him not only remains undefiled but cleanses the leper! The priests should have hearkened to the prophet like Moses. Instead they are given the testimony of an outcast!

The cleansing of a leper included a beautiful type of the death and resurrection of Christ (Lev.14). Two birds were taken, one was killed and the other, dipped in its blood, was set free to fly into the heavens. Besides this, the priest must offer various sacrifices and anoint his ear and hand and foot and head with oil, a symbol of the spirit. This erstwhile leper must have made good use of this timely opportunity to testify to the priests at Jerusalem, during the days of his cleansing.

15-16 Compare Mk. 1:45.

17-26 Compare Mt.9:1-8 Mk.2:1-12.

17 The fame of the Lord must have been very great at this time to gather so large and so representative a throng. Galilee alone had over two hundred villages, according to Josephus, and we may suppose that Judea had at least half as many. It is notable that, though He did not go about in Judea as He did in Galilee, the Judeans came to Him.

18 There is nothing unusual in the setting of this scene for an Oriental. To let down a *bed* through the steep roofs usually found in the West would be a feat in itself. But Eastern houses had flat roofs with battlements, easily accessible, often by a staircase on the side, and a place of continual resort. The roofing was readily removed, and this was often done in taking a corpse out of the house, for they had a superstitious fear of carrying a dead man through the doors.

20 A well man could hardly have pressed his way into the presence of the Lord in such a crowd, so what could a poor paralytic do? But the faith of the friends was far from paralyzed. It was very vigorous, indeed. It was manifested by their act. And it was this faith, rather than the pitiable paralysis of the patient, that challenged the attention of the Lord. Such faith was far more than sufficient for the healing of his body. So He ignores his paralysis and addresses Himself to its cause.

Disease is the result of sin. This is true racially rather than individually. As individuals, our sufferings are not confined to the result of our own sins, but spring from the most complex combinations of heredity and environment. In the kingdom health will be an effect, not a cause, and the basis will be the pardon of sins. The lesser is included in the greater.

24 Pardon is executive clemency based on *authority*. Only a high government official can pardon. Sin can be pardoned only by God and the One to Whom He delegates this authority. His mastery of paralysis proves that He can pardon sins. This proclaims Him the Son of Mankind, the coming One Who can banish both sin and sickness from the earth. This will not be fully accomplished until the final consummation.

27-28 Compare Mt.9<sup>9</sup>Mk.2<sup>13,14</sup>.

27 Human wisdom and expedience would have urged our Lord to choose for His apostles men of the highest character and reputation. Instead, He chooses those that were despised and abhorred. Not without cause were the collectors of revenue for Rome hated for their traitorous occupation and extortionate greed. John the baptist, in telling them to assess no more than what had been prescribed (3<sup>13</sup>), pointed out their most reprehensible practice. They collected far in excess of the government's requirements and kept the balance themselves. This opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of their fellow-countrymen was the only motive which could tempt a Jew into this hated occupation. They were always classed with sinners.

Our Lord does not seek to cover His call of Levi, or Matthew, as he is usually named. He goes right to the tribute office and takes him from his work. He does not wait until He can meet him elsewhere, or until he changes his occupation, or has been put on probation. It is evident that He wishes to impress the people with the fact that He came to call the unrighteous and sinners, in order to magnify God's love and mercy rather than His justice.

29-32 Compare Mt.9<sup>10-13</sup>Mk.2<sup>15-17</sup>.

31 What subtle irony there is in these words! The Pharisees and scribes were foully diseased within in spite of their pious appearance. Yet their ailment was like some insidious plague that deadens the nerves to its presence. The truth remains, the Lord could not call those who *thought* themselves whole, however serious their real condition.

33-35 Compare Mt.9<sup>14,15</sup>Mk.2<sup>18-20</sup>.

33 How little did they realize the privilege of His presence! Not even John, let alone the Pharisees, could provide a spiritual banquet. Why should they have a physical feast?

36 Compare Mt.9<sup>16</sup>Mk.2<sup>21</sup>.

37-39 Compare Mt.9<sup>17</sup>Mk.2<sup>22</sup>.

36 The Pharisees were trying to patch up their old cloak by tearing a piece from His new one. Their old skin bottles were empty and decayed. They had no joy and the forms which once contained it had become corrupted

and decayed. The wine the Lord gave them was full of cheer and gladness, and could not find expression in fasting and asceticism. All this was said, doubtless, at the reception of Levi, to defend the feasting and the joy, and to dispel the gloom which they sought to cast over it.

1.5 Compare Mt.12<sup>1-8</sup>Mk.2<sup>23-28</sup>Deut.23<sup>25</sup>.

1 The somewhat enigmatical word *second-first* in the Greek has proved so inexplicable that many texts have omitted it, and few editors retain it. Many explanations have been offered, but most of them are based on conjecture. The solution seems simple. The Jews had several sabbaths besides the seventh day of the week. The fifteenth and the twenty-first of Nisan were sabbaths, being the first and last days of the festival of Unleavened Bread. When the weekly sabbath came on the sixteenth, two sabbaths would come together, one a "great day" (Jn. 19<sup>31</sup>), and the next an ordinary sabbath. To distinguish the fifteenth-sixteenth sabbath from the double sabbath a week later it was called the first, and to distinguish the second day from the first it was called the second-first (Lev. 23<sup>6-8</sup>). This was probably the day of His resurrection.

2 According to the law (Deut.23<sup>25</sup>), the disciples had a perfect right to pluck the ears and eat them, though this is not legal in the Western world. The Pharisees do not object to that, but to the act of rubbing, which they interpreted as work unlawful on the sabbath day. If we tear off the mask, we shall find that *they* were breaking the law, not the disciples. It was probably the festival of Unleavened Bread. The disciples eating the grain as it came from the stalks, certainly ate unleavened bread! But, in the spiritual realm, hypocrisy is leaven (12<sup>1</sup>), and they were guilty of hypocrisy, they were using leaven, at the very beginning of the feast, which was unlawful!

3 Though the disciples had committed no breach of the law, what if they had? The priests labor in the temple, David ate before God (1 Sa. 21<sup>1-6</sup>), and they were in the presence of the Lord of the Sabbath Himself. If He is not offended, why should they be?

6-11 Compare Mt.12<sup>9-14</sup>Mk.3<sup>1-6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Jewish tradition carried sabbath observance to ridiculous lengths. They gravely discussed whether it is lawful to put out one's hand to give to a beggar, and how far! They disagreed as to whether it is allowable to comfort the sick on that day! It is striking how many times the Lord is reported as healing on the sabbath. The reason is clear. These instances are signs indicative of the healing of the nation. But when the nation is cured it will enter into the great sabbatism of the day of the Lord, commonly called the millennium. Healing brings relaxation, rest. How fitting that it should be on the sabbath!

<sup>12</sup> Communion with God is the only proper and adequate preparation for His work. The apostles were not chosen without God's guidance. They were not chosen for their own excellence, but for their fitness to fulfill the will of God and carry out His purpose. Thus one of them was actually selected from the beginning to betray his Lord.

<sup>13-16</sup> Compare Mt.10:1-Mk.3:13-19.

<sup>13</sup> The name "apostle" is really our "commissioner". They were to be His authoritative representatives, when He was not present. As God had given Him a commission, with authority to enforce it, so He delegated it to them. After His ascension they became the recognized leaders until the increasing apostasy deposed them and put James, the Lord's brother according to the flesh, in their place. In the kingdom they will rule the twelve tribes, with Matthias in the place of Judas.

<sup>14</sup> Simon, or Peter, is always first among the apostles. His name hitherto was Simon, meaning Hearing, but the Lord changes it to Peter, meaning Rock, as he is the first stone in the spiritual edifice He is about to build. His father's name was John, but this is also changed by our Lord to Jonah, meaning Dove, a symbol of the spirit, and of Peter's spiritual paternity. Simon, son of John, is the physical man, Peter, son of Jonah, the spiritual.

<sup>17-19</sup> Compare Mt.12:15-21-Mk.3:7-12.

<sup>20-23</sup> Compare Mt. 5:1-12.

<sup>20</sup> There is no reason for creating a difficulty by insisting that this is Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew's account.

Our Lord undoubtedly repeated much of His message to fresh audiences. The variations and differences in detail are intentional and correspond with the character of the account. Matthew takes Him up into a mountain and surrounds Him with His disciples. Luke takes Him *down* to an even place and surrounds Him with a vast concourse, though He spoke only to the disciples.

<sup>20</sup> The weal and woe pronounced on the poor and rich, the hungry and the full, the lamenting and the laughing, those who are hated and those who are flattered, is strictly limited by the word *now*. Conditions on earth preceding the coming of the kingdom involve the true disciple in poverty, hunger, distress, and hatred. The same conditions will prevail again just before the kingdom actually appears. These beatitudes will be fulfilled in the vast throng who come out of the great affliction (Un. 7:13-17). Of them it is said "They shall be hungering no longer . . . and every tear shall God be brushing away from their eyes." The woes are equally applicable in the same period to the apostates in great Babylon. The rich apostate Jews represented by the false woman of the apocalypse (Un. 17, 18) who indulge themselves and have no sorrow—these shall suffer death and mourning and famine. And those who see their judgment will repeat our Lord's words: "Woe! Woe!" (Un.18:10). In the present interval of God's transcendent grace, while blessing comes to the nations because of Israel's rejection of the kingdom, there is no woe pronounced on the rich, but they are charged to use their riches for God (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

<sup>24</sup> Compare Ja.5:1-6.

<sup>25</sup> Compare Prov. 14:13.

<sup>26</sup> Compare Jn.15:19-Ja.44.

<sup>27-31</sup> Compare Mt.5:38-44 7:12 Ex.23:4 Prov. 25:21 Ro.12:20.

<sup>27-31</sup> These precepts reflect the persecutions preceding the kingdom, and give the conduct proper to those who enter it.

<sup>28</sup> Compare 23:34 Ac.7:60.

<sup>29</sup> Compare 1 Co. 6:7.

<sup>30</sup> Compare Deut. 15:7,8,10.

<sup>31</sup> Compare Gal. 5:14.

32-36 Compare Mt. 5:44-48.

35 We have here the substance of the new covenant which the Lord will make with Israel when He restores them to their land and to His favor (Jer. 31:27-34). After those days, He says

I put My law within them,  
And I will write it on their hearts.

The second greatest commandment, to love your associate as yourself, never had more than a superficial and perfunctory observance. But Ezekiel declares that in that day He will give them a new heart and a new spirit, and will take away the stony heart and give them a heart of flesh (Eze. 36:26). This is the essential basis of the kingdom in Israel. The law will not be enforced from without but by a vital power within. They will actually care for the welfare of others rather than their own. So long as each one is concerned for himself alone, the best that government can do is to restrain the resultant evil. This happy form of rule will not extend beyond the people of the covenant. The nations will be ruled with an iron club (Un. 19:15). Their obedience will not be from the heart but compulsory, so that, when Satan is loosed, they are ready to rebel against the most beneficent form of government the world has ever seen (Un. 20:7-10).

36 The *principle* underlying these precepts is quite applicable in this day of grace, but a literal fulfillment of the promises is out of the question. Indeed, grace goes far beyond the spirit of this passage, for it gives freely without the promise of a recompense.

37-38 Compare Mt. 7:1, 2 Prov. 19:17 Ja. 2:13.

38 The figure is very expressive to one who has seen grain measured in the East. By squeezing down, shaking together and piling high until it runs over, the quantity of grain in a given measure is vastly increased. Grain was carried in the loose folds of the bosom of their garments.

39 Compare Mt. 15:14.

39 Besides its general application, the Lord undoubtedly referred especially to the religious leaders in Israel. On several occasions He characterized the scribes and Pharisees as blind guides (Mt. 15:14; 23:16, 24). The light that was in them was darkness, hence it was very dense.

40 Compare Mt. 10:24, 25 Jn. 12:36.

41-42 Compare Mt. 7:3-5.

41 Even those who are not blind should distrust their own eyesight. We can all see the obstructions in the discernment of others. Heredity, environment, religious associations, all intrude into our perception of things divine. If each one were more anxious to discover his own defects, he would be more fitted to help others. But how shall we extract the beam in our own eye? By carefully comparing our conclusions with evidences of revelation. Too many of us stereotype "truth" rather than hold to the facts on which all truth depends. Truth that does not bear a microscopic comparison with the minutest fact of the inspired Scriptures has no right to the name. A careful presentation of all the facts in available form should be the most efficient of all aids to remove our prejudices and reveal the truth.

43-45 Compare Mt. 7:16-20 12:33-37.

43 In the kingdom "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree" (Mic. 4:4). The fig tree figures their righteous government, hence the prophet adds, "and none shall make them afraid". The vine portrays the gladness and joy that ensue. The nation of Israel will never produce figs or grapes so long as they are thorns and thorn bushes. Far less can the nations of the world who have not received the cultivation accorded the people of the covenant. Good government and happy homes come from the heart and cannot be imposed on the unregenerate by penal laws.

46-48 Compare Mt. 7:21-25 Isa. 26:3, 4 28:16 IC. 31:10, 11.

46 This parable presents the permanent character of the kingdom. Its foundation is laid deep in the solid stratum of God's purpose rather than the insecure sand of human expedience. The superstructure may look safe, but the stress of political storms will wreck every state but the one which will displace them and have no end. So, also, are those who are allied with these kingdoms. Those who heard and obeyed Him built a house whose foundations would last for the eon. Those who do not obey are caught in the crash preceding the kingdom.

1-10 Compare Mt. 8:8-13.



<sup>2</sup> What He has said has neither interpretation nor application to nations outside the Israelitish fold. None of those present could so have understood His words, for their prejudice against the gentile nations was extreme, and He made no effort to disabuse their minds on this score. But we know that the nations will have a place in the kingdom, and that blessing will flow out to them through Israel. Does He give no hint of this? The centurion's slave gives us a graphic picture of the benefits which come to the nations through the mediacy of Israel.

The centurion himself is undoubtedly a proselyte to the Jewish faith or he certainly would not build a synagogue for them. The slave represents the subservient position of the nations in that day. But the most remarkable similarity is suggested by the distance between the Healer and the one who is healed. In Israel, all healing was done in His presence. They were at great pains to bring their sick from afar; they broke through the roof; His touch or the sound of His voice seemed essential to secure the desired blessing. And so it is with Israel. Until His future presence, they have no hope of partaking in the promises of the prophets. His feet will stand on the mount of Olives, His capital will be Jerusalem. The other nations, though at a distance, will also receive His healing balm as did the centurion's slave. There is no necessity for identifying this incident with that in Matthew's account. The lesson is the same, but the time and setting seem different.

The great principle of blessing at a distance through faith is followed much further in God's dealings with the nations in the present secret administration (Eph. 3<sup>o</sup>). Though Christ has not returned, and though Israel is not blessed, yet by faith we receive a blessing far superior to anything suggested by this scene. We are not slaves of Israel and do not depend on any intervention through Israel, but we have a place and a portion among the celestials which is immeasurably beyond both.

<sup>11</sup> Death was defeated whenever it entered the presence of Christ. This was the greatest sign of His messiahship. For the kingdom will consist, to a large extent, of those who have died

in expectation, not having received the promises. Abraham will be there and David, but how can they enter except through resurrection? Therefore, Christ is the Resurrection and the Life. He that can raise the dead is the Messiah of Israel, He is the Son of God. Besides the rousing of Jairus' daughter, He brought Lazarus back from the tomb. The little girl had scarcely died, the widow's son was on his way to the tomb, and Lazarus had been dead three days. One was but a child, one a youth, the other a mature man. But each one responded to His word, and passed from death back into life. Thus will it be in the former resurrection, which will occur some thirteen hundred and thirty-five days after the middle of the seventieth heptad of the ninth of Daniel (Dan. 12<sup>12</sup>) or about seventy-five days after His epiphany. The faithful in Israel will arise to die no more, but the unbelieving will not awake until the close of the day of the Lord (Dan. 12<sup>2</sup>).

18-20 Compare Mt. 11:2-3.

<sup>18</sup> By this time John had been in prison more than a year. Reports of the wonderful works of Christ probably brought to him the question of his own release. He had lived his whole life in the wide open spaces and close confinement must have been most depressing to his spirit, and led him to brood over his own fate. The news that he received concerning Christ seemed to cover only one phase of the activities of the One he had heralded. He baptized in holy spirit but not in fire. He did not burn up the chaff with fire. Were there to be *two* Messiahs? This one did only good and no evil. He could not hope to be released from prison by Him. Would He later execute the judgment foretold or was that the work of a different One? Such seems to be the trend of John's thoughts. He was anticipating the day of vengeance, when Christ would take His great power and reign. To have answered his question would involve the revelation of secrets which were not due to be known at that time. The kingdom was still being proclaimed. Its rejection could not be predicted without nullifying its proclamation. Hence the Lord does not reply to John's question, but bids those sent by him to note the character of the works

He is doing. This may be taken as a personal message to John that his suffering would be relieved even to the extent of rousing him from the dead.

<sup>19</sup> As the form of the Greek word for DIFFERENT or "another" is indefinite as to gender, it may be rendered "a different thing" or "another thing". That is, John may have hoped that Christ was about to change His ministry of mercy to one of judgment, in which case he would be delivered.

<sup>21-23</sup> Compare Mt. 11:4-6.

<sup>24-28</sup> Compare Mt. 11:7-15.

<sup>24</sup> Notwithstanding his question, John was no weakling or lover of luxury. He was not wavering in his confidence in Christ or desirous to escape merely for his own comfort. No one could call him a reed subject to the whim of every current of air! His imprisonment was proof of this, for he stood against the storm when he boldly accused Herod of his sin. His camel's hair garment proved that he was no silk robed courtier. They came out to see a prophet and that was what they saw. His present imprisonment was only an added proof of that, for such was the treatment which they usually gave a man of God. John, as the immediate forerunner of Christ, was the greatest of all the prophets.

<sup>27</sup> Compare Mal. 3:1.

<sup>29</sup> Compare 3:12.

<sup>29</sup> John's call to repentance was to the whole nation, but the Pharisees and lawyers could not accept God's estimate of their lives. They justified themselves. The rest justified God. The common people and the tribute collectors, by undergoing his baptism at least acknowledged their own sinfulness. To this day the same principle obtains. Self-condemnation is a sure road to righteousness; self-justification is the road to ruin.

<sup>31</sup> Compare Mt. 11:16-19.

<sup>31</sup> Those who wish to oppose God's work have no difficulty in finding fault, for every virtue, fitly displayed, is turned into a vice by the distorting eyes of jealousy and hate. John's subject was sin, so he was an ascetic. It was not his work to lead them into the joys of the kingdom. That was for Messiah. He satisfied their souls with

food and made the wine for a marriage feast. All this was in accord with their message and ministry. Silly men, knowing neither, would have them mar their message by acts which jar with their ministry.

<sup>33</sup> Compare 1:15.

<sup>36</sup> Truth is best conveyed by contrast. In fact, all human knowledge is relative. We know nothing absolutely, but by its relation to other things. Herein lies the loveliness of this incident. The Pharisee was at the top, the woman at the bottom of the social scale. It is very striking and instructive to see these two brought together and to note their different reactions to the grace of Christ. The greatest glory of the Saviour was His love for sinners and His holiness which remained unspotted in contact with them. The touch of this woman of ill repute would have sent a shudder through the self-righteous Pharisee. It thrilled Him with compassion.

This Simon did not apprehend. He thought his Guest must be ignorant of her character to allow caresses, hence did not have even the insight of a prophet. But the ignorance was not on the Lord's part. He soon proved that by His parable. Neither was it on the woman's part. Her tears, her worship, all she did, show the deepest consciousness of her own sinfulness and of His salvation. It was Simon himself who was ignorant. He did not know his own sinfulness. He did not recognize his Saviour. He did not honor Him with the common courtesies of Oriental hospitality. If he had known Him he would have shown Him the utmost attention and rejoiced in the woman's worship.

There is no reason whatever for identifying this woman with Mary Magdalene. She had been a demoniac, not a sinner.

<sup>41</sup> This simple parable contains the whole philosophy of sin. However hateful in itself, its ultimate effect is to produce an abundant response to God's love. The greatest triumphs of grace are in the darkest depths of degradation. The Pharisee, instead of being immensely superior to the social outcast, as he supposed, was at a vast disadvantage. His love for the Saviour was shallow, his response to His grace

feeble, because he had no dire sense of sin. Without in the least encouraging or countenancing sin, we must acknowledge its place in God's purpose to establish and strengthen cordial relations between Himself and His creatures, and such communion as is quite out of the question by any other means. And the more serious the sin the more certain and loyal will be our love to the One Who delivers us from it. This is the only revealed or rational solution of the temporary presence of sin.

44 An honored guest would not only be given water, but would have had his feet washed by a slave; he would have been given a kiss of welcome by his host; and he would have been sprayed or rubbed with the fragrant essential oils or attars which are so common among the upper classes in the Orient. All these Simon had neglected, manifesting the poverty of his appreciation. All these the woman supplied in lavish measure and method, and so manifested the opulence of her love.

48 Undoubtedly, according to the parable, the Lord deals graciously with Simon as well as with the sinner. But it is to her alone He speaks the word of pardon and salvation. And, lest her act, the fruit of her faith, be confounded with it and be made the ground of her salvation, He concludes, "Your *faith* has saved you."

2 Compare Mt.27<sup>55</sup>, 56 Mk.16<sup>9</sup>.

2 Many of the Lord's disciples have been misjudged, but the case of Mary Magdalene seems to be the most flagrant. The name now stands for a repentant harlot, whereas there is not the least ground for fastening such a sin on Mary Magdalene. She was a demoniac. Seven demons had gone out of her. Now she, with other women, followed Him and the apostles in their journeys. They seem to have had the honor of supplying His wants out of their own wealth. This does not at all accord with the account of the woman who was a sinner in the city of Simon the Pharisee (7<sup>37</sup>). Mary was from Magdala, on the western shore of the lake of Galilee, not far from Tiberias.

4-8 Compare Mt.13:1-9 Mk.4:1-9.

5 The parable of the sower seems to have been repeated with some varia-

tions on various occasions at this period of His ministry. He had been proclaiming the kingdom for some considerable time and had noted the effects of His message. This is the gist of the parable. The picture presented was one so common that all His hearers were familiar with it. The roads ran right through the fields. The rocks and the thorns were plentiful. Every Spring they could see this parable repeated before their eyes. It is usual to use this parable indiscriminately of every proclamation of the evangel. But that is surely a serious error. The evangel is preached today to *open* blind eyes to the salvation of Christ. This parable was spoken that, hearing, they should *not* be understanding. Only those who already believe can grasp the meaning of a parable. Even they often fail to apprehend its force. The disciples did not understand. How, then, could the multitude possibly discern its hidden meaning?

In Israel the festivals represented a cycle of their spiritual history. First-fruits and Pentecost and Ingathering were intended to tell of a spiritual harvest. Now He tells them of the sowing of the seed. There is only one Sower.

The usual elements of opposition were present when the Lord proclaimed the kingdom. The Slanderer, the flesh and the world were the three forces that frustrated His words. First, there was the opposition of the Slanderer that hindered many from believing at all. Among these were the scribes and Pharisees whom He called the children of the Slanderer, and whom John the baptist had called the offspring of vipers. Then, there was the mass of His disciples who, indeed, believed, in a sense, yet were not fit for the kingdom. The kingdom can be entered only through great trial and it will be most difficult for a rich man to get in. The great affliction (Un. 7 14) will take its toll of the half-hearted, leaving only the poor and honest hearts for the kingdom. Any attempt to "apply" this parable to the present grace will find its chief interest in the confusion that it creates. The kingdom proclamation demands endurance; the evangel of God's grace supplies it.

9-10 Compare Mt.13<sup>10-17</sup>Mk.4<sup>10-13</sup>Isa.6<sup>9</sup>.

11-12 Compare Mt.13<sup>18,19</sup>Mk.4<sup>14,15</sup>.

13 Compare Mt.13<sup>20,21</sup>Mk.4<sup>16,17</sup>.

14-15 Compare Mt.13<sup>22,23</sup>Mk.4<sup>18-20</sup>.

16-18 Compare 11<sup>33-36</sup>Mt.5<sup>15,16</sup>Mk.4<sup>21-25</sup>.

16 To enable His disciples to discern the difference between the fruitful and unfruitful hearers, He gives a further illustration. The hearty believer places his light on a stand. He makes the message known. The half-hearted one is slothful. He hides it under a couch. The worldly one puts his business first, and hides it under a vessel. These two shall lose the light they have, but the former shall receive more light.

17 Compare 12<sup>2</sup>Mt.10<sup>26</sup>.

18 Compare 19<sup>26</sup>Mt.13<sup>12,25,29</sup>.

18 In grace no one is deprived of the light he has, no matter how feebly it may flicker, yet the other part of the principle applies to all. He who has some light is on the way to further illumination.

19 The crowding out of His physical relations is symbolic of the trend of His ministry at this time. He was allying Himself with those of like spirit, and strengthening His union with them.

22-25 Compare Mt.8<sup>18-27</sup>Mk.4<sup>35-41</sup>.

23 A lovely little likeness we have here of that great spiritual storm which engulfed them at His crucifixion. The wind would represent the unseen powers of evil, one of which entered into Judas, and the waters the people who were whipped into fury under their influence. Had the Lord been absent, as on another occasion, we would refer this trial to the time of the end. But He is with them. Does not His sleep speak of His death, and the consternation of the apostles the fear which His decease inspired? And His awakening—did not His resurrection proclaim Him Sovereign over all the powers of evil? Not only wind and wave, but sovereignties and dependencies obey His will.

26-31 Compare Mt.8<sup>28,29</sup>Mk.5<sup>1-10</sup>.

26 Some manuscripts read Gadarenes for Gergesenes, or Gerasesenes. Gadara is usually identified with the modern Um Keis, a place about three hours' travel from the lake shore on the far

side of the Jermuk river. This location does not at all suit the circumstances surrounding this miracle. Except at Tiberias there is no overhanging cliff on lake Galilee, but at the site of some ancient ruins called Chersa there is a steep declivity, and beyond the ruins are tombs in the mountain side. This site is "across from Galilee", on the eastern shore of the lake. The shore is so narrow at the base of the mountain that a herd of hogs, rushing down its steep sides, would not be able to stop before being drowned in the water. These facts, together with the manuscript evidence, seem sufficient to justify us in adopting the reading Gergesenes, rather than the usual Gadarenes.

28 The demons never seemed to be at a loss to identify the Lord. It might take a miracle to make men admit Him to be the Messiah. Few saw Him to be God's Son. But the demons usually insisted on giving Him this title and acknowledged His authority over them. In spiritual intelligence they were certainly far superior to any of His disciples. Hence they feared Him, realizing the lawlessness of their obsession of human beings.

In some abnormal trance states it is possible for a person to entirely yield control of his body to another mind. In this condition the thoughts of the directing mind find a response in the subject, before they can be uttered and conveyed through the usual channels. If one man can control another in this fashion, it is not difficult to see how demons can break down the human will and impose themselves on their victims. This may have been the case before the deluge, and the reason why mankind was given a flesh diet thereafter. The present time is characterized by the activity of deceiving spirits (1 Ti.4<sup>1</sup>). Satan is transfigured into an angel of light, and those under him seek to simulate the operations of God's holy spirit.

32-33 Compare Mt.8<sup>30-32</sup>Mk.5<sup>11-15</sup>Lev.11<sup>7-8</sup> 1 Ki.22<sup>22</sup>.

32 Hog raising was contrary to the law of Moses. Swine were unclean animals, unfit for food. Hence the Lord was quite justified in being the cause of their destruction. Indeed, there was a fitness in furnishing the unclean demons with unclean habitations.

34-37 Compare Mt.8<sup>33</sup>,34Mk.5<sup>14-17</sup>.

34 It is evident that the Gergesenes thought more of their hogs than of human beings. It is likely that there were other herds and other lawless practices which His presence would condemn. How terrible is the perversity that prefers darkness to light, because of the evil which it harbors! He seems to have remained but a little while, acceding to their request, but He does not leave them without a witness to His power and love, for the erstwhile demoniac carries on the work by proclaiming his cure to the whole city. The Lord seldom visited that side of the lake and may never have preached to them again.

38-39 Compare Mk. 5<sup>18-20</sup>.

40 Compare Mt.9<sup>1</sup>Mk.5<sup>21</sup>.

41-42 Compare Mt.9<sup>18</sup>Mk.5<sup>22-24</sup>.

41 Undoubtedly, there is an intended contrast between this Jew, with the highest of privileges, who is at the head of a synagogue in Capernaum, and the centurion proselyte who had built them a synagogue. But the centurion is humble and confident in the Lord's power. He did not deem himself worthy of having the Lord enter his home. He saw no necessity for One so great as He to come into personal contact with the case. He recognized His lordship. As a result he received an instantaneous response. His slave was healed immediately (72-8). Not so Jairus. The centurion felt unqualified to come himself, but Jairus comes and casts himself at His feet, and desires His presence in his house. Surely the chief of the synagogue is worthy to have Him enter his home! Had his faith equaled the centurion's, his daughter could have been saved long before. He is delayed. The throngs are so thick that He cannot hurry. So it is with Israel. Their faith is feeble. They cannot grasp His power to bless unless He is present.

43 Meanwhile one who has a larger measure of faith is healed. Whether guided by intuition or by intelligence, she touches the tassel of His cloak. The "blossom", a fringe or tassel, was put on all garments as a reminder of the commandments (Nu.15<sup>37-41</sup>). On it was a ribbon of blue. The robe speaks of righteousness, the fringe or

tassel of its finish. Indeed, the Hebrew word for *blue* is formed from the word which means to *finish*. That which finished or completed our Lord's righteousness was His obedience to death. So that the woman may well figure that remnant in Israel who receive the salvation of their souls while the nation lies dead (1 Pet. 1<sup>9</sup>). The soul (not life) of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17<sup>14</sup>). Hers was a salvation of blood by blood. His suffering provided a blood redemption for the faithful few while the nation as such waited for redemption by power.

43-48 Compare Mt.9<sup>20-22</sup>Mk.5<sup>25-34</sup>.

49-50 Compare Mk. 5<sup>35,36</sup>.

49 The hopelessness of Israel's state is well figured by death. If we take all the disabilities and diseases which are given as signs of her spiritual condition, their sum would be death. And it is notable that in this case, as well as that of Lazarus, there was delay on His part. This is most marked with Lazarus, and there the Lord gives us the reason for His deliberate delay. He did not want to cure Lazarus; He wanted him to die, in order that God's glory might be manifested thereby (Jn. 11<sup>4</sup>).

So it is with Israel nationally. He could long ago have come and restored them to life. But, for their greater good and God's greater glory, He is deliberately delaying His return. He will wait until their condition is beyond all human help, until its very hopelessness will proclaim the power of His salvation.

51-56 Compare Mt.9<sup>23-26</sup>Mk.5<sup>37-43</sup>.

1-6 Compare Mt.10<sup>1-15</sup>Mk.6<sup>7-13</sup>.

1 Hitherto, it seems, the apostles had remained with him as disciples, to learn His words and ways. Now, however, they are empowered as apostles, to represent Him and carry the proclamation into communities which He Himself did not visit. We can well imagine the ardor with which they would assume their new powers and responsibilities. This was not a general commission for all time. It continued only so long as He Himself proclaimed the kingdom and was withdrawn when it was rejected and He made known His sufferings. In that the apostles could take no part.

<sup>3</sup> The conditions under which the twelve apostles were sent forth had regard to the customs and usages of the land. They were going to their own countrymen and the most direct road to their hearts and confidence would be to depend entirely on their hospitality. Such was the custom then, and until very lately a poor peasant could travel all over that region without a purse, or provisions, or extra apparel. They slept in the same garments which they wore during the day. Strict etiquette demanded that every villager should invite them to eat with him. Indeed, on this point the Lord goes contrary to the established custom. To move from house to house would lead to much distraction and consume much time, so they remain in the first house they enter, so long as they are in the neighborhood. The villagers would not seriously object to this arrangement, for it saved them much toil and trouble. Each new lodging required special preparations and feasting and other courtesies which became burdensome and of no real benefit. Otherwise they were careful to keep the customs, and avoid needless persecution.

7-9 Compare Mt.14:1,2 Mk.6:14-16.

<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding that John had exposed Herod's sin in marrying his brother Philip's wife, as well as all his other wickedness, and that Herod had locked up John in jail, the tetrarch had a high opinion of him and feared him and was sorry to be trapped into putting him to death (Mk. 6:20-26). He seems to have clung to the idea that the Lord was John, risen from the dead, and expressed a desire to make His acquaintance and was eager to see Him perform a miracle in his presence. It seems strange that he was not able to gratify his wish, and did not see the Lord until He stood before him on the night of His betrayal. Herod was glad indeed of the opportunity, but all his talking did not draw a single word from His mouth. That was the only sign that was given to Herod, and it should have sufficed (Isa.53<sup>7</sup>):

He is hard pressed and *He* is humiliated,  
Yet He is not opening His mouth.

10-11 Compare Mt.14:13-14 Mk.6:30-34 Jn.6:1-4.

<sup>11</sup> Bethsaida was probably situated on both sides of the mouth of the Jordan, as it enters the lake of Galilee. This makes it unnecessary to suppose there are two cities of the same name. Moreover there is a spot not far away which seems to answer to all that we know of the site. It is a desert place, not far from the lake, near a mountain, and a grassy spot large enough to seat the multitude.

12-17 Compare Mt.14:15-21 Mk.6:35-44 Jn.6:5-13.

<sup>13</sup> This is one of the seven signs of John's account, which were given to prove that He was the Messiah. He is the true Bread, able to sustain His people even in a desert place. The lesson in this sign is more marvelous still if we carefully compare it with a similar occasion, when four thousand were fed on seven cakes. The astonishing thing is that the fragments left from feeding the greater number with the five cakes was much in excess of the fragments from feeding the smaller number with seven cakes. His power is not limited by the means He uses. We need never be discouraged because we have so little for Him to work with. On the contrary, He can do more with little than with much. Human aid hinders rather than helps Him.

18-20 Compare Mt.16:13-19 Mk.8:27-29.

<sup>18</sup> At this point a gloomy cloud begins to throw its sombre shadow over the little band of true disciples. It has become increasingly evident that the throngs utterly fail to recognize Him as the Messiah. They eagerly eat the food which His power provides, but cannot understand His words. To them He is no more than a wonder-working prophet. The power displayed in His prodigies amazed them, but the significance of His signs escaped them. They have rejected Him and His message. The pathway that led to a crown now leads to a cross. His messianic claims are laid aside. He actually warns them *not* to make Him known as the Christ. He enters the path of suffering. But, even as the multitude did not believe His words, so now His disciples fail to follow when He speaks of His death. The path to the cross was lonely. He could not make the message known, for His own apostles did not believe it.

21-25 Compare Mt.16<sup>19-26</sup>Mk.8<sup>30-37</sup>.

23 With His prospects changed from a glorious kingdom to one of rejection and death, those of His disciples are altered, also. It will cost them much to follow Him in His path of rejection. It will mean daily renunciation of self. It will mean the carrying of a load which will bring them shame and suffering. Yet the highest honors of the kingdom are for such. Those who suffer with Him, reign with Him. If any of His disciples prefer to avoid this suffering and thus save his soul (not his *life*), he will lose the joys and honors of the kingdom. If any choose to lose or destroy his soul by association with Him in His rejection, he will save it, for his place will be high in the kingdom.

26-27 Compare Mt.16<sup>27,28</sup>Mk.8<sup>38-91</sup>.

26 This is in anticipation, for hitherto there has been little cause to be ashamed of Him. To nerve them for the ordeal He gives them a glimpse of that future day when His shame will give place to glory, when He, instead of being the despised Nazarene, will be the most glorious Potentate of all the earth. No one will be ashamed of Him then! Yet He will be ashamed of those who are not loyal to Him in His humiliation.

27 This solemn statement seems to have been the cause of endless speculation. To one who has intelligently followed the narrative thus far it seems most appropriate. Had the kingdom proclamation been received by Israel, then it surely would have been set up in that generation. Even though it is rejected, the proclaiming has been faithfully done, and demands recognition. The private life of our Lord was pleasing to God, so He publicly acknowledged Him at His baptism, saying "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I delight!" We have now reached the conclusion of the kingdom proclamation, and what is more fitting than to give a foretaste of that day, and thus approve His ministry? So, in anticipation, the kingdom is set up.

Peter, in his second epistle, considers this scene as a confirmation of the prophetic word. Not only will Christ have glory in the future day of His presence and power, but He has already been clothed with glory and honor.

28-33 Compare Mt.17<sup>1-4</sup>Mk.9<sup>2-6</sup>.

33 Peter could not bear to hear the Lord speak of His sufferings, but here was a scene that was more to his liking. He desired to make it permanent, so proposes to build booths for the prophets and the Lord. But that was not at all the object in view. They were not yet occupied with the glory but with the Lord's suffering. Peter was premature. The time had not yet come. So the glory is swallowed up by a cloud, in which the solitary Sufferer appears alone. The Voice which came from heaven was a rebuke to Peter's proposal as well as an expression of the delight God had in His Son. Christ had been speaking to His disciples of His suffering, and Peter's words showed how utterly he ignored his Master's words. Moreover, he seemed to put Moses and Elijah on a level with the Lord. So the Voice directs him away from them, and they vanish from the scene.

34-36 Compare Mt.17<sup>5-9</sup>Mk.9<sup>7,82</sup>Pt.1<sup>16-18</sup>.

37-42 Compare Mt.17<sup>14-18</sup>Mk.9<sup>14-27</sup>.

37 What a change awaits Him when He descends from the glories of the holy mountain! There He was enveloped in the majesty and dignity of His high station. There He found Moses and Elijah in fellowship with the thoughts that filled His mind. Now He veils His glory and descends to a curious throng and to unbelieving disciples, the best of whom ignored the heavy cloud which hung over His soul. The first thing which meets Him suggests the change which has come over the spirit of His ministry. His disciples have been unable to cope with the evil spirit. Undoubtedly the unseen world of wickedness was well aware of the fact that they had succeeded in turning the leaders and people against Him. Hence the spirit refuses to obey the disciples. But their time had not yet fully come, so He rebukes the unclean spirit and heals the boy. This is a sign of the future failure of the kingdom proclamation under the apostles, as detailed in the book of Acts. As their message was refused by the nation, the signs and miracles which accompanied its proclamation gradually vanished. They will not be restored until His presence in the future.

<sup>45</sup> The Lord was not misled by the amazement of the multitude. He knew their fickleness and unbelief. But He was concerned more particularly that His disciples should not be deceived by the great impression which His miracle had produced. Coming immediately after the marvelous manifestation in the mountain, Peter, James, and John would naturally come to the conclusion that this was the time to restore the kingdom. They evidently were entirely unaware what "exodus" Moses and Elijah had been talking to Him about. So the Lord solemnly prefaces His repeated declaration of His sufferings with a request that they take due note of the present applause, and contrast it with the bitter words that were about to break forth after His betrayal, so that they, too, may learn what is in man, and learn to put no confidence in the flesh.

Now and again a "plain scripture" is asked for to prove a point of doctrine, on the supposition that no one could refuse to believe if such were produced. But alas, unbelief can stare the plainest passage out of countenance and never see its force. So the disciples were being continually reminded, in the plainest possible speech, that He was to suffer and die, but it did not affect them enough to arouse their questions.

<sup>46</sup> This was a most shameful proceeding! How could the disciples think of nothing but their own exaltation at the very time that He was seeking to engage their hearts with His humiliation? In some sense, it is a far more miserable manifestation of human perversity than the unbelief of the multitude.

<sup>49</sup> It could have been nothing less than pride and jealousy that caused the disciples to forbid any one to use the Lord's name in casting out demons. Perhaps they were smarting under their own failure, while the Lord was in the holy mountain. John seems to speak of it in a kind of confession, wrought by the Lord's rebuke. They wished to be greater than others, and each one wished to be the greatest of them all. While He was descending into the depths alone, craving their understanding and sympathy, they were seeking for place and power with no thought of paying the price.

<sup>51</sup> As the Jews are not beholden to the Samaritans (Jn. 4<sup>9</sup>), it is no wonder that they retaliated at times and would have no intercourse with Jews! But in this case there seems to have been a special reason. The Jews worshiped in Jerusalem and the Samaritans claimed that Mt. Gerizim was the proper place to worship. It was just before the feast of Tabernacles, and caravans of Jews were going through Samaria, from Galilee, to worship at Jerusalem. Hence the affront offered to His disciples. But the Lord had very kindly feelings toward the Samaritans and had disciples among them (Jn. 4<sup>39-42</sup>).

<sup>54</sup> The long standing antagonism between the two peoples finds expression in this harsh proposal. It goes to show how feebly even the dearest of His disciples, one of whom is sometimes called the apostle of love, followed the gracious spirit of His mission. It is of the utmost importance that we do not follow Biblical examples blindly, but discriminate the spirit which becomes us in Christ.

<sup>58</sup> The Son of Mankind is the allottee of all the power and dignity forfeited by Adam. The beasts of the field and the birds of the air are among the meanest subjects in His dominion, for Adam was lord not only of his posterity, but of the whole creation under heaven. He named the animals and they obeyed him. As the eighth psalm says:

Thou art causing him to rule what  
Thy hands have made.  
Thou dost put all under his feet,  
Sheep and cows—all of them—  
And even the beasts of the field,  
The birds of the heavens, and the fish  
of the sea,  
That which crosses the paths of the  
seas.

What pathos lies in this comparison! The lowest creatures in His realm are provided for, yet He, their Head, is homeless, and without a place to pillow His head!

<sup>59</sup> Only about half a year remained of His ministry. He was on His way to the feast of Tabernacles, and six months later, at the Passover festival, He was to be offered up. Hence He urges the utmost diligence. The social ceremonies of entombment and leave-taking were tedious and distracting at such a crisis.



<sup>1</sup> As the Lord was on His way to celebrate the festival of Ingathering, this was actually the time of harvest and He was comparing the physical to the spiritual state of the country. At harvest time there is much to do, so He appoints six times the original number of apostles to assist in the harvest work.

<sup>3</sup> He has no illusions concerning the attitude of the people. They are hostile. They are wolves. Each house or city is now to be tested to see whether it contains friends or foes. In the case of a city there is a message for that which will not receive them, just the same as for that which will. The kingdom has drawn nigh whether they will have it or not.

<sup>4</sup> This must be understood in its oriental setting. To this day special messengers on important business are required to forego the formal flattery and tedious etiquette of the Eastern salaam. These salutations included endless inquiries and as many answers. It was considered highly proper to intrude into any discussion and even take a part in any bargaining that happened to be under way. These instructions were quite necessary if these apostles are to discharge their mission.

<sup>7</sup> The common custom of the East is for each villager to have the privilege of entertaining a stranger. And each move from house to house would stir up a great deal of pride and hypocrisy and lead to some ill feeling, besides taking much time and distracting them and destroying their efficiency. At each house they would be feasted and be indulged with a general good time, all of which was entirely out of harmony with the spirit of their mission.

<sup>12</sup> The sins of Sodom were so terrible that fire has effaced its very site. Yet these sins were not as offensive in God's sight as the rejection of His messengers. One was sin done in darkness. The other was a sin against light. The judgment of God will be absolutely fair to all.

<sup>13</sup> Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, "His own city", were the most favored of all places, for in them most of His mighty works were done. Yet now they, like Sodom, have disappeared, so that their sites are in dispute. They are cast down to "hell".

<sup>17</sup> But a short time before, nine of the apostles had tried without success to cast out a demon (9:40). The Lord had not specifically empowered the disciples for this work. Under these circumstances they had much cause to rejoice at the power in their possession. The Lord, being in intimate touch with the spirit world, had noted that its head had come down, no doubt at a signal of distress from his minions. This, of course, has no connection with the so-called "fall of Satan", of which we never read in the Scriptures, but has reference to Satan's action in response to their ejection of demons in Christ's name. Knowing the power of the enemy, and what He and His disciples would yet suffer at his hands, our Lord seeks to put their joy on a more secure footing. Indeed, unless their names are engraven in heaven, and thus under the protection of the Almighty, these spiritual powers over which they are triumphing, will try them beyond endurance.

<sup>21</sup> This is a most delightful glimpse of the inner thoughts of the Son of God. No doubt He had noticed from the very first that His message had little appeal to such as we would naturally suppose would be most eager and appreciative. He was continually clashing with the most intelligent classes. He had a following largely recruited from the lower stratum of society, the *fellaheen*, mostly fishermen and farmers, men who toiled for their living, while the professional scholars, scribes, priests, and teachers of the law, were antagonistic. Nevertheless, seeing that this was evidently God's will, He does not *endure* it, or *bear* with it, but *acquiesces* and *exults*. Let us not *endure* but *enjoy* the will of God, no matter how unsatisfactory it seems. He is working for His glory and His creatures' good. We desire success and recognition for our small share of service, with little thought of His larger purpose. It is God's way to turn the wisdom of the wise into folly, and to use that which is despised to effect His will, so that no flesh should be able to boast itself in His presence. The thought that God positively conceals His truth from some shows how impossible it is for His slaves to be "successful" in the accepted meaning of the term.

<sup>25</sup> A lawyer, or one versed in the law of Moses, especially in making it a burden for others than themselves (11<sup>46</sup>), would naturally be interested in the Lord's opinion as to what deeds would merit eonian life. From the standpoint of the law, this was very simple. Moses had written: "And keep My statutes, and My judgments: which a man should do, and live in them. I am Jehovah" (Lev.18<sup>5</sup>). Hence the Lord reminds him of the law he is supposed to understand. He correctly comprehends the whole law in the greatest commandment—love to God—and its complement—love to man. The lawyer knew the law. All that he needed to do was to keep it! Could he keep the law he would never die. But the law was not given to impart life. It came to cause death.

But the law had evidently done some of the work for which it was really intended, and he is conscious that his love to his associate is not up to its standard. Instead of acknowledging this and taking refuge in God's grace, he seeks to justify his failing by a quibble as to who is included in the term "associate". Such quibbling was the stock in trade of the expounders of the Jewish law. They were always seeking a loophole to escape its rigid requirements.

To show him the futility of laws and ceremonies the Lord tells him the story of the good Samaritan. The Samaritans were cordially despised by the Jews, who would not be beholden to them at all (Jn.4<sup>9</sup>). The lawyer would never acknowledge such to be his associate! But the Lord Himself was despised and rejected, hence He enters the story as a hated Samaritan.

The lawyer is the man who descended from Jerusalem to Jericho and is half dead. Jerusalem is the place of blessing and life. Such is his if he keeps the law. Jericho is the place of the curse. Such is his if he breaks the law, for "accursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things which have been written in the scroll of the law to do them" (Deut. 27<sup>26</sup>; Gal. 3<sup>10</sup>). He is condemned even while he seeks to justify himself. He has hopes that the religious rites will help him. Yet these are dashed to the ground when a priest comes along, but keeps as far from him as he can. The law does not

allow a priest to defile himself with the dead. It is not that he is hard hearted. His holy office brooks no defilement. The Levite likewise dare not be defiled with the dead. The lawyer will learn, when the law has had its full effect, that it cannot touch a man in his condition. These two men, like the law, came along casually, not to cure, but to condemn sin. But the Samaritan, that is, the Lord, was on a definite mission. The wounded man does not repel, but rather attracts Him, and draws out His compassion. He is not defiled and disabled by contact with death or sin. While the priest and Levite, with all their holiness, are helpless to manifest the love the law demands, the despised Samaritan, who would doubtless be hated by the helpless Jew under other circumstances, comes to his rescue and actually displays a love for his enemy which rises above the law's demands.

So does the Lord seek to drive the lawyer from his own defective doing, even his own reluctant love, to the real source of life, eonian and abundant, found in His grace and love as the Good Samaritan.

<sup>38</sup> In Mary and Martha we have a much needed contrast between service and study, and our Lord's estimate of each. Service has its place, and Martha could hardly have been excused if she had not supplied His simple wants. But then, as now, His slaves are tempted to overdo service to the neglect of the more necessary and vital acquaintance with God's will which alone fits for the highest forms of service and worship. Service without a clear knowledge of God's plans is often worse than wasted, but a heart acquaintance with His grace is the preliminary to such worship as most gratifies His heart. The one thing most needful today, as then, is a close acquaintance with His word gained by humbly sitting at His feet.

<sup>2</sup> This, though usually called the Lord's prayer, is the disciples' prayer. Every part of it is in close accord with the kingdom ministry of our Lord and can be used intelligently only by those of the Circumcision who are anticipating the kingdom spoken of by the prophets.

The prayers for us to follow in our

petitions are found in Ephesians (Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21). All here is from the standpoint of earth: all there is from the vantage of heaven. These disciples will be used to enforce His will on earth: we will rule among the celestials. Even in regard to our present life, few of us can conscientiously ask for a daily dole of bread, for we are usually provided with more than that. We surely cannot ask for pardon, for that is an admission of guilt, and we have been pronounced not guilty, or justified. By no means can we base a request for pardon on our own lenience toward others, for our acquittal is by undiluted grace. And the last petition is a definite reference to the great affliction, which will precede the coming of the kingdom, in which we will not be involved. It is only those unacquainted with the calling above, which is ours in Christ Jesus, who can conscientiously repeat this form. It cannot but cloud their apprehension of God's marvelous favor to the nations for the present secret economy to use a prayer every item of which is fitted for an entirely different administration. The custom of constantly repeating this prayer has done much to blind the minds of the saints to the great secrets which lie at the foundation of the truth for the present, and to confound justification with pardon. Those who are merely pardoned are on probation, and need continual renewals. Those who are justified are at rest concerning their sins and need not pray continually for that which they already have.

11 The secret of acceptable prayer today is conformity to the will and purpose of God at this present time. If we ask amiss, He is not so unkind as to grant our requests, neither can He change His purpose to suit the whims of His erring children. To pray intelligently we must understand what He is about, and fall in line with His plans. No amount of importunity will swerve Him from His course, or pleading of His promises to others divert Him from His present operations. He cannot follow the advice offered by those ignorant of His ways and unresponsive to the transcendent grace which He is lavishing upon them. Those who know Him never advise Him.

17 Few signs were so impressively suggestive of spiritual power as the casting out of demons. That they were the emissaries and subordinates of Satan is implied in our Lord's argument, and every one compelled to leave its victim was a sign of the ejection of Satan himself when the kingdom is set up. Indeed, the most important factor in the millennial reign is the absence of Satan, who will be bound during the entire period (Un. 20<sup>1-3</sup>). From the primeval temptation in Eden up to that time, man's enmity to God is largely the result of wicked spiritual influences from without. Man is the pawn, played by Satan, in his efforts to overthrow God's sovereignty. To release mankind from this thrall-dom is the first essential to the establishment of a righteous government. Men's efforts are a dismal failure chiefly because they do not reckon with this unknown influence and could not cope with it even if they were aware of its presence.

Satan's influence over mankind will culminate when he is cast down to earth and, as the seven-headed dragon, assumes the leadership of man's campaign against God at the time of the end. Then it is that Christ will descend and cut his career short by confining him for the thousand years. Every time He or His disciples cast out a demon it was a foretaste of that blessed kingdom. Only a stronger One than Satan could invade his realm and defeat his deputies.

When they could not question the reality of His miracles, and must give some adequate cause, they became desperate, and committed the sin which could not be pardoned even in the coming eon. To attribute the work of God's spirit to Satan's power is the limit of iniquity.

24 Israel as a nation is here pictured as a man out of whom the unclean spirit of idolatry has been cast. Ever since the Babylonian captivity they have been held back from breaking the first commandment. But freedom from idolatry has not been followed by the worship of God. The place once occupied by idols is empty. At the time of the end the unbelieving nation will be forced to worship the image of the wild beast, and their state will be far worse than their previous plight.

<sup>27</sup> This is a delicate yet decisive thrust at the slightest tendency toward Mariolatry. Mary was indeed most blessed to be chosen to bear such a Son, but it was a physical relationship, such as He sustained in some slight degree to all who were descendants of Jacob. Happiness did not inhere in this. It springs from a spiritual source. Hence He ignores the remark as to Mary, and turns it so as to include His spiritual relatives.

<sup>29</sup> These were hard sayings for the religious Jews. For such a saying His townsmen at Nazareth sought to kill Him (4<sup>24-30</sup>). They could not bear to hear of blessing coming to gentile curs while they are passed by. They did not see that privilege, in itself, does not bring happiness. It entails suffering if it be unheeded or spurned. He who is under the light of law will be judged by its illumination. Those in darkness will not be held responsible for a light they never had.

<sup>31</sup> The resurrection of judgment is not altogether a matter of condemnation. The queen of Sheba will be commended for coming to hear Solomon. The repentance of the men of Nineveh will be recognized and rewarded.

<sup>31</sup> Solomon, with all his wisdom, cannot compare with his greater Son. His reign closed under a cloud which caused the division of the kingdom. He did that which displeased Jehovah. But Christ's wisdom extended beyond His words to His ways. What He said and did were both in constant accord with the mind of God.

<sup>32</sup> Jonah's conduct, both before and after his proclamation, shows how lacking he was in sympathy with his message and the One Who sent him. Jonah was exceedingly displeased and very angry when he found that God was gracious and merciful and of great kindness, so that He actually did not fulfill His threats of doom. Jonah was angry again because a gourd was destroyed by a worm. He cared only for his own comfort, and, to him, the withering of the gourd which sheltered him was of more consequence than the destruction of the great city with its thousands of God's creatures. God's judgments are not vindictive but remedial. He does not desire to condemn but to save. Judgment is His strange work.

<sup>38</sup> That light may become darkness seems, at first sight, incomprehensible. But this was the case with the worst of our Lord's enemies, and is often true today. As an example, the truth that Christ should come from Bethlehem was a pure ray from the word of God. But His enemies turned it to dense darkness for themselves when they took it for granted that He had been born in Nazareth. What should have proven Him to be the Christ was made an argument to disprove it. In the same way today many a precious truth is supposed to deny another, equally precious, because they seem to be irreconcilable. If the scribes had made a careful inquiry, as they should have done, they would have known that, though the Lord was reared in Nazareth, He was born in Bethlehem. And if we seek for the facts accurately and carefully, the truth which we have will not eclipse some other truth. Let us labor that the light in us does not become darkness.

<sup>38</sup> Compare Mk. 7:1-8.

<sup>38</sup> Baptism is simply ceremonial washing. The merest dipping of the hands in water would suffice for luncheon. No such ceremony was commanded by the law. It was one of the precepts of men which they had added to His statutes. The Pharisees made much of externals and non-essentials so as to have the appearance of sanctity. But their fastidiousness did not extend to the vital realities of life. Alas! Is not this the condition of the great religious world today? There is form and ceremony, but vital power is not present.

<sup>39</sup> Compare Mt. 23<sup>25,26</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> Compare Mt. 23<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> "Judging" in this connection can only mean the correction of wrongs. There is no good English equivalent for the Greek word *krisis*. By leaving the term uniformly "judging" we hope to rid it of the sense of condemnation and attach to it the neutral idea of executing justice to the deserving as well as the undeserving. Judging awards for good as well as punishes for evil.

<sup>43</sup> Compare Mt. 23<sup>6</sup>, Mk. 12<sup>38,39</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> Compare Mt. 23<sup>27,28</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> English needs a special term to distinguish these teachers of the law of Moses from the legal profession. They seem to have been a special class tak-

ing upon themselves what really pertained to the priesthood. The failure of the priests seems to have led to the rise of "lawyers" to expound the law of Moses, and to determine its application in practical life. This gave them an advantage of which they were not slow to avail themselves. Whenever men are given a divine monopoly they abuse it. When the exposition of the scriptures is usurped by a special class they not only fail to unfold them but they effectively hinder others from discovering the truth for themselves.

46 Compare Mt. 23<sup>4</sup>.

47 Compare Mt. 23<sup>29-36</sup>.

51 Compare Gen.4<sup>8</sup>2 Chr.24<sup>20,21</sup>.

51 Men are to be judged by what they know as well as by what they do. To do that which you condemn in others convicts you of their crime as well as your own. Cain was a religious man; in fact he is the first to bring an offering to Jehovah (Gen.4<sup>3</sup>). But his works were evil (1 Jn. 3<sup>12</sup>). The first murder was committed by an outwardly religious, but inwardly wicked man. It is rather remarkable that there were three different men, named Zacharias, murdered in the court of the temple. One was Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, who testified against them. And they conspired against him, and stoned him in the court of the house of the Lord. When he died he said "Jehovah is seeing and inquiring," which corresponds closely with "exactng", here used by our Lord (2 Chr.24<sup>20-22</sup>). As Chronicles is the end of the Hebrew canon, from Abel to this Zechariah would comprise all the religious murders of the book.

But the Zacharias here may be the same as in Matthew, where he is called the son of Berechiah, that is, the author of the book of Zechariah (Zech. 1<sup>1</sup>). He also testified of their evil ways. We have no other record of the manner of his death, but our Lord knew that he was slain where only a priest could have done the deed. From Abel to this Zechariah would stretch over their whole inspired history.

Over thirty years later another Zacharias was foully slain in the outer temple (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book IV, chapter 5). This was near the end of their stay in the land.

52 Compare Mt. 23<sup>13</sup>.

54 Compare Mk. 12<sup>13</sup>.

1 Compare Mt.16<sup>6-12</sup>Mk.8<sup>15-21</sup>.

1 Though hypocrisy, in all its forms, is most hateful to God, yet it seems most prevalent in the sphere of religion. The most potent preventive is the great truth here enunciated. Once we realize that pretense of any kind is but a temporary expedient which will react with fearful effect in the future it will make us slow to claim to be what we are not. We may be successful now in concealing our deeds of darkness from our fellows, but they are surely known to God and just as surely will be manifest to men. Happy is he who is not concerned with present appearances but so lives that his acts will be approved in the light!

2-5 Compare Mt.10<sup>26-28</sup>.

4 Gehenna, the valley of the son of Hinnom just below Jerusalem, is the place where the refuse and offal of the city was burned. In the kingdom the bodies of criminals will be cast into its flames. The distinction here drawn is between the believer, whose death, especially if endured for the Lord's sake, will make him eligible to a high place in the kingdom at the resurrection of the just, and the rebellious, who, even if they should be in the kingdom, will suffer its stern condemnation. The enemies of Christ can kill, and thousands will be slain as witnesses to the truth, yet their act has an effect exactly opposite to what they intend, for it enhances the felicity of the saints in the resurrection. Not so with those whom He executes. They forfeit the joys of the kingdom.

6 The infinitude of God's care in creation surpasses all human comprehension. There is no detail of our lives too small for His microscopic concern, nothing too trivial to touch His tender solicitude.

8-9 Compare Mt. 10<sup>32-33</sup>.

10 Compare Mt.12<sup>31,32</sup>Mk.3<sup>28-30</sup>.

10 The unpardonable sin of Israel was not the crucifixion of Christ, but the subsequent rejection of the holy Spirit's testimony through His apostles. This has brought on their present dispersion for the eon.

11 Compare Mt.10<sup>19,20</sup>Mk.13<sup>11</sup>.

11 This has no reference to the preaching of the evangel today, but to the proclamation of the kingdom.

12 Compare Ac.4<sup>8</sup>72,55.

<sup>14</sup> See Ex. 21<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Compare 1 Ti. 6<sup>8-10</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> A telling truth which would do more to ameliorate the ills of humanity than all government, were it heeded, is embodied in the phrase, "the superfluity of his possessions". Life does not consist in having, but in being. The moment that our possessions exceed our needs they become a burden. The only place that treasure can be safely and sanely deposited is in the heavens. This is illustrated in the following parable.

<sup>18</sup> In Palestine it was customary to store grain and other products in sealed, air tight, cistern-like pits, dug on a hill side or in a field, where the ground was sufficiently dry. In these food was kept unspoiled for long periods, safe from marauders and mice and ants. It would be difficult to preserve grain or food stuffs for many years in barns such as are used in the West.

<sup>19</sup> Compare Prov. 18<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> This is an excellent passage to teach us the significance of the soul. It is now spoken of as though it were the spirit. The soul craves food and drink and merriment. It expresses itself in the appetite and physical desires. The rich man had made no provision for his spirit. His hoard was of grain and wine and oil, good only for the life that now is. The soul is satisfied by the senses. Taste, smell, hearing, sight, and touch are the means of its exercise.

<sup>20</sup> See Job 27<sup>16-22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Compare 29-34 Ja. 2<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>22-26</sup> Compare Mt. 6<sup>25-27</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> From the world's standpoint this man was most prudent, for he provided for the future. But his death turned his prudence into folly.

<sup>22</sup> Man has become the slave of his desires. Instead of eating and drinking to live, he spends his life in laboring for the means of living according to his liking.

<sup>24</sup> The lower ranks of creation are a daily display of God's care and provision. No one can study the marvels of nature without some sense of the over-seeing providence of God. They are better provided for than men.

<sup>27-28</sup> Compare Mt. 6<sup>28-30</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> There are many beautiful flowers in Palestine but the scriptures do not mention any varieties, hence it is difficult to fix upon the one specially alluded to. Some have thought that He referred to a beautiful species of iris, colored dark purple and white. There are also brilliant hued tulips. But these flowers are not abundant enough to warrant the general allusion made by our Lord. There are other flowers, more numerous and quite as glorious, which carpet the fields of Palestine. Among these the most gorgeous and conspicuous in the Spring is the *Anemone coronaria*, usually a brilliant scarlet, which is found in all parts of the land. It abounds in the plains and on the mountains, along the shores of Galilee and on the bare hills of Judea. The richness of its tints and the profusion with which it appears everywhere combine to give point to our Lord's comparison. Though the commonest of flowers, it is also among the loveliest. The Arabs include it among the flowers called *susan*, which is equivalent to the Hebrew *shushan* and the Greek *krinon*, the word here used. This is, however, the common name for any brilliantly colored flower like a lily or tulip, or ranunculus or anemone.

<sup>29</sup> Compare Mt. 6<sup>31-34</sup>.

<sup>32-34</sup> Compare Mt. 6<sup>19-21</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> See Hag. 1<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> This advice must be understood in the light of the property laws in Israel and the imminence of the kingdom. Each one had his allotment, on which his living depended. Our Lord was not asking them to sell this. It was property over and above this which He advised them to sell, as it would be worthless to them in the redistribution of the land in the kingdom. Their only way of securing it was to use its price in helping the poor in Israel. Thus they would transfer their interests into the coming kingdom.

<sup>36</sup> Compare Mt. 22<sup>1-14</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> The Lord's return is always left indefinite as to time so that it may be continually imminent to the hearts of His people. We should remember that our next conscious moment may be in His presence. There is nothing to compare with this to give joy and power in service.

<sup>39</sup> As most of the houses in Palestine were built of sun-dried clay, or *adobe*, a thief could best effect an entrance by digging his way through the walls. They literally burrowed their way into a house they wished to rob.

<sup>39-40</sup> Compare Mt.24<sup>43</sup>, 44 1 Thes.5<sup>1-11</sup> Un. 3<sup>16</sup>15.

<sup>40</sup> The coming of Christ as Son of Mankind is to be a complete surprise even to those in Israel who are waiting for Him. This coming as a thief is connected with the day of the Lord (1 Th. 5<sup>2</sup>), and the sudden destruction of those in darkness. But we are not in darkness, so that that day will not overtake us as a thief. God did not appoint us to indignation. We look for Him, not as an enemy, but as a Saviour (Phil.3<sup>20</sup>). For us salvation has a past, a present, and a future tense. The bodies of our humiliation have not yet been saved. They will be at His coming.

<sup>41</sup> The Lord's coming for us is a matter of pure grace in accord with all His dealings in this secret administration. We should not be drowsing, but this will not cost us our place in His presence. Our salvation depends on His death, not on our faithfulness. Whether we are watching or are drowsing, we shall live at the same time together with Him (1 Th.5<sup>10</sup>). It will not be so in His coming to Israel. Peter's question brings out the parable which shows that, while some will be rewarded for service at His coming, others will be cut asunder for unfaithfulness. They are dealt with as slaves and their place in the kingdom depends on what they do during His absence, but we are subjects of grace and, whatever loss we may suffer for unfaithfulness, we ourselves will be saved (1 Co. 3<sup>15</sup>).

<sup>41-44</sup> Compare Mt.24<sup>45-47</sup> 1 Co.4<sup>1-5</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> Compare Mt. 24<sup>48-51</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> All God's judgments are tempered by attending circumstances. He does not require His creatures to live up to light which they do not have. Yet His judgments increase in severity according to the privileges enjoyed. Thus it is that Israel is subject to the most awful of the inflictions of the end time. How thankful we should be that His grace not only bestows transcendent privilege but brings immunity from judgment as well!

<sup>49</sup> We are now approaching the great crisis in His ministry. Instead of being believed and received, the proclamation of the kingdom has caused strife and contention. Its rejection is evident. The baptism with which it began must have its counterpart in another baptism at its end. The shadow of the cross lay athwart His path henceforth, and its awful pressure lay heavily on His Spirit. Until it shall have been accomplished the kingdom cannot come. Until then the opposition must increase. The kingdom of God was thrice rejected. They rejected Jehovah when Saul was chosen king. They rejected Christ. They rejected the preaching of the apostles.

<sup>50</sup> Compare Mt. 20<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> Compare Mt. 10<sup>34-36</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> At His birth the heavenly hosts sang of peace on earth (2<sup>14</sup>). The kingdom foretold by the prophets was to end all strife. He was to be the Prince of Peace, and of the increase of peace there was to be no end (Isa. 9 6,7). Hence they had good reason to suppose that He had come to give peace to the earth. And that He will do when He comes again. But the time from His rejection until His return has been and will be a period of strife and division. This will reach its climax in the coming time of Jacob's trouble, when the kingdom is once more proclaimed and faithfulness to God will tear families asunder and destroy the tenderest ties of nature. But when He comes all strife will vanish and peace will preside over all the earth for the thousand years.

<sup>52</sup> Compare Micah 7<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> The Lord now turns from the disciples to the throngs. In spirit, He sees a great storm coming, yet they are utterly oblivious of the signs. They were experts at foretelling the weather. Clouds in the west, over the Mediterranean, with a southwest wind, would be sure to bring a rainstorm. If the wind shifts to the north it is soon over. The south wind, off the desert, always brings heat. With all this discernment they did not see that the current of opinion in Israel was leading to a violent storm. There was little peace for them, and they were finally driven out of the land and scattered among the nations.

57-59 Compare Mt.5<sup>25,26</sup>Prov.25<sup>8</sup>.

1 There is a strong natural tendency to connect calamity with sin. Hardly any great disaster occurs but someone seeks to justify it on the ground that the victims must have been extraordinary sinners. Job's friends reasoned thus. In their minds his calamities must have been occasioned by some secret offenses, and were sent as a punishment for his wrong doing. Now, while sin often does entail suffering in this life, much of it does not. And suffering is not sent simply as a punishment for sin, but also as a means by which God reveals Himself. Job was vindicated by God, yet he abhorred himself. Through his trials he was led to a greater blessing and a closer knowledge of God than could otherwise be. He had *heard* of Him before; now he *saw* Him (Job 42<sup>5</sup>). Let us not judge those who suffer, as though they deserved what they endure. God is not now judging or sentencing His creatures. That is past for believers and future for unbelievers. In the great white throne judgment those who appear before it will be dealt with according to their sins. Then it will be possible to deduce their delinquency from the character and severity of their sentence. But all such reasoning is foolish now. The Galileans whom Pilate killed were no worse than others of their kind, and the tower of Siloam did not fall on the most vicious in Jerusalem.

1 Compare Ac.5<sup>37</sup>.

2 Compare Jn.92<sup>3</sup>.

4 Compare Neh.3<sup>15</sup>Jn.9<sup>7</sup>.

6-9 Compare Isa.51-7Mt.21<sup>19</sup>.

6 For three years John and the Lord sought to find fruit from Israel as a nation. Little did Israel think that their rejection of His proclamation was dooming all their national aspirations. The same truth is taught in the cursing of the fig tree (Mt.21<sup>19</sup>; Mk.11<sup>13</sup>), which, indeed, may stand for the hewing down. The next miracle shows Him still laboring in a final effort to produce fruit.

10 Israel's doom is figured by a soulless tree; her deliverance is shown by the restoration of the infirm woman. This recognizes the reason for Israel's weakness, which was the possession of a spirit at variance with God. The

ruler of the synagogue displayed this same spirit, so that, in a sense, the physical plight of the woman becomes his in spirit. He, like the whole nation, was opposing the Lord and His work, in a pretended zeal for God's law. The moral effect of the miracle seems to have kept the chief of the synagogue from forbidding the Lord to work, so he turns to the people and forbids them to come to be cured. He was blind to the great truth that salvation is of God, when man cannot work, hence is far more fitting on the Sabbath than during the week.

14 Compare Mt.12<sup>9,10</sup>.

15 Compare 14<sup>3-6</sup>Mt.12<sup>11,12</sup>.

16 A significant note is sounded when our Lord terms the infirm woman a daughter of Abraham. It suggests that she had faith, and that the salvation which it prefigured will be confined to those who have the faith of their great forefather Abraham.

18-19 Compare Mt.13<sup>31,32</sup>Mk.4<sup>30-32</sup>.

18 As both birds (Mt.13<sup>4,19</sup>) and leaven (Lu.12<sup>1</sup>) are figures of that which is evil, and this is spoken, like the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, after the rejection of the King, we see in these comparisons a representation of the course of the kingdom before He returns in righteousness. At the end of the eon it will be again proclaimed and have an amazing growth, but will harbor wicked spirits and evil practices.

19 Compare Dan.4<sup>10-12</sup>.

20-21 Compare Mt.13<sup>33</sup>Zech.5<sup>5-11</sup>.

22-27 Compare Mt.7<sup>13,14</sup>,21-23.

23 The Lord avoids a direct answer to the question, and turns the questioner's thoughts upon himself. It would seem that at this time, the wide gates into the kingdom had been closed, and access could be had only through the private entrances, which are locked when evening comes. The proclamation of the kingdom had opened the gates wide up to this time, and it was easy to enter by repentance and baptism. But at this crisis the proclamation was withdrawn, hence many of those who struggled could not enter.

By no means should this parable be applied indiscriminately to the evangel, either of the kingdom or of the grace of God. God's good news is nev-



er narrow or cramped. In the tabernacle in the wilderness the gate, which opened into the court where the altar and laver were stationed, was very wide, and the entrance into the holy place occupied the whole front side of the tent. It could not have been wider. These were types of the way of God during the proclamation of the kingdom. The evangel for today is wider still, for it embraces all nations and imposes no conditions. Faith in God's word cannot be obtained by any struggle. Neither is there any reluctance on God's part, but He is beseeching all men to be conciliated. This can be understood of those only who have neglected to enter while the wide gates of the kingdom evangel were open, and now seek an entrance after the proclamation has been closed.

25 Compare Mt.25<sup>10-12</sup>.

27 Compare 2 Ti. 2<sup>19</sup>.

29 Eastern etiquette is most stringent as to the placing of guests at a banquet. The most honorable must have the first place and the least the last. So it will be in the kingdom. It is probable that none of the great ones of His day, should they find an entrance, would maintain their dignities. Poor, despised fishermen, among the lowest social layer of the land, will be first, for they will rule the twelve tribes. And some, no doubt, of those in high standing in the past, will take a humble place, glad to be honored by the presence of those whom they once despised.

30 Compare Heb. 11<sup>29,40</sup>.

31 Compare 23<sup>7</sup>.

31 Herod had been interested in the Lord and wanted to see Him do some sign (23<sup>8</sup>). He had killed John, but the Lord does not fear him. Calling him a jackal, or fox, He sends him word that He will continue His ministry as planned, and will spend three more days in his territory, on His way to Jerusalem. There the sacrifice must be offered. He knew that the hatred of men would be restrained so that He could not be killed far from the holy city. If an Israelite wanted to sacrifice to God he could not offer it any place. He must bring it to Jerusalem or turn it into money to purchase his offering there. God will not go counter to His law. He leads the Victim to the proper place.

34-35 Compare Mt.23<sup>37-39</sup>Ps.118<sup>26</sup>.

34 Jerusalem, the center of rule and religion in Israel, the most favored city on the face of the earth, was also the center of apostasy and rebellion. Had the priests of her temple remained true to God, there would have been no need for prophets and special messengers to recall them to Jehovah. But they would not heed the prophets and, instead of leading the people in the ways of righteousness and holiness, they turned them against God's spokesmen. These thoughts were awakened in His mind by the threat of Herod. While He had no fear of him, He well knew what would befall Him at the hands of the priests and rulers of Israel, who should have shielded Him from Herod. They, though the accredited representatives of God, were more thirsty for His blood than the Edomite. Religion, apart from the Spirit of God, is the most vicious and immoral of human motives.

1-6 Compare 13<sup>10-17</sup>Mt.12<sup>9-13</sup>Deut.22<sup>4</sup>.

1 It seems improbable that a chief Pharisee should invite Him to his home without some sinister design. This seems to have been a trap, for it is most unlikely that a dropsical man would be a guest at such a feast. This is confirmed by the fact that he was dismissed after being healed. He seems to have been used as a test. If the Lord did not heal him, they could claim that He was not able. If He did, they could accuse Him of desecrating the Sabbath. Either way they had Him at a disadvantage. That is why they watched Him so closely. But the Lord saw the snare and caught them in their own craftiness (1 Co.2<sup>19</sup>). He closed their mouths completely.

7 No doubt our Lord followed His own admonition and took the last place at this feast *and was allowed to keep it!* He was but a poor peasant. They were lawyers and Pharisees! Their action at the feast was but an index of their general character. They exalted themselves and were due to be abased. To grasp the full force of this illustration we must remember that, among the Jews at that time, such matters were deemed of serious importance. We may sit anywhere at a banquet without feeling offended, but

with them the rank of each guest must be scrupulously acknowledged by placing him above all his inferiors. It was properly the duty of the host to attend to this. The principle may well be applied at all times. Are we taking a high place? If so, our great Host may need to call us down. Are we in the lowest? Then we need not fear, for the lowest cannot make room below themselves.

<sup>10</sup> Compare Prov. 25<sup>6-7</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> The pure joy of giving is largely lost when it degenerates into a trade. Yet it seems from this that we cannot give without being recompensed. If we give to get we may, indeed, be disappointed, but if we give with the single thought of blessing others, we are doubly repaid. There is the happiness that attends the giving, and the repayment in the resurrection. The grasping gift gets but little that is worth while. It defeats itself. The gracious gift gains all that it seems to forego and brings happiness to the recipient, to the giver, and to God.

<sup>13</sup> Compare Neh. 8<sup>10-12</sup>.

<sup>15-21</sup> Compare Mt. 22<sup>1-10</sup> Prov. 9<sup>1-5</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> This remark seems to be an adroit attempt to turn the conversation into a safer and more comfortable channel. But this man was probably one of the lawyers or Pharisees (there were no others present) who was refusing the invitation to God's great dinner. Thence the Lord takes him up, and suggests that the happiness of eating in the kingdom is only for those who come. The picture He draws is in striking contrast with the feast He was attending. All who were invited came to this feast and deemed it an honor to be present. No poor or crippled or blind or lame were admitted, except the dropsical man, and he was dismissed before the feasting began, though he no longer was a cripple.

The great dinner of the kingdom will be quite the opposite of this. The men of substance refused the invitation. The scribes, lawyers, and Pharisees would not come and they will know nothing of the happiness of those who eat bread in the kingdom. But the outcasts, those whom the proud religionists would spurn from their table, these will enjoy the happiness which comes from tasting God's provision and plenty. The rejection of the

invitation is a plain intimation of our Lord's rejection by the influential leaders of Israel, the self-righteous, who thought they needed no repentance. They were not hungry; they felt no necessity. They were busy in acquiring the land of their poorer countrymen by purchase, or they were getting control of more acreage by adding to their oxen, for the land was allotted to each man according to his ability to farm it. They were laying up treasures on earth. They had no ear for the invitation and shall have no place in the kingdom.

<sup>23</sup> Compare Mk. 16<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> There is only one slave here, consequently we must limit the scope of this parable to our Lord's ministry. He never went to the nations outside the land, but He did reach the Samaritans and the Syro-Phoenician woman, who were outside the narrow pale of ultra-Judaism.

<sup>24</sup> Compare Ac. 13<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> This saying has proved a stumbling stone to many, and it is usual to tone down the word "hating" to some milder term. But it is the same word which undoubtedly means hate in other connections. The solution of the difficulty lies in the tense of the verbs. It is not a saying for all time, especially not for the present, but was applicable only during those closing days of His ministry when His disciples were to withstand the opposition of their loved ones, and the seduction of their own souls, which would shrink from the suffering in which faithfulness to Christ would involve them. It is only in this connection that the hate was to be exercised. It is its scope, rather than its intensity, which was limited. Such an attitude toward our relatives is utterly foreign to the spirit of grace which pervades the present.

<sup>26</sup> Compare Deut. 13<sup>6-11</sup> 33<sup>9</sup> Mt. 10<sup>37,38</sup> Un. 12<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Compare Prov. 24<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>28-33</sup> The leaving of all possessions (above their allotments of land) was another special requirement, in view of the coming kingdom.

<sup>34</sup> Holding on to possessions or compromising with those dear to them at such a time would make them like insipid salt, quite useless for the purpose for which it is designed.

34-35 Compare Mt.5:13 Mk.9:50.

1 Compare 7:34, 35 Mt.9:10-13.

2 Our Lord's liking for sinners led the proud, self-righteous Pharisees and scribes to utter a most precious truth, though they, indeed, did not intend it thus. "This man is receiving sinners . . . !" Far from denying the charge, He makes it the basis of a five-fold parable in which He emphasizes the vital fact that God is not concerned with the righteous, but with sinners. The term parable is used at the beginning and includes, not only that of the lost sheep, but also the lost coin, and the prodigal son, and the unjust steward, and the rich man and Lazarus. They are five different parts of one parable, which deals with the nation of Israel and the various classes in it. First we are shown the Saviour's attitude toward the lost in the story of the lost sheep. The following pair, concerning the lost coin and the prodigal son, are strikingly like the last two, concerning the unjust steward, and the rich man and Lazarus.

Two of these stories have to do with money, and the story of the prodigal son is closely matched by that of the rich man.

Like all the Lord's parables, these are not merely apt illustrations of divine truth, but pictorial parables of spiritual facts as they existed in the nation to which He was sent.

3 Our Lord was not sent to any but the straying sheep of the house of Israel (Mt. 15:24). He had no commission for any other nation and He never left the land of Israel to reach others. The hundred sheep, therefore, bring before us the nation of the covenant. The Lord is the good Shepherd, Who gives His soul for the sheep (Jn. 10:11). The ninety and nine are the self-righteous majority of the nation, who, like the Pharisees and scribes, to whom He was speaking, thought they had no need of repentance. They were not safe within the shelter of the fold, but out in the wilderness, left without the protection of the Shepherd, and open to the attacks of the wild beasts. They merely thought themselves safe. But they did not stir His heart or call for His succor. A single silly sheep astray from the flock causes Him more suffering and more joy than all the

rest. God could get little satisfaction out of Israel because of their self-righteousness. The tax gatherers and sinners heard Him gladly, and they alone responded to His love and mercy. He received sinners because no others would have Him or felt their need of Him.

The hunt for a lost sheep in the wilds of Judea was a hazardous and dangerous task, and may well remind us of His suffering unto death on the cross. The descent into a deep and dark ravine infested with savage beasts, is a fit picture of His descent into the depths of Golgotha.

The lost sheep gives us God's side. The lost coin gives us Israel's side. The nation is often seen under the figure of a woman. To this very day it is the custom among the women of the land to wear silver coins for a headdress. These are their most prized ornaments, and mean much more to them than the mere money value. Israel had been decked with ornaments by Jehovah, and it was one of these that was lost. And each sinner among them who repented had a foretaste of the day when the redemption money is found for Israel's ransom.

4 Compare 19:10 Isa.53:1 Pt.2:25.

11 In the parable of the two sons we have a portrait of the two classes in Israel to illustrate their moral distance from God. The prodigal was far from the father's house; the elder brother was far from his heart. So the Pharisees and scribes boast of a ceremonial nearness to Jehovah, but their hearts are far from Him. The tax collectors and sinners are outcasts, yet they know their plight and yearn for the compassionate mercy of God.

The point in this portion of the five-fold parable lies in the contrast between the two sons. Natural religion, such as the self-righteous Pharisees and scribes possessed, prides itself on conduct such as characterized the elder son, which consists in doing right and living up to the law as best they could. But such deportment, even if sincere and true, gives no occasion for the father to reveal His affection.

The prodigal is a composite picture of the sinner and the publican. His dissipation and profligacy set him forth as a sordid sinner, mired in im-

morality. His alliance with the citizen of a foreign country, his herding of the hogs and his desire to eat the diet of the unclean creatures, is a deft delineation of the traitorous tax collector, who joined with Rome in oppressing God's people. He had been far worse than a mere "prodigal". He recognizes himself as a sinner.

13 Compare Job 21:14-15.

17 Compare Jer. 31:18-20.

17 The first desire of the prodigal and of all awakened sinners is to do something themselves to ameliorate their evil condition. "What must I *do* to be saved?" This is their constant cry, because they do not know the Father, and misjudge His love. So the prodigal proposes to plead for a place in his father's service. He rehearses his little speech, and his highest expectation is a place among the servants in his father's house.

But how far is all this from the father's thoughts! He saw him afar off, and heard his confession, and ignored his plea. Instead of the menial place of servility he gives him the highest place of honor. The choicest robe and the daintiest viands all proclaim the delight of the father at receiving his son back again. There was feasting and merriment, which began, but has no end.

So with the sinners and outcasts. The Lord frankly forgave them. They were not put on probation, or set to the task of redeeming their character by meritorious conduct and perseverance in rectitude. They were clothed in garments of salvation and satisfied with the sacrifice of God's providing. They joyed in the God of grace. The bliss of the kingdom, the exultant rejoicing of all creation in the consummation, will not be built upon obedience, but on the disobedience that led to destruction and death; yet rather on the love that saves the lost and gives life to the dead.

Sin is a temporary necessity in God's great purpose to reveal Himself. It is the background which brings out the high lights of His grace. It is the foil which sets forth the depths of His affections. It was provided for before its entrance into the world, hence is not of man's choosing. It will be restrained in the eons of the eons and be entirely removed at the consummation.

18 Compare Isa. 55:7 Hos. 14:1-3 Ps. 51:3,4.

20 Compare Job 33:27,28 Ps. 86:103:8-13.

22 Compare Isa. 61:10 Gen. 41:42.

28 Compare Ac. 22:21,22 Ro. 10:19 2 Co. 5:20.

29 Compare Mt. 19:20 Ro. 3:20,27 Mal. 3:14.

31 Compare Ro. 9:4,5.

1 The parable of the unjust steward confines itself to the Pharisees and scribes, the stewards of Israel's wealth. They were dissipating His treasures and were fond of money and served their own greed for gain rather than ministering to the glory of God. They were prudent in the things of this life to the extent of jeopardizing their prospects in the eons to come.

8 Compare Jn. 12:36 Eph. 5:1 Th. 5:5.

9 Compare Mt. 6:19,20 1 Ti. 6:17-19.

9 The emphatic *I* shows that there is a contrast intended between the lord of the unjust steward and Christ. This cannot be expressed in the indicative. Moreover, the Lord does not commend unrighteousness, and advise deceit. Besides, the sentiment immediately following is quite opposed to such double dealing. Faithfulness, not shrewdness, is the requisite for honors in the kingdom.

Money or means of any kind are only trivial and temporary factors in the life of faith, unless we view them as tests with a view to the acquisition of the true riches. Those who are faithful stewards of material wealth, which is theirs only to use for a time, and not to possess forever, may expect a reward in kind in the kingdom. The Pharisees died rich, and will have no place in the glories of the Messianic reign. Christ died in the most abject poverty, yet He will be weighted with the wealth of all earth's highest glories. Even in this day of sovereign grace, present riches are too often a hindrance to future reward, when they may well be a means of preferment by their faithful and gracious dispensation. Neither the most conservative investment nor the most fortunate speculation will yield as safe or as profitable proceeds as a share in the concerns of God. It yields, not only temporary returns, but eternal dividends.

13 Compare Mt.6<sup>24</sup>Ga.1<sup>10</sup>Ja.44.

13 God wants the wholehearted service of His slaves. This is not possible where other motives than His glory, or other objects than His exaltation are given the first place in the hearts of those who seek to serve Him. The lure of riches is one of the most seductive to lead His own away from His work.

15 Compare 18<sup>11,12</sup> 1Sam.16<sup>7</sup>.

15 We all naturally share the desire of the Pharisees to *appear* right before our fellow men rather than to actually *be* right before God. But it is better to appear wrong before mankind and await that day when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed than to hide under a cloak of hypocrisy which will be torn aside by the divine presence.

16-17 Compare Mt.4<sup>17</sup>5<sup>17,18</sup>11<sup>12,13</sup>.

16 God's revelation was made by many modes, each appropriate to the time when it was used. "The law and the prophets," a title of the Hebrew Scriptures, which we now misname "the Old Testament", was His means of dealing with Israel until John the baptist, the greatest of all the prophets. He was the forerunner of a new method of divine revelation through the incarnation of Christ. The proclamation of the kingdom did not receive the response of contrite hearts, according to the law, but rather awakened a desire for its establishment by carnal means. At one time they would have taken Christ by force, because He had satisfied their hunger, and would have made Him King. This would have meant a revolt and war and bloodshed.

18 Compare Mt.5<sup>32</sup>19<sup>9</sup>Mk.10<sup>11,12</sup>.

18 Not only does He intimate that the Pharisees are to be dismissed from the stewardship, but this apparently unconnected statement suggests that the nation is to be divorced from Jehovah, and left desolate. This is a fitting link to lead us up to the final section of this five-fold parable, in which Israel's fate during her divorce is discussed.

19 The cambric of the priest and the purple of the king in the rich man's garments indicate Israel as the royal priesthood. His merry times are due to Israel's special blessings. The Pharisees looked down upon the sinners and publicans and gave them a

place like that of Lazarus, outside, with the dogs, even as the prodigal was afar off with the swine. They had little more than the unclean aliens, who were called curs by the religious Jews.

The prodigal, the rich man, and Lazarus all are represented as being dead. The prodigal and the rich man show the nation in apostasy. Lazarus, being comforted in Abraham's bosom, represents the faithful remnant. So long as the nation, as such, is dead, neither Lazarus nor the rich man can claim the blessings of the kingdom. The continued persecution and hatred of the Jews by all nations is aptly pictured by the flames in which one of them found himself. The place in Abraham's bosom is no less faithful a figure of the comfort which came to those who believed. Abraham's bosom cannot be literal, for he is dead and even were he alive the picture of thousands of believers in his literal bosom is preposterous. Since this is so it follows that all of the scene is figurative, for if Abraham is not literally there, neither is Lazarus nor the rich man.

22 Compare Ps.113<sup>7</sup>Heb.114.

23 Compare 13<sup>28-30</sup>Mt.8<sup>11,12</sup>.

24 Compare Mk.9<sup>43-48</sup> Isa.66<sup>24</sup>.

25 Compare 6<sup>24</sup>.

27 Even the rich man's request has its counterpart in Israel's apostasy. After One rose from the dead He was proclaimed in (1) Jerusalem, (2) Judea, (3) Samaria, (4) to the limits of the land (Ac.1<sup>8</sup>), and (5) to the dispersed among the nations. The message was based on the Lord's resurrection from the dead. Those receiving this five-fold testimony correspond to the five brethren. Yet, even as the Lord foretold, they did not, as a nation, repent. Some of their sufferings, until the terrible tragedy of the siege of Jerusalem, are recounted by Josephus. To this very day the Jew is being tormented in the flames of national hatred. But the time of their restoration is drawing near (Ro.11). But before their torment ceases it will be much intensified in the terror of the greatest of all Jewish persecutions.

29 Compare Jn.5<sup>39-47</sup>Ac.15<sup>21</sup>.

31 Compare Mt.28<sup>11-13</sup>Jn.12<sup>9-11</sup>.

1-2 Compare Mt.18<sup>6,7</sup>Mk.9<sup>42</sup>1 Co.11<sup>19</sup>.

1 The Lord is through with the unbelievers and now addresses His own disciples. He anticipates the fact that, even among themselves, there would be much to cause them to stumble and fall. He seeks to warn them against becoming the occasion of a brother's sin. And, in case of sin, He urges them to conform to the spirit of their proclamation, which promised a pardon or forgiveness on the ground of repentance. Repentance, or a change of mind, brought pardon from God for the unbeliever, and repentance should bring forgiveness among brethren, no matter how often it is required. The transcendent grace shown to us should lead us to a still more loving attitude. We are to be gracious to one another apart from any repentance.

3-4 Compare Mt.18<sup>15,21,22</sup> Lev.19<sup>17</sup> Eph. 4<sup>31,32</sup>.

5-6 Compare Mt.17<sup>20,21,22</sup>Mk.9<sup>23</sup>.

5 Every-day conduct is a greater drain on faith than the working of miracles. It may be far more difficult to forgive a seventh offense than to say to a leper "Be clean!" The apostles realize their lack, and desire to augment their slender stock of faith.

6 Israel, politically, was figured by a fig tree. The black mulberry is a species of wild fig. It represents the sovereignty of Rome. The nations are compared to the restless sea, Israel to the stable land. So that the underlying thought in our Lord's mind seems to be that with faith sufficient they could uproot Rome's rule from the land of Israel and remove it to the nations where it belonged. In other words, the kingdom would come. It was lack of faith that kept the kingdom from being realized. The mustard kernel is also suggestive. He had already compared the kingdom to it (13<sup>19</sup>). In apostasy the nation will attain a place of rule in imitation of the kingdom. Great Babylon will be the mustard plant which attains to a sovereignty of the earth apart from God.

7 Slavery is not out of date in things divine. The true servant of God will delight to acknowledge that he has been purchased by God, and is not his own. All that he can do is not at all what he feels he ought to do.

10 Compare Job 22<sup>2,35</sup>, 31 Co.9<sup>16,17</sup>.

12 Compare Lev.13<sup>45,46</sup>Nu.5<sup>2,3</sup>.

12 Our Lord was on His last long journey to Jerusalem. He knew what kind of reception awaited Him there. This miracle seems to be directed as a testimony to the priests. It was a sign that He came in accord with the law of Moses. Though the priests could not cleanse away sin, they had the right to pass upon the cleansing. If the lepers were cleansed they could not deny the presence of the power of God. Not only do they fail to give Him the praise which was His due, but it seems that they even dissuaded the lepers themselves from returning to Him. What a contrast is the despised Samaritan! He does not wait to show himself to his priest, but, as soon as he is cleansed, he returns and worships. The nine Jews had the correct formula for worship but a corrupt heart. The Samaritan was wrong in his religion, but he soon found that the true place of worship was at His feet.

14 Compare Lev.13<sup>2,14</sup>Mt.8<sup>4</sup>.

15 Compare Ps. 30<sup>11,12</sup>.

20 That the coming of the kingdom of God will be a visible, observable event the Scriptures amply testify. It will come like a lightning flash (24), accompanied by signs and portents in heaven as well as on earth. But it will not be a small, local occurrence, known only to those who are watching closely. This is the force of the word usually rendered "observation". It denotes *scrutiny*, a careful inspection lest something elude observation. Thus they "watched" the gates of Damascus day and night in order to apprehend Saul of Tarsus. This suggests quite the opposite thought, that it comes with such apparent and public "observation" that careful scrutiny is useless.

21 Compare Ro.14<sup>17</sup>.

21 It will not be confined to any locality, but will instantly cover the whole earth. Hence it would be useless to investigate or follow up any report that the kingdom is here or there, for it will be everywhere. Moreover, unlike other kingdoms, which fail for lack of an inward response to outward regulations, the kingdom of God will be founded on a moral force within men's hearts. This does not deny it an outward polity. But the point for

the Pharisees, to whom He was speaking, is that, like Nicodemus, they needed an inward renewal, rather than a keen and curious scrutiny of local occurrences, in order to enter the kingdom. It has been suggested that this should be rendered, "the kingdom of God is *among* you", that is, in the person of the King. But the word here used certainly means *inside*, as witnesses its only other occurrence (Mt. 23<sup>26</sup>), which speaks of the *inside* of the cup and the plate in contrast with their *outside*.

22-25 Compare 53<sup>5</sup>Mt.24<sup>23-27</sup>Mk.13<sup>21-23</sup>Jn. 13<sup>33</sup>.

25 Compare 9<sup>22</sup>.

26-27 Compare Mt.24<sup>37-39</sup>Gen.7.

26 The unexpected suddenness of the coming of the Son of Mankind is further enforced by a comparison with the days of Noah. It will be a day of fancied security and swift destruction. Most of the divine processes are a gradual growth and changes are introduced slowly. The present economy of grace was brought in by instalments during a considerable period of time, from Paul's call to his imprisonment. But God's judgments are always swift and sudden. Now that it is evident that the kingdom will not be established as a result of His proclamation, but will be introduced by judgment, its coming takes on the characteristics of the previous judgments of the irreverent.

28 Compare Gen. 19<sup>16,24,25</sup>.

30 Compare 2 Th. 1<sup>6-10</sup>.

31-33 Compare Mt.24<sup>15-18</sup> Mk.13<sup>14-16</sup> Gen. 19<sup>26</sup>.

31 Oriental houses usually have an outside stair to the roof, so that, in great haste, it is not necessary to go into the house to get down from the flat roof.

32 The soul is distinct from the life, for we can hardly say that one who is destroying his *life* is causing it to *live*. It is those who shrink from suffering who seek to preserve their souls, and thus forfeit the joys of the kingdom.

34-36 Compare Mt.24<sup>40,41</sup> Th.4<sup>17</sup>.

37 Elsewhere the nations are represented as wild beasts. Here they are like birds of prey gathering about Israel in her last extremity.

37 Compare Mt.24<sup>28</sup> Job 39<sup>30</sup>.

1 This parable follows most naturally from the foregoing prophecy concerning the coming of the Son of Mankind, for then it is that the saints in Israel clamor for vengeance, as figured in the souls under the altar (Un. 6<sup>9-11</sup>). Indeed, it is the importunity of the blood of the martyrs which brings on the judgments of the sixth seal.

We, too, are told to pray without intermission (1 Th. 5<sup>17</sup>). But a prayer for vengeance is utterly foreign to the spirit of grace which is ours in Christ Jesus. We can quite understand that God should need much urging and continued importunity before He visits their adversaries with vengeance. That is His strange work. It is not in direct accord with His heart. But there is a question whether such urgency is necessary for Him to answer those of our prayers which are in accord with His will. Above all, let us not make this parable an excuse for senseless repetition or stubbornness in petitioning for that which is contrary to God's present attitude of grace. The closing words of the parable emphasize its close connection with the judgments which attend the coming of the Son of Mankind.

7 Compare 2 Th. 1<sup>6,7</sup>.

9 This Pharisee is intensely typical of those self-righteous ones, who imagine that God is pleased with their sham religion. Self is the center and the circumference of all their worship. Though so fully pleased with themselves, they are the most pitiable of men, blind to their sins, dead to their own corruption. The traitorous tax gatherer, on the other hand, showed a spiritual intelligence seldom seen during our Lord's ministry, as is indicated by his use of the word *propitiate*. From where he stood he could doubtless see the smoke of the sacrifice ascending to God, and he grasped the great truth of propitiation, that, sinner though he was, he could approach and obtain favor of God on the ground of sacrifice. Thus did the Saviour call their attention once again to the sacrifice He was about to offer so that He may become the great Propitiatory or meeting place of God and man.

13 Compare Ps.40<sup>12</sup> 51<sup>1-3</sup> Jer.31<sup>18,19</sup>.

14 Compare Ro. 3<sup>19-26</sup>.

15-17 Compare Mt.19<sup>13-15</sup> Mk.10<sup>13-16</sup> Mt. 18<sup>3</sup>.

15 It was customary for rabbis and great teachers to invoke a blessing on those who desired it, especially on children who were not mature enough to derive benefit from their words. It was a touching tribute to the esteem in which some, at least, still held Him. Theirs was a child-like faith, uninfluenced by the current of opposition which was setting in against Him. Hence it was specially acceptable to Him to bless the babes, for in them was reflected the sincere and unwavering faith which was so satisfying to His heart.

18-23 Compare Mt.19<sup>16-22</sup> Mk.10<sup>17-22</sup> Ex. 20<sup>12-18</sup>.

18 The law was never given to impart life (Ga.3<sup>21</sup>). Its function was to make sin more sinful by turning it into transgression. Its mission was to reveal the presence of sin, not to remove it. Only those who continued to do all its precepts could claim life.

The chief approaches the Lord with the wrong expression. The word "good" suggested a certain lenience which was not in the law. If eonian life is to be the wages of lawkeeping, it must be on the ground of justice rather than goodness. But the Lord does not allow the opportunity to go by to assure the chief that God is good. Passing over the greatest commandments, love to God and to his associates, the Lord first mentions those grosser sins which usually pass as the principal precepts of the law. But when He puts before him a practical test to determine whether he kept the two great precepts, his chances for eonian life vanish.

The social economy in Israel was such that it was hardly possible to be very rich without oppressing the poor. After the land had been divided by lot the only way to get more was to encroach on the allotments of others who were compelled to sell until the jubilee. At that time the Jews were not traders and could not take interest, so wealth was almost always in cattle or land. When the kingdom is established the land will be redistributed according to the lines laid down in the prophets (Eze.47<sup>13-48<sup>35</sup></sup>). A rich man will have no claim whatever on his

lands. He cannot carry his wealth with him into the kingdom. It is not likely that any great difference in the distribution of wealth will be possible under the laws of that day. Property will be practically unknown. Land will be held as an allotment from Jehovah, Who will retain its control in His own hands, but will allot its use.

22 Compare 1 Ti.6<sup>17-19</sup>.

24-27 Compare Mt.19<sup>23-28</sup> Mk.10<sup>23-27</sup> 1 Ti. 6<sup>9,10</sup>.

28-30 Compare Mt.19<sup>27-30</sup> Mk.10<sup>28-31</sup>.

28 This saying of our Lord has occasioned much genuine distress among those who "apply" all Scripture to themselves, with no regard to the great changes in God's dealings. In actual practice we do *not* get back what we give up for Christ in this day of grace. Paul, our pattern, suffered the loss of all, and was rewarded with a prison. If we restrict this to those to whom our Lord was talking the difficulty vanishes. The apostles were greatly compensated even at that time for their sacrifices for the kingdom.

31-34 Compare Mt.20<sup>17-19</sup> Mk.10<sup>32-34</sup> Ps.22 Isa.53.

31 The twelve were very keen as to their own petty privations and the consequent reward, but painfully obtuse on the subject of His great sacrifice. It is not hard to see how the nation could slay Him in their ignorance and thus fulfill the prophets which were read constantly in their synagogues, when His own disciples could not understand the plainest predictions of His sufferings, though repeated and emphasized throughout this last journey to Jerusalem.

The Lord undoubtedly did many miracles of the same kind. He healed many blind men as a sign that He would open the eyes of the blind nation. There were probably four distinct blind men healed on this journey through Jericho. The many differences in detail between Mt.20<sup>29-34</sup>; Mk.10<sup>46-48</sup>, and this passage do not need to be "harmonized" but *believed*. The different circumstances of each case do not denote discrepancies, but divine accuracies the force of which our present spiritual microscopes are not powerful enough to reveal.

35-43 Compare Mt.20<sup>29-34</sup> Mk.10<sup>46-52</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> Compare Josh.6<sup>2</sup>1 Ki.16<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The case of Zaccheus meant much more to a patriotic Jew than we can possibly imagine. The most hated and unpopular class in the whole nation were the tax farmers, who paid the taxes for a district and then collected it from the people, adding their own charges to it. Not only were the taxes oppressive, but the collectors usually imposed enough to enrich themselves. Now Zaccheus was evidently a leader in this nefarious business and was cordially disliked by his countrymen.

The Lord is proclaiming a kingdom. How strange it must have seemed for Him not only to have one of these hated collectors among His apostles, but to invite Himself to the house of a chief of these unpatriotic traitors! Few acts in His career showed more clearly that He came to call sinners, not the righteous. It was a difficult lesson for them to learn, so He chooses the most striking means of impressing it on their minds.

<sup>3</sup> Compare Jn.12<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> There is a delightful parallel between Zaccheus' physical state and his spiritual condition. His small stature suggests the small esteem in which he was held by his countrymen. As we would say, they *looked down on* him. But he managed to elevate himself by means of a fig-mulberry, or wild fig tree, an excellent representation of the Roman rule, which gave him his position and wealth. Israel, politically, is figured by the tame fig tree.

It was not the Lord's will that he should remain there, hence His word, "Hurry! Descend!" The effect of the Lord's favor is immediately apparent. Without any prompting, he announces his intention to give half of his possessions to the poor, and to more than right any wrong doing which may have occurred in his dealings. What a contrast with the rich self-righteous chief (18<sup>18</sup>) who, though urged to do so, and promised a great reward, would not part with his possessions, and this chief of sinners, whose riches are given freely, without even a suggestion from the Lord! It is the compulsion of love which springs only from the depths of sin.

<sup>8</sup> Compare 3<sup>8</sup>,12,13 Ja.2<sup>21-24</sup> Ex.22<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Compare Ro.4<sup>11</sup>,12 Ga.3<sup>7</sup>.

11-27 Compare Mt.25<sup>14-30</sup> Ac.1<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Compare Dan.7<sup>13</sup>,14 Ac.1<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> The picture presented in this parable was well known to His hearers. Native noblemen were obliged to go to Rome to "obtain a kingdom". The first Herod and Archelaus both repaired to Rome to be elevated to the throne. The latter had built a palace in Jericho near which this parable was spoken, and doubtless his hearers remembered that, when he returned as Ethnarch of Judea and Samaria, he had rewarded his adherents and had slain his enemies.

His disciples seemed absolutely deaf to His repeated warnings that He was about to suffer, rather than to reign. Even the multitude seemed to sense the great fact that the time for the kingdom had come, but did not realize the growing opposition. So He, with marvelous discernment, seizes on a parallel which they did understand, in order to explain to them what seemed so difficult. He did not deny their expectation of a kingdom; rather He confirmed it. Like the Herods, He, too, was going away to receive a kingdom. The reason for this is hinted in the hatred of the citizens. Even so the Jews had sent an embassy to the emperor Augustus and besought him to unite their country with Syria rather than that they should have an Idumean for their king. But their protestations were in vain and Archelaus was made tetrarch. They only brought down his vengeance on their heads when he returned. That the Lord will follow a similar course, and slay His enemies when He sets up the kingdom, shows that this is not the present period of grace, but the literal sovereignty of our Lord which will be preceded by the terrors of the apocalyptic judgments.

The main thought seems to be centered on the service of His slaves during His absence. Here, too, this parable is vastly different from present truth. There may be some similarity between us and the first two slaves, but it is contrary to the spirit we have received to think and act like the wicked slave. What genuine believer in Christ Jesus, who has tasted of His love and grace, would think of calling Him harsh and grasping? We, one and all, no matter how slight our

knowledge of Him, think Him loving and generous. However little we may do for Him, or however faulty that little is, the lack is hardly due to such ungrateful motives as this slave's excuse.

14 Compare Jn.1:11-19:15.

27 Compare Un. 19:11-21.

28-36 Compare Mt.21:1-8 Mk.11:1-8.

28 This entry into Jerusalem marks one of the most important days in the history of the holy people. The seventy heptads of Daniel's prophecy are divided into seven, sixty-two, and one. The sixty-ninth heptad, after which Messiah was to be cut off (Dan. 9:26), must be fulfilled before the crucifixion. Nothing in His life heretofore corresponds to His presentation to the people as a Prince. His birth, His baptism, the beginning of His ministry, none of these so fully satisfy the words "unto Prince Messiah", as His entry as recorded on this day. Hitherto He had trudged along as any wayfarer, but now He comes as a king should come, riding on a colt, over a path strewn with the garments of His loyal subjects.

31 This is perhaps the only act in which He exercises His regal authority. A king could commandeer anything in his kingdom, so He, as the King of Israel and the Lord of all in the realm (yet too poor to have a mount of His own!) has no hesitancy in sending for the colt. He has no royal trappings but the garments of His lowly escort.

37-38 Compare Mt.21:9-11 Mk.11:9-10 Jn. 12:12-19.

37 How solemn and inspiring was the scene as the cavalcade, nearing the descent of Olivet, stood revealed to the gaze of the holy city! Long had Jerusalem waited for that day! Prophets had perceived it and saints had sighed for it, yet where was the response from the city as the procession came into view? A few of His own rend the air with their acclamations, but the great city with its priests and chiefs is represented by the sullen Pharisees who resented His royal assumptions. Much has the sacred city suffered for its neglect of Him since that day. Blessed, indeed, will be that future day when, once again, He stands on Olivet and claims the royal honors which they then refused (Zech. 14:4).

38 Compare 2:14 Ps.118:26.

40 Compare Hab. 2:11.

40 There is a marked change manifest in the attitude of our Lord. Since His rejection by the nation was evident, He has been restraining His disciples from making Him known. He closed the proclamation of the kingdom and would not allow it to be heralded. Now, however, He receives the acclamation of the disciples, and rebukes the remonstrance of the Pharisees instead of rebuking His disciples. They were fulfilling the Scripture (Zech. 9:9):

Exult exceedingly, daughter of Zion,  
Shout, daughter of Jerusalem.  
Lo! your King is coming to you,  
He is just and being saved:  
He is humble and rides on an ass,  
And on a colt, the foal of an ass.

41 Compare Hos.11:3.

42 Compare Deut.5:29 Isa.48:18.

42 This was the day so long foretold by Daniel the prophet (Dan. 9:25) when Messiah the Prince should come. Since the coming forth of the king's word to restore and to build Jerusalem, sixty-nine heptads had run their course. Exactly four hundred and eighty-three years of three hundred and sixty days each had passed since the edict of Artaxerxes (Neh. 2).

All the previous ministry of Messiah was with a view to His public proclamation on this day. Hence His lament over the apostate city. The day of her visitation had come and she was utterly oblivious of it. The scribes could actually have demonstrated mathematically that He was the Messiah by counting the days of Daniel's prophecy, yet they are so blind that they reject Him. It was Jerusalem's last opportunity. Seven times had He visited the city and had given ample proof of His messiahship. This was final. Had they received Him her portion would have been peace. Now that they reject Him there can be no permanent peace until she reverses her decision at His return in power.

43 Compare 21:20 Dan.9:26.

43 All of this was literally fulfilled at the siege of Jerusalem by Titus and the later destruction under the emperor Hadrian. Jerusalem has seen little of peace except in its desolation. The recent capture of the city is but the prelude to the terrible times that are still to come.

<sup>44</sup> Compare Mic.3<sup>12</sup>Mt.24<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>45-48</sup> Compare Mt.21<sup>12-17</sup>Mk.11<sup>11,15,19</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> His kingdom will be a combination of church and state and He will be the Head of both. Hence He not only presents Himself as King, but enters the temple and cleanses it of its unlawful traffic.

<sup>46</sup> Compare Isa.56Jer.7<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Compare Jn.12<sup>17-19</sup>.

<sup>1-8</sup> Compare Mt.21<sup>23-27</sup>Mk.11<sup>27-33</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The Rabbis had a great conceit of their powers of debate, so they deemed it best to lay a snare for Him. The question itself seems innocent enough, and had they honestly asked for information, He doubtless would have answered them. But He seldom listened to men's words. He read their hearts. Those who sought to catch Him were always taken in their own toils. In an indirect way His question contained the answer that they desired. If the baptist was commissioned by God to prepare His path, surely then His authority must far exceed that of John, for he repeatedly renounced himself in favor of the One Whose sandal thong he was not worthy to loose. What a humiliating confession they were forced to make to cover their hypocrisy! Of what use is truth to such men? So He wisely refuses to tell them what any blind man could see if he did not wish to hold to his error at any cost.

<sup>9-12</sup> Compare Mt.21<sup>33-36</sup>Mk.12<sup>1-5</sup>Isa.51-7.

<sup>9</sup> The parable grows out of the attitude of the Pharisees, as just made manifest. Most skilfully He uses incidents well known to them and figures with which they are familiar to trace the attitude of Israel toward those who had been sent with divine authority in the past. All the prophets—even Moses—suffered at their unbelieving hands. They always persecuted the messengers of God, and, for that reason, they were about to kill Him.

The sad history of Israel, their continual defection and rejection of God, does not seem to affect their hearts. They are ready to do as did their forefathers, even though they condemn them. They boast in the very prophets that their fathers persecuted. Does not all this show the total failure of law and ritual as a link between God and man? Religion so radically viti-

ates the standard of human morals that it is reserved for religious men to commit the crime of crimes.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Ac.7<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>13-15</sup> Compare Mt.21<sup>37-39</sup>Mk.12<sup>6-8</sup>Th.2<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> It was only reasonable to suppose that even if the nation had maltreated the messengers of God, they would not be nearly so likely to mistreat the Son. Previous messengers often came unannounced, with few credentials, and often with a most unpalatable message. But the Son came according to many prophecies which foretold minute details of His career. He was the only Prophet to be introduced by a forerunner. None approached Him in the number and wonders of His works.

<sup>15-18</sup> Compare Mt.21<sup>40-44</sup>Mk.12<sup>9-11</sup>. See Ac.4<sup>11</sup> Pt.24<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> The destruction of Jerusalem and the nation was directly due to the murder of Messiah. Their misfortunes from that day to this and the evils still in store for them in the greatest of all afflictions, at the time of the end, all would have been avoided, humanly speaking, had they hailed Him as their King.

<sup>17</sup> Compare Eph.1<sup>10</sup>2<sup>14</sup>Ps.118<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> The head corner stone of a building is the most ornamental and honorable in the whole structure. Lying on the ground, they stumbled over it and refused it. So have the builders of Israel hurt themselves on Him.

<sup>18</sup> Compare Dan.2<sup>34,35</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Compare Mt.21<sup>45,46</sup>Mk.12<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> The object of the scribes and chief priests now seems to be to put Him in a quandary. Either He will be discredited in the eyes of the people or come to a clash with the civil rulers. So long as He had a following they were afraid. Nor were they willing to risk an open debate. So they keep out of it entirely and send others with what, at first sight, seems to be a simple question of conscience. They hope to get Him to say that they should not pay taxes to Rome so they can accuse Him to the government. So they use fine flatteries to destruction. But His first response tears off the veil of hypocrisy and reveals the true intent of their inquiry. They wish to try Him, not to quiet their conscience.

<sup>20-28</sup> Compare Mt.22<sup>15-22</sup>Mk.12<sup>13-17</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Compare Deut.28<sup>47,48</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Two kinds of coins were in circulation, the Roman and the Jewish. The temple taxes had to be paid in the Jewish shekel, the Roman in the foreign currency. The fact that they had accepted the conqueror's money shows that they regarded themselves as his subjects. Indeed, not long after this they insisted that they had no king but Cæsar. To pay taxes, therefore, was only the fulfillment of an obligation they had already undertaken. Hence, instead of branding Him with sedition, as they hoped, He fastens on them the disgrace of national servitude. And, to emphasize the divine obligations, He insists on their paying the shekel of the sanctuary, which they doubtless did in fact but not in spirit.

Our attitude toward rulers is set forth in Ro. 13<sup>1-7</sup>. We look at the civil authorities as but a part of the sovereign supervising government of God, even though they are oblivious of Him or actually opposed to Him.

<sup>27-36</sup> Compare Mt. 22<sup>28-30</sup> Mk. 12<sup>18-25</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Compare Ac. 23<sup>6-8</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> The law made extraordinary provision for the perpetuation of the name and family of an Israelite. Should he die without issue, it was the duty of his brother to marry his widow and the son of such a union would take his name, so that it would not be blotted out (Deut. 25<sup>5,6</sup>). The Sadducees seize on this custom to formulate a difficulty which was evidently a stock argument in their encounters with the Pharisees.

It is evident that they had a most superficial understanding of the law and paid no attention to the underlying reason for its enactments. The law in question was necessitated by the disturbing element of death. Apart from this it has no place. In the resurrection of the just, where there is no more death, it can have no application. Marriage, similarly, has no place in the resurrection, so the question really revealed the ignorance of the Sadducees, rather than their fancied acuteness.

<sup>28</sup> Compare Deut. 25<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> Compare Mt. 22<sup>31,32</sup> Mk. 12<sup>26,27</sup> Ex. 3<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> The real issue is now taken up by the Lord. They denied the resurrection. They appealed to Moses, so He also uses Moses as the basis of His

argument. The God of Abraham is pre-eminently the God of promises and covenants. These have not been fulfilled and cannot be carried out if Abraham is not roused from the dead. All the virtue of the title "the God of Abraham" is lost if we consider it merely in connection with the past life of the patriarch. He did not receive the promises. It demands that he shall be raised from the dead.

<sup>38</sup> There is no question here of the death state. Abraham is not living now. It is only in a secondary sense that all are living to God. He deals with His creatures in life, not in death. The Lord is not seeking to prove that death is life, but that there is a life after death in resurrection.

<sup>39-44</sup> Compare Mt. 22<sup>23-46</sup> Mk. 12<sup>28-37</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> He has brought them to a point where they no longer dare to question Him, so now He turns to question them. He goes straight to the heart of the whole situation. Often had He been hailed as the Son of David, and He always acknowledged this evidence of faith in Him. But how few, even among His disciples, knew Him as David's Lord! That this Lord, Who was in the form of God, should empty Himself and be found in fashion as a Man (Phil. 2<sup>5-8</sup>), was a truth so utterly beyond their comprehension that He did not even stop for an answer. The Hebrew scriptures use the titles "Lord", "God", etc. of the Image of God as freely as of absolute Deity. There are two Personalities Who bear these divine appellations, nor need we often be concerned which One is uppermost in any passage, for They are one, as the Image is one with Him Whom It represents. The lowly Man of the evangelists is the divine Lord of the prophets.

<sup>42</sup> Compare Ps. 110<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>45-47</sup> Compare Mt. 23<sup>1-7</sup>, 14 Mk. 12<sup>38-40</sup>.

<sup>1-4</sup> Compare Mk. 12<sup>41-44</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Compare 2 Co. 8<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> God values a gift according to the sacrifices of the giver. Its commercial value means little to Him, Who owns all things, and Who accepts nothing except as a token of esteem. The rich seldom labor for a living, hence their offerings, unless very great, can mean little to them or to God. But such a drudge as this widow, who had nothing except the pittance she could earn,

was at a great advantage. However little she might give, it would be great in God's eyes. And if she should give all, as this dear woman did, she would actually bring greater wealth to God than the combined total of all the large oblations. No one lacks the means to give much to God.

5-7 Compare Mt.24:1-3 Mk.13:1-4 Mic.3:12.

6 The present interval being an absolute secret, we must banish it from our view entirely when considering the prophetic forecast here given. It is contained in the "eras of the nations" (24) but the vision of the future is as though we were looking at two mountain ranges, one before the other, which look like one, and hide the valley that lies between. We see here the turbulent times of the Jewish wars, the destruction of the temple at the siege of Jerusalem, the dispersion—all long past—and then find ourselves in the future terrors of the sixth seal, and the coming of the Son of Mankind.

8-11 Compare Mt.24:4-8 Mk.13:5-8.

8 It is said that more than sixty different ones have come with messianic claims and the greatest of them is still to come at the time of the end. The rider on the white horse, under the first seal of the sixth chapter of the Unveiling, will be the false messiah of the end time.

10-11 The second seal (Un. 6:3,4) takes peace from the earth. It corresponds with the conflict of nation with nation and seems to indicate a world war with universal conscription, whole nations hurling themselves at one another rather than merely sending small contingents of fighting men. Famine is indicated by the black horse with the balances (Un.6:5,6). A day's labor will barely buy one day's food. The fourth seal, with its sallow greenish horse (Un. 6:7,8) corresponds with the pestilences here predicted.

12-19 Compare Mt.24:9-14 Mk.13:9-13.

12 From verses twelve to twenty-five we have an outline of the siege of Jerusalem, the dispersion among the nations, the occupation of the holy city, and the persecutions which will be endured *before* the time of the end. We should remember that the perspective here and in all similar prophecies is such that the great affliction which is yet to come appears to follow soon

after the dispersion. The present interval is practically ignored.

20 The siege of Jerusalem under Titus was one of the most terrible of all time. After the city was once invested, the opportunity for escape was cut off, and many who attempted it were slain. Thousands were crucified and many deserters were disembowelled because of a rumor that they sought to conceal their money by swallowing it. Others over-ate and burst asunder. More than a million perished miserably and nearly a hundred thousand were enslaved and carried off to Egypt and elsewhere. The city was almost completely demolished. It is said that the Christians in the city took warning and fled to the mountains of Judea in time to escape the terrible affliction.

24 Jerusalem has been in the hands of alien nations ever since. Even the crusades did not restore it to the Jews. Its change from Turkish rule to British sovereignty is a most favorable sign, but by no means gives the city back to the holy nation. It is still trodden (not trodden *down*, as usually misquoted) by a foreign power. This may be the last era of the nations, but it is not yet the end of "the times of the gentiles".

25-27 Compare Mt. 24:29-31.

25 The end of the eras of the nations will be accomplished by marvelous indications of divine intervention. This is brought before us under the sixth seal (Un. 6:12-17) of the Unveiling. The sun becomes black as sackcloth of hair and the moon as blood, and the stars of heaven fall to the earth. It is the time of divine indignation and only those in Israel who are preserved by divine power will be able to stand. The hundred and forty-four thousand will be sealed and saved through this great affliction as well as the innumerable throng (Un. 7:2-17). Portents which perplex and appal mankind will presage their deliverance.

28-33 Compare Mt.24:32-35 Mk.13:28-31.

28 The fig tree pictures Israel politically. Like that one which the Lord cursed, the nation in this aspect withered away and has had no political status until recent years. When their right to a home in Palestine was acknowledged, and they became the subject of international diplomacy, it became necessary to recognize them as a nation. Zionism has kindled their na-

tional aspirations and was a token that the branches of the fig tree were preparing to bud. The British declaration giving them a home in Palestine, and their efforts to reclaim and repopulate the land of their forefathers, are sure indications that Israel's winter is nearly past and her summer is near.

<sup>32</sup> It is evident that all these things did not take place in that generation. Nor did the Lord say that they would. He simply said that they *should*. He could not at that time reveal to them the failure of the Pentecostal economy. The present grace was an absolute secret. These must be left out of this prophecy. Leaving these out, all these things *would* have taken place in a single generation. Peter, at Pentecost, shows that repentance of the nation alone stood between them and the day of the Lord. Had the nation received his message, the times of refreshing would have come (Ac. 3:19). This passage, instead of being an insoluble difficulty, is really the key to the proper apprehension of this whole prophecy. It shows that the whole is viewed as an immediate possibility, and does not include the Pentecostal or the present economy in its scope.

<sup>1-2</sup> Compare Mt.26:1-5 Mk.14:1,2.

<sup>1</sup> In our Lord's day the popular names of the sacred festivals were not used with the clear exactitude of the Hebrew Scriptures. There the Passover is used of the day before the festival of Unleavened Bread, not of the festival itself. The passover was not sacrificed in the festival (Lev. 23:5-8). As one followed immediately after the other they seem to have been combined. It was practically necessary to put away leaven on the Passover, so it was included in the days of unleavened bread. Then, as the passover was sacrificed on this day, the whole festival, which lasted seven more days, was popularly known as the Passover.

<sup>3-6</sup> Compare Mt.26:14-16 Mk.14:10,11.

<sup>3</sup> It is evident that Judas, of his own volition, would not have betrayed his Lord. It was only when actually obsessed by Satan that he does such a dastardly deed. This fact must greatly modify our judgment of him. It is a question whether any of His disciples, or even of His apostles, could have done otherwise when under the control of the Adversary.

<sup>7-13</sup> Compare Mt.26:17-19 Mk.14:12-16.

<sup>7</sup> "The day of unleavened bread" here refers to the day before the first day of the festival, the fourteenth of Nisan, on which the Passover lamb was sacrificed. According to the law the festival proper did not commence until the fifteenth of Nisan (Num. 28:16,17).

<sup>8</sup> According to Josephus, the passover was always eaten by a company of not less than ten, and often by twenty or more. It seems that, in this case, the apostles had made no preparations until the very day had come. But this Passover had been before Him for a long time, and He had put it into the heart of someone to provide the place, possibly without any clear knowledge of the object of the preparations.

<sup>10</sup> Carrying water jars was "women's work", seldom done by a man. So that a man bearing a jar of water was an unmistakable sign. Possibly he was the only one in the whole city who demeaned himself thus.

<sup>14-18</sup> Compare Mt.26:20-29 Mk.14:17-25.

<sup>15</sup> Even to His apostles this last Passover must have seemed exceedingly solemn, but what shall we say of His feelings, knowing as He did that He, as the great Antitype, must suffer before the day is done? Well did He know that He was the true Lamb, and that His previous ministry was but the prelude and preparation for His sacrificial death. Just as the Passover lamb was taken on the tenth day of the month and kept till the fourteenth (Ex. 12:3-6), so He had been chosen by John the baptist (Jn.1:29) for the day which was now at hand. The lamb for the Passover must be perfect, without blemish (Ex.12:5). His holy life of peerless perfection, pure, though in constant contact with sin, was without parallel in the annals of mankind. All who sought to find a flaw in Him were confounded.

The Passover was about to be fulfilled by His decease. Hence, in the midst of this final celebration, He introduces a new memorial of His death. The Passover was kept not only in remembrance of the exodus out of Egypt, but also as a type of the greater deliverance which comes through His sacrifice. But the new observance is based on an accomplished work, on

suffering endured, on redemption attained. In its kingdom aspect it was given to remind them of His sufferings, during the interval of His absence. A special revelation of this observance was given to the apostle Paul, who passes it on to the Corinthians. Hence this account, as well as those in Matthew and Mark, are intended for the Circumcision only.

19-20 Compare Mt.26<sup>26-28</sup> Mk.14<sup>22-24</sup> 1 Co. 11<sup>23-26</sup>.

21-23 Compare Mt.26<sup>21-25</sup> Mk.14<sup>18-21</sup> Jn. 13<sup>18-30</sup> Ps.41<sup>9</sup>.

23 How sad it is to see the self-centered apostles, whose hearts should have been overflowing with sorrow and sympathy for Him as He confides to them the significance of the symbols and the nearness of His betrayal, forget His part and think only of themselves! They were concerned lest they should be thought guilty of disloyalty, yet worse still, at such a solemn time, when He was revealing the depths of His humiliation, each one seeks his own exaltation. The contrast is a most vivid illustration of how far the very best of men sink below the moral grandeur of the peerless One. He finds few rivals in His descent from highest glory to deepest shame! They were content to let Him tread that path alone.

24-27 Compare Mt.20<sup>25-28</sup> Mk.10<sup>42-45</sup>.

25 They deserved a stern rebuke, yet He gently chides them while explaining the true essence of greatness. His own example should have taught them better, for His superiority consisted in service. Hence He received the homage of men's hearts, not the adulation of their lips.

27 Compare Mt.20<sup>28</sup> Phil.2<sup>5-8</sup> Jn.13<sup>3-17</sup>.

28 Compare Mt. 19<sup>28</sup>.

28 Trial leads to the throne. Not service or success, but endurance in failure fitted the twelve apostles to sit at the table of the great King and to be associated with Him in the government of Israel.

31-34 Compare Mt.26<sup>30-35</sup> Mk.14<sup>26-31</sup> Jn. 13<sup>36-38</sup>.

31 Both the betrayal and denial of the Lord were the work of Satan. Judas was actually possessed by the enemy, while Peter was the object of an outward attack. Wheat is sifted to get rid

of the chaff. So Peter was rid of the self-conceit which hindered the exercise of the sterling qualities he possessed. He may not have been more selfish than the rest, for they all clamored for the highest place, but, as it was the Lord's will that he should be the chief of the twelve, it was necessary to humiliate him first. Satan's claim is limited by the Lord, for the adversary is allowed to do only so much evil as will eventuate in good. It is a sober truth that Satan had a hand in preparing Peter for his high place among the apostles. In the same way all his efforts will be turned to beneficial account.

32 Compare Jn. 21<sup>15-17</sup>.

35 Compare 9<sup>8</sup>.

35 Isaiah's prophecy concerning Him indicates a great change in His relations to His fellow men. Hitherto He was anything but a criminal, and His disciples were welcomed and freely entertained. To intimate this enmity, He counsels them to buy swords. But, as usual, the apostles fail to catch the drift of His figure, and produce two swords, without evidently perceiving the irony of His words "It is enough." Two swords would be of little avail for twelve men, especially if they should attack the Roman empire! Later, when one of them uses his sword, the Lord corrects the false impression, and restores the severed ear of His enemy.

37 Compare Isa.53<sup>12</sup> Mk.15<sup>28</sup>.

39-40 Compare Mt.26<sup>36-38</sup> Mk.14<sup>32-34</sup> Jn. 18<sup>1,2</sup>.

39 Compare 21<sup>37</sup>.

40 Compare Mt. 6<sup>13</sup>.

40 The great conflict between good and evil is here seen in its most intense exercise. The Lord well knew the evil that lay ahead of Him, for He had been speaking of it again and again. Moreover, He was well aware of the immeasurable benefits of His death to God, and to all His creation. Does He therefore meet it with stony indifference and stoicism? Are the sufferings less real because they are known and come from God? Not at all! In the face of trial He urges His apostles to pray that they should not enter it. He Himself does not wish to drink the cup. The sufferings of Christ are not His will, but the will of His Father. Hitherto there had been perfect unani-

mity between the will of the Father and that of the Son, but in this extreme agony of soul, acquiescence gives place to submission. From the dawn of creation He had delighted in the will of God. He had gladly emptied Himself of the glories of the form divine and took the form of a slave, and entered into the humiliation of humanity, but when it came to the death of the cross His soul revolted and His will refused to follow. Our wills are instinctively in conflict with God's, so it seems almost impossible for us to realize the awful gulf revealed in the agonizing words, "not My will, but Thine, be done!"

41-46 Compare Mt.26<sup>39-46</sup>Mk.14<sup>35-42</sup>.

44 Compare Heb. 5<sup>7,8</sup>.

47-48 Compare Mt.26<sup>47-50</sup> Mk.14<sup>43-46</sup> Jn. 18<sup>3-9</sup>.

48 The gentle forbearance is the most crushing quality of this question. The Lord does not berate him for his act. He does not denounce him for his deed. But it hurts His heart that he should cover his crime with a show of affection.

49-51 Compare Mt.26<sup>51-54</sup> Mk.14<sup>47</sup> Jn. 18<sup>10,11</sup>.

49 Doubtless the Lord allowed the apostles to harbor the mistaken impression that He was about to meet force with force so as to afford Him an opportunity to reveal His true attitude in a most striking and instructive manner. So far as we know, He had never healed His enemies. Blessing was reserved for the faithful and friends. So that, in this simple miracle of healing the ear of the high priest's slave, we can see a moral glory which is nowhere else displayed.

52-54 Compare Mt.26<sup>55-57</sup>Mk.14<sup>48-53</sup>.

52 Behind all the acts of men the Lord always saw the sovereignty of God. Since it was His Father's will that He should suffer on the Passover, He knew that His enemies would be helpless to take Him until the proper time. So He had calmly ignored the threatening attitude of the chiefs, and taught openly in the very temple itself. Now the day had come for Him to be offered up. Now, since it was God's time, it was their hour.

54 Compare Jn. 18<sup>12-14</sup>.

55-60 Compare Mt.26<sup>58,69-74</sup> Mk.14<sup>54,66-71</sup> Jn.18<sup>15-18</sup>.

55 That Peter really intended to be loyal to his Lord cannot be doubted, especially as he did not run away but followed as closely as he dared, keeping Him in sight. It demanded some courage to enter into the courtyard of the chief priest. But there was nothing in what he saw of the trial to give him confidence. If they maltreated his Master as they were doing what would they do to His disciples? What a vast difference between his conduct here and his magnificent courage in the Pentecostal era! Now he is afraid of a mere maid, then he defies the whole Sanhedrin. Yet this failure was the very foundation of his future firmness. From the instant that the Lord looked at Peter he was a changed man. Bitter self-reproach takes the place of boasting. Confidence in Christ replaces self-conceit. He has learned the lesson of true greatness, as he writes in his first epistle: "Be humbled, then, under the mighty hand of God, that He should be exalting you in season" (1 Pet.5<sup>6</sup>).

61-62 Compare Mt.26<sup>75</sup>Mk.14<sup>72</sup>.

63-65 Compare Mt.26<sup>67,68</sup>Mk.14<sup>65</sup>.

66-71 Compare Mt.26<sup>59-66</sup> Mk.14<sup>55-64</sup> Jn. 18<sup>19-24</sup>.

66 The Sanhedrin was the highest religious court in Israel and should logically have been the one to pass upon His claims and confirm them. Had they been at all what they were supposed to be, He could easily have convinced them. But they were so utterly apostate that the Lord recognized the futility of having anything to do with them. They were not sincerely inquiring into His claims but were seeking evidence to convict Him. He well knew that they wanted Him to claim to be Christ that they might use it against Him. They wanted Him to say that He was the Son of God that this might be evidence of blasphemy and lead to His death. This is why He says "You are saying that I am!" If He did not claim it they would have no case against Him. And even thus, though He refused to speak the words, they catch at His retort. What a travesty of righteousness! What a mockery of religion is this highest and holiest of Jewish tribunals! Pilate had some sense of justice left, but they were utterly shameless. Their light had become darkness.



<sup>1-5</sup> Compare Mt.27<sup>1-14</sup>Mk.15<sup>2-5</sup>Jn.18<sup>28-38</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The trial now takes on a new character. It passes from the religious to the political phase. It would be quite useless to bring the Sanhedrin's findings before Pilate, because he was not to be drawn into their religious quarrels, so long as these did not affect the state. So they modify the indictment accordingly.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Mt.22<sup>17-21</sup>Ac.17<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> To us the Lord's reply to Pilate seems to be an admission of the charge that He was a king, and consequently, a rival of Cæsar. But the turn of thought lies in the emphasis. In John's account there is a fuller discussion, in which the Lord makes it plain to Pilate that, at that time, He was not pressing this claim. "You are [not I am] saying it," indicates that the accusation springs from the desire of His enemies to have it so, rather than any evidence they can furnish. So Pilate understood it, and bluntly told the Jews that, if anyone was at fault, they were, and not their Prisoner.

<sup>4</sup> Compare Ac.3<sup>14,15</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> They hoped, by the mention of Galilee, to rouse the procurator's animosity, for it was well known that he and Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, were enemies. But Pilate knew that Herod was well acquainted with the religious quarrels of the Jews and might possibly be able to find the real cause of their animosity. Hence he sends Him to the Idumean.

<sup>7</sup> Compare 31,2.

<sup>8</sup> Compare 99.

<sup>9</sup> Herod, having beheaded John the baptist, became greatly interested in this new Prophet Who more than took John's place. He never had met Him. As the Lord was not of Galilee, but of Bethlehem, Judea, Herod had no jurisdiction over His case. His father, Herod the Great, had indeed held sway in Judea, and used his power to massacre the babes of Bethlehem, in order to make sure of His destruction. They were a bloody race, and with divine dignity Christ scorns to speak to the haughty Herod. Yet even he could find no ground for the accusations of His enemies.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Isa. 53<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Compare Ac. 4<sup>25-28</sup>.

<sup>13-17</sup> Compare Mt.27<sup>15-19</sup> Mk.15<sup>6-10</sup> Jn. 18<sup>28,39</sup>19<sup>4</sup>Ac.13<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Every civil charge against the Lord was found to be false. His long sojourn in Galilee and the miracles He had performed were reported to Herod, but he had not been informed of a single disturbance, though the Roman government was constantly on the alert to crush any insurrection in its beginning. Bar-Abbas had headed one that very year. The religious rulers were none too loyal to Rome, and any charge coming from them, unless well authenticated, was to be viewed with suspicion.

The utter hypocrisy of the whole proceeding comes to a climax in their request for the release of Bar-Abbas. He was actually guilty of the charge brought against the Lord, with the added distinction of having committed murder (while the Lord had roused the dead), yet they wanted him released! But the Lord, Who was not guilty, must be crucified! We cannot help seeing in these two an illustration of the wonderful salvation which springs from the murder of the Just One. He suffered, the Just One for the unjust, that He might bring them to God. If Christ had been released Bar-Abbas would have been executed, as he deserved. He is a type of the mass of unbelievers, who are saved without faith, at the consummation.

<sup>18-23</sup> Compare Mt.27<sup>20-23</sup> Mk.15<sup>11-14</sup> Jn. 18<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> The act of Pilate in crucifying Christ is as nothing compared with the guilt of the religious leaders of the Jews. They had the oracles of God which foretold the coming of the Blessed One. Pilate may never have even heard of the Messiah. They had the light of a holy and just law. Yet the Roman governor, with little more than an instinctive sense of justice (for no statute was involved) was far more righteous. Three times he bears record that he cannot find a single fault worthy of death. His real weakness lay in the form of government. Pilate's office, to some extent, depended on his pandering to the populace. They were always ready to accuse their governors of disloyalty to Cæsar if they displeased them.

<sup>24-25</sup> Compare Mt.27<sup>24-26</sup>Mk.15<sup>15</sup>Jn.19<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Simon is the type of those who follow Him, bearing His cross.

26 Compare Mt.27<sup>32</sup>Mk.15<sup>21</sup>Jn.19<sup>17</sup>.

26 Tradition has sought to surround the cross with a false glamour by making it cross-shaped, instead of a single upright stake. The word "cross" itself has so embedded itself in the hearts of the saints that it would seem cruel to tear it out. Yet those who are spiritual will recognize the great truth that the crucifixion was designed to sound the depths of shame and ignominy, and any attempt to embellish it only detracts from its true moral glory.

28 In the midst of His sufferings He did not forget the fate of that unhappy people, who were sowing the seed of countless sorrows when they crucified their Messiah. It is probable that most of the women and children then alive died of violence in the Jewish wars and the siege of Jerusalem.

30 Compare Isa.2<sup>19</sup>Hos.10<sup>8</sup>Un.6<sup>18</sup>.

32 Compare Isa. 53<sup>12</sup>.

32 These two malefactors must not be confused with the two robbers who were crucified later.

33-38 Compare Mt.27<sup>33-43</sup> Mk.15<sup>22-32</sup> Jn. 19<sup>17-24</sup>Ps.22<sup>16-18</sup>.

33 There is no good reason for using the Latin equivalent "Calvary". The Greek is the usual word for "skull", from which we derive *cranium*. It was doubtless so called from a resemblance to the human skull.

34 Though some important manuscripts omit this, the first recorded saying of our Lord on the cross, there is no reasonable doubt that it is genuine. When we consider how improbable it is that any man could show such compassion or even invent such a gracious thought, we are compelled to admit its inspiration. Its answer is found in the renewed proclamation of pardon or forgiveness after His ascension by the apostles He had chosen. This is the sin against the Son of Man-kind, which was forgiven. The sin against the holy Spirit, the rejection of the apostles' ministry, could not be forgiven for the eon. Hence the nation was thrust aside, as they are today.

35-37 Compare Ps. 22<sup>6-8</sup>.

38-43 Compare Mt.27<sup>44</sup>Mk.15<sup>32</sup>.

39 Only in Luke's account do we read of these two malefactors. Matthew and Mark speak of two others who were crucified later, who were robbers.

47-49 Compare Mt.27<sup>54-56</sup>Mk.15<sup>39-41</sup>.

There were no "thieves", unless the malefactors were guilty of this crime. The penitent malefactor did not speak against the Lord at first, as is usually supposed. He begins by rebuking his companion, and acknowledging the justice of his fate, and then justifies the Sufferer at his side. He reveals his faith in Christ by his appeal to be remembered in the kingdom.

42 Compare Ps. 106<sup>4-8</sup>.

43 As this verse is the center of so much controversy it has been deemed best to render it as literally as possible, though the English result is somewhat stilted.

43 Paradise is the Persian word for park. It is used in the Septuagint of the garden of Eden, and elsewhere of the future renewed earth in the kingdom. The Lord will not come into His kingdom until after the great judgments which commence the Lord's day (Un.11<sup>15</sup>). The Lord assured the malefactor that his request will be granted, and that his present sufferings shall be exchanged for the delights of that day.

44-46 Compare Mt.27<sup>45-53</sup>Mk.15<sup>33-38</sup>.

44 The physical darkness was but a sign of the spiritual gloom which enveloped the great Sacrifice due to His abandonment by God when He became the sin offering. Not only were His enemies against Him, but His friends forsook Him, and, most dreadful and inexplicable of all, His Father turned from Him, seeing that He occupied the place of the curse and bore the sins of the world.

45 The rending of the curtain of the temple signified that the way into God's presence was now open. Hitherto God had hid behind His flesh, now He was revealed through it.

46 Compare Jn.19<sup>28-30</sup>Ps.31<sup>5</sup>.

46 The Spirit of the Lord returned to God (Ecc.12<sup>7</sup>), His soul went to the unseen (Ac.2<sup>27</sup>), but His body was not returned to the soil (Gen.3<sup>19</sup>). His resurrection consisted in the return of His Spirit to the body, and the consequent return of the consciousness, or soul.

50-54 Compare Mt.27<sup>57-60</sup> Mk.15<sup>42-46</sup> Jn. 19<sup>38-42</sup>.

50-53 Thus the words of Isaiah were fulfilled. He should have been buried

in the place appointed for criminals, but His work was done. His shame was past, so He is entombed with the rich (Isa.53<sup>9</sup>).

<sup>55</sup> Compare Mt.27<sup>61</sup>Mk.15<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>1-11</sup> Compare Mt.28<sup>1-10</sup>Mk.16<sup>1-8</sup>Jn.20<sup>1-18</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The resurrection did not occur on Sunday, or "the first day of the week", but on the first one of the seven sabbaths which led from Firstfruits to Pentecost. The notable phrase "one of the sabbaths" is always found in the interval between Passover and Pentecost, never at any other time of the year. It may refer to any sabbath of the seven. It is usually used of the resurrection day (Mt.28<sup>1</sup>; Mk.16<sup>1-2</sup>; Jn.20<sup>1-19</sup>), which would be during the days of unleavened bread, but also of a sabbath after this (Ac.20<sup>6,7</sup>), any time up to Pentecost (1 Co.16<sup>2,8</sup>). Scholars are divided as to the reason for the rendering "first day of the week". It was usual to say that "one" is sometimes used for *first*, and that "sabbaths" sometimes means *week*, but the latest attempt to justify the accepted rendering is that "one of the sabbaths" is equivalent to "the first day after the sabbath". As the day after the sabbath was commonly called the "morrow of the sabbath" (Lev.23<sup>15</sup>, LXX), this seems far fetched. Even if we take "one" to mean first in this case, the sense is not changed, for the resurrection actually was on the first of a series of sabbaths, as we read in Mark (16<sup>9</sup>). But in no case were sabbaths ever used for "week". That is always represented by *hebdomad*, or seven. The only exception would be when a number of sabbaths measure the same space of time as so many hebdomads. As the expression "first day of the week" can be so readily expressed in Greek there are grave grounds for refusing to use these words as the equivalent of "one of the sabbaths".

<sup>4</sup> How little heed their hearts had given to the Lord's constant predictions of His death and resurrection is evident from their bewilderment at the empty tomb. After the sufferings had been fulfilled according to His word, they should have reckoned on His resurrection. Instead, they doubt.

<sup>7</sup> Compare 9<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Compare 8<sup>2,3</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Compare Jn.20<sup>2-10</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Peter had good cause to remember the Lord's first announcement of His death and resurrection, for he had objected to it, and had been severely rebuked (Mt.16<sup>21-23</sup>). The Lord had actually called him *satan*, because he wanted the kingdom to come without suffering. It is usual to suppose that all evil is of the Adversary, but the crucifixion, the climax of all evil, was by the specific counsel and foreknowledge of God (Ac.2<sup>23</sup>).

<sup>13-17</sup> Compare Mk.16<sup>12,13</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Compare Mal.3<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> In resurrection, before His ascension, the Lord was present for forty days, manifesting Himself to His disciples at will. He was not invested with the supernal glory in which Paul saw Him after His ascension. The forty days give us a sample of the terrestrial bodies of Israel's saints, the vision of Paul revealed the body glorious which will be the portion of those who partake of His celestial glory. It is too bright for earth. It was dimmed to suit the sight of His disciples. But it had powers far beyond the present human body. He could change its form, vanish or appear at will, and move without hindrance through any material obstacle. It does not take much faith to perceive the possibility of such a body. Even in its present imperfect approximations to physical truth, science could formulate a theory to explain it. The properties of matter change greatly according to the latent powers they contain. Thus water is solid ice when cold, fluid water when warm, and gaseous, invisible steam when hot. So a human body, with sufficient vital force, might change its own constitution and actually become invisible or luminous.

<sup>16</sup> Compare 24<sup>31</sup>Jn.20<sup>14,21,4</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> The crucifixion of Christ must have been known to almost all in Jerusalem. As it was the Passover, several million people were there, and through them, it would spread rapidly through the land.

<sup>21</sup> Compare 2<sup>38</sup>Ac.1<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> The resurrection, when plainly foretold, was always to occur on the third day. The tomb is empty and the messengers declare Him to be alive, yet

still they do not believe! No wonder He chides them for their dullness of both head and heart! Besides, they had the Scriptures, and it is to these He appeals to explain the sufferings which they could not understand. Doubtless He spoke of the rejection of Moses himself by his brethren and of David the king, and especially of Hezekiah, who was smitten for the nation's sins, the type of the suffering Messiah. Many a passage in the Psalms of David is charged with a deeper doctrine and a higher thought than appears upon the surface. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, shows that David, in the so-called sixteenth Psalm, speaks of Him Who was his Lord and Son, when he gives a detailed account of the body and soul of Christ in death (Ps. 16<sup>9-10</sup>; Ac. 2<sup>25-28</sup>). The concluding verse of the Psalm, "Thou makest known to Me the paths of life," accounts for His Spirit, for it is the spirit that imparts life. Thus fully did David predict Messiah's death. Once our eyes are opened, the pages of the Scriptures become aglow with the things concerning Christ. As the dwelling place of God, the tabernacle and the temple were faint shadows of Him and His varied offices. The ritual, the sacrifices, the priesthood, the festivals—all pointed to the Coming One and His work. So much is there of Him that He could not have given much more than an outline on the road to Emmaus. Even then they do not seem to have fully realized the import of His words. They do not express any conviction that Christ must have been raised, and that the rumors they had heard must be true. Their inability to see Him in the stranger was but a sign that they were still unable to see Him in the Scriptures. No doubt they had heard of the new observance which He had given the twelve, and knew that the broken bread was a figure of His body, broken for them. The symbolic act of blessing and breaking the bread opened their eyes at last, and they finally awoke to the reality of His resurrection. His task accomplished, the Lord vanishes, but they are eager to report the marvelous truth to the apostles, and return to Jerusalem.

22 Compare 1-11.

24 Compare 12 Jn. 20:2-16.

36-40 Compare Mk. 16:14 Jn. 20:19-23.

36-40 Compare Mk. 16:14 Jn. 20:19-23.

39 The nature of our Lord's resurrection is nowhere more clearly revealed than in His efforts to convince the trembling disciples. The Lord was human in the full sense of the word, and had a body, soul, and spirit before His death. He lost none of these in resurrection. Had He been a spirit, as some of the disciples supposed at first, then He would not have had a body, with flesh and bones. The fact that His body did not decompose in death, that it still had the wounds which came at the crucifixion, that it is never said to have blood, all go to show that it was as real a body as before, but changed in its powers and mode of living. The bodies of the saints will be changed from soulish bodies, sustained in life through the medium of the blood, into spiritual (not spirit) bodies, vivified directly by means of spirit.

44 Compare 6, 5 18:31-33.

45 Compare Ps. 119:18.

46 Compare 26, 27 Ps. 22 Isa. 53.

46 This commission, for all mankind, in contrast to the kingdom commissions of Matthew (Mt. 10:5-8 28:16-20), is concerned with sins and the suffering of Christ. It promises a pardon to all who repent. In actual practice it was often combined with the other commissions, as recorded in the book of Acts. It was not in force until Pentecost. There Peter proclaims: "Repent . . . for the pardon of your sins . . . (Ac. 2:38). He used it again in preaching to Cornelius: "everyone who is believing in Him is to be obtaining the pardon of sins through His name" (Ac. 10:43). Peter and the eleven do not seem to have left the land of Israel in the proclamation of pardon. Paul was appointed to carry it to the nations. His first commission was to the effect that the nations were "to get a pardon of sins" (Ac. 26:18). After his separation (Ac. 13:2) he coupled this with justification (Ac. 13:38, 39), and drops pardon when he no longer proclaims Christ after the flesh (2 Co. 5:16-21). Pardon is administered by the executive of a government, for those who are proven guilty; justification acquits those who are reckoned not guilty.

47 Compare Ac. 2:38.

<sup>49</sup> Compare Jn.14<sup>15-17</sup>,26<sup>167</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> The sequel to Luke's account is in the book of Acts. There the thread of the kingdom proclamation is taken up by the twelve apostles, after their endowment with power at Pentecost.

<sup>50-51</sup> Compare Mk.16<sup>19</sup>Ac.1<sup>9-11</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> The Lord seems to have lingered only long enough to establish the fact of His resurrection and prepare the

apostles for their future ministry. There is no hint here of His high heavenly honors, but all His teaching is confined within the sphere of Israel's restoration to become earth's suzerain, according to the prophets, and to the blessing of the nations through them.

<sup>52</sup> Compare Ac.1<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Compare Ac.2<sup>46</sup>,47<sup>542</sup>.

## JOHN'S ACCOUNT

THIS ACCOUNT presents our Lord in the character of the Son of God. Matthew portrays Him as the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. Luke impresses us with His humanity, Mark with His service, but here we rise above these lesser glories, and learn of His divine relationship. The genealogies of Matthew and Luke are each in accord with the truth they teach, Mark needs none for the Servant, but John unveils Him as the Word before His advent in fleshly form.

The keynote is struck in the first sentence. He is the Word, the Expression, the Logos. God is revealing Himself here through the medium of *sound*. He appeals to human ears. While this is a higher method than an appeal to power or acts, it is a much lower means than that used in this day of grace, for to us He is presented as the Image of God. He appeals to our spiritual *sight*.

A comparison of John's ministry and Paul's for the nations is suggested by the name given to John. In recognition of His tempestuous character, the Lord calls him a "son of thunder". Paul's first meeting with the Lord was like the lightning. The light of a flash travels about a million times as fast as the thunderclap which it occasions, and perhaps a billion times as far. No sound reaches us except from earth and even then, at no great distance. We can see stars so far from us that no human speech can more than suggest their remoteness.

So then, John presents the Son of God as the Word, in His relation to the earth. Paul also presents Him as the Son of His love, but rather in relation to the celestial universe. And, high as the spiritual flights of the beloved disciple, the apostle of the nations reveals a transcendent realm of truth to which John was a stranger. He was a minister of the Circumcision, and such blessing as he does out to the nations is entirely dependent on Israel's prior bliss. Paul bases all his blessing for the nations on Israel's previous apos-

tasy. It is a notable fact that this account was not written until after the apostolic ministry had closed. Possibly none of the other apostles even saw it. They never used it in the period comprised by the Acts. Paul never read it. He was able to fulfill the most marvelous of all ministries without a single glance into this narrative. Indeed, his later ministries were not concerned with Christ after the flesh and it would have had but little appeal to him so far as its proclamation was concerned. Being, then, given after all present need for it was past, it undoubtedly is intended for the Israel of the future, especially in the millennial era. Unlike the other accounts, it suggests Christ's rejection at its commencement, and soon unveils a preview of the marriage of the Lambkin which takes place during the thousand years, and gives a series of seven signs, all of which find their fulfillment in the day of Jehovah.

The seven signs are specially designed to support the central thought that He is the incarnate *Word*. Unlike the accounts elsewhere, there is no personal contact, or action. He speaks and it is done.

His word has power because of what He is. The water blushed into wine at the word of Him Who was the true Vine (15<sup>1</sup>). He not only said "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" (14<sup>6</sup>), but could tell the courtier, "Go. Your son is living" (4<sup>50</sup>). He is the Door (10<sup>7</sup>) through which the impotent man was saved. He is the Bread (6<sup>35</sup>) that fed the five thousand (6<sup>5-14</sup>). As the Good Shepherd (10<sup>11</sup>) He seeks His sheep in the storm (6<sup>18</sup>). As the Light (9<sup>5</sup>) He opens the blind man's eyes (9<sup>7</sup>). As the Resurrection and the Life (11<sup>25</sup>) He rouses Lazarus (11) from the tomb. It is the *word* of "I AM" which displays its potency in the seven signs of this evangel. Briefly, the words of Christ are substantiated by a divine sign language which only those who knew the Word of God could understand.

<sup>1</sup> As God always was, there is no absolute beginning brought before us in the Scriptures. Both here and in Gen. 1<sup>1</sup> the article *the* is lacking in the originals, showing that it refers to the commencement of the subject in hand. In Genesis it is the beginning of creation. Here it is the beginning of revelation. The phrase might be rendered idiomatically, "To begin with".

The Logos, or Saying, or Expression, or Word, brings before us the revelation of God through sound, which appeals to the ears of His creatures. It is inferior to and in contrast with the revelation in which Christ is presented to sight, as the Image of God. Paul was saved by a sight of His transcendent glory. John was called by His word. Sound is slow and confined to the earth. Sight is swift and searches the heavens. This suggests the limited sphere of John's ministry.

"With" suggests two Greek words neither of which is used here, hence for accuracy's sake it is best to translate literally "toward". "With God" has no cogency in this connection. "Toward" indicates that the revealed Word pointed the creature in the direction of God. Take every "thus saith the Lord" in the Hebrew Scriptures and they all point us to God, and reveal some attribute of the divine character.

It is impossible for the mind to entertain the two thoughts that the Word was toward (or with) God, and the Word was God. Nothing which is toward (or with) an object can actually be that object. The difficulty lies in the difference between English and Greek idiom. "Was" and "is" are usually omitted in Greek, unless they are used in a figurative sense. Thus "This is my body" does not mean that the bread of the communion actually is the Lord's body but represents it. As the bread stands for the Lord's body, so the Word took the place of God. The God of the Hebrew Scriptures spoke: it was an oral revelation. He was revealed as Elohim, Jehovah, Adonai, etc., by means of utterances which came to the fathers through the prophets, while His essence was concealed. As at Sinai, His voice was heard, but He was hid.

<sup>2</sup> Tyndale, the first translator of our English Bible, used the pronoun "it" in referring to the Word, nor did he ever change it in his revisions.

<sup>3</sup> Being is based on the Word of God; creation is connected with Christ as the Image of God (Col. 1<sup>15-17</sup>). The reason of all existence is evident. It provides a field for God's self-revelation. Sounds without ears are nothing and sights without eyes are vain. God wishes to be known; hence the need of creatures and a medium of revelation which is also the means of creation.

<sup>4</sup> The Word of God is presented as the channel of life in both the physical (Gen. 1<sup>11,20,24,27</sup>) and spiritual spheres (Ps. 119<sup>25</sup>); as well as a light in the prevailing darkness (Ps. 119<sup>105</sup>). Yet even the nation to whom the Word of God came remained in dense darkness.

<sup>6</sup> The opening paragraph is a summary of the Hebrew revelation. The law and the prophets were until John. He, too, belonged to that period, and concluded the testimony to the Coming One.

<sup>13</sup> An ancient reading, preserved by some of the early Fathers, is exceedingly apt and suggestive. It has "Who was begotten" and refers this statement to the incarnation of the Word, rather than to the spiritual birth of believers.

<sup>14</sup> The pre-existence of Christ is clearly implied in the statement that the Word became flesh. The Word had not assumed a human form before; now it becomes a human being. In this way grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ. The divine expressions of the Hebrew Scriptures now converge in the Man. His previous place is further confirmed by John, when he insists that He was before him, though, as to flesh, He was after him.

<sup>18</sup> The various theophanies of the Hebrew Scriptures, such as Isaiah saw (Isa. 6<sup>1</sup>), were not actual discoveries of the Deity, but sights of messengers through whom God communicated with mankind in the past (Hb. 2<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>19</sup> The Jews did well in sending priests to John. But the priests had no sense of sin, so do not inquire about a sacrifice, but whether he is the ruler or prophet for whom they are looking.

Government and education are still the panaceas proposed by the majority of priest-craft. But John wisely withdraws himself from their notice, and as the Voice, heralds the coming of the Messiah Himself.

21-34 Compare Mt. 3:1-7; Mk. 1:2-11; Lu. 3:4-22, 29-36.

29 First John points out God's Lamb for the sinner, then for the saint. No other animal was so freely used in the sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual. Not only was a lamb slain at the passover (Ex.13<sup>s</sup>), but it might be used as a sin offering (Lev.4<sup>32</sup>) or a guilt offering (Lev.5<sup>6</sup>) and was prescribed for the cleansing of a leper (Lev.14<sup>12</sup>). But never, as here, did it take away the sin of the whole world. But it was not slain for sin only, but for worship and communion. Every morning and every evening witnessed the smoke of an ascending offering (Lev.29<sup>38</sup>). It was used as a peace offering (Ex.37). Besides this it was offered with the wave offering (Lev.23<sup>11</sup>), a symbol of the resurrection. Thus on seven different occasions a lamb was used to depict the sacrificial work of the Messiah. Indeed, His ministry of approximately four years may well be viewed as the antitype of the four days during which the passover lamb was kept before it could be offered (Ex.12<sup>6</sup>). During this period He displayed His marvelous perfections to the world. Not a blemish was found in Him. No wonder that the disciples, when they found the true Lamb of God, left John, and followed Him!

40 The call of Simon Peter is worthy of careful consideration, as it is undoubtedly an index of his ministry. It is especially instructive when viewed in contrast with the call of Paul. He was introduced to Messiah by a blood relation. Hence he, in turn, proclaims Christ to the Circumcision. Paul met Christ Himself come down from heaven, outside the land, hence he goes to the Uncircumcision with a heavenly message. Peter was a disciple of John, who was eager to welcome the Messiah. Paul was His most malignant enemy. Hence Paul preaches an evangel of undiluted transcendent grace, such as Peter himself never even apprehended.

42 The contrast between Paul and Peter is further emphasized by their names. Simon, or Simeon, is Hebrew for "hear", or "hearken". He hearkened to the Word incarnate, and became His disciple. "Saul" suggests the disobedience of Israel's first king, and the words of Samuel, "Behold, to hearken is better than sacrifice! To attend than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15<sup>22</sup>). Simon was saved by sound. Saul was saved by sight. One was rewarded for his obedience, the other was favored because of his disobedience. One is the leading exponent of God's mercy to Israel, the other of God's transcendent and gratuitous grace to the nations.

Both were given new names to accord with the character of their commissions. Simon was called Cephas or Peter, meaning "rock", because he was to be used as a foundation. Saul was called Paul, because his ministry filled the "interval" between the repudiation of Israel in the past and their reception in the future.

44 This is the western Bethsaida.

46 A devout Jew had good cause to question whether the Messiah should come out of Nazareth, unless he knew that He had been born in Bethlehem and His parents had gone there as a refuge from Herod's successor (Mt. 2<sup>22</sup>). Moreover, though there was a spoken prophecy that He should be called a Nazarene (Mt.2<sup>23</sup>), the name does not occur even once in the Hebrew Scriptures, or in the Talmud. "The Nazarene" was a term of reproach, and was used only by those who wished to insult Him.

47 Nathanael (gift of God) is a delightful type of the faithful in Israel. His position "under the fig tree" suggests those who longed for Messiah's kingdom and were looking for redemption in Israel, knowing from the Scriptures that the time spoken of by Daniel drew near. Nathanael heard His proclamation and acknowledged His right to the throne, and His higher glories as the Son of God. To such He promises a place in the coming kingdom. The opened heaven is a millennial picture, when all like Nathanael will enjoy the blessedness of heaven and earth united under the rule of their Messiah.



<sup>1</sup> Cana, in Hebrew, means "acquire". The marriage feast is a sign of the time when the Son acquires the kingdom, and as the bridegroom is elated over the bride, so will He be elated over Israel (Isa. 62<sup>3,5</sup>). So long as they trust in the law, which was graven on stone, they will be in want of the wine which gladdens the heart of God and mortals (Jud. 9<sup>13</sup>). When they are restored to Jehovah, He will write His laws on their hearts. This is the new covenant He will make with them in that day (Jer. 31<sup>31-33</sup>). Then He will perform the much greater miracle of turning right into rejoicing and justice into joy. The power to transmute water into wine was the sign that He is competent to fill their hearts with the joy and gladness which can come only with the kingdom. He is the true Vine. Hence He is the Messiah. In general, it reveals the principle that God has the best still in reserve for His creatures, and that their lack is a lesson to lead them into an appreciation of His goodness. Men put their best forward at first, but God leaves His for the last. His saints will be satisfied but never satiated with Him Who is the never-failing source of joy. The best is always on before. Yet the poor wine serves its purpose to commend the good.

<sup>13</sup> As the Passover was at hand, and every Jewish family was preparing for it by banishing all leaven from their houses (Ex. 12<sup>15</sup>), the Lord went up to His Father's house to cleanse it from the leaven of covetousness (1 Co. 5<sup>10</sup>). Little did the priests dream that the dreaded leaven was in the most sacred place in all the land! While the meanest house was being cleansed of literal leaven, the priests actually allowed spiritual leaven in the courts of Jehovah. More than this, covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3<sup>5</sup>). They boasted that they abhorred all idolatry, and here we find it in the very house of God! No wonder, when the Lord went up to Jerusalem, He found it necessary to cleanse His Father's house in preparation for the coming Passover. He drove out the beasts with a small whip, and ordered the culprits out of the temple precincts. Idolatry and leaven should find no harbor in the house of His Father!

<sup>18</sup> The Jews ask for a sign. But if they have become so dense that they utterly fail to read the significance of His act in cleansing the temple of its spiritual leaven, how can they understand when He reveals its end? Priesthood had apostatized, sacrifice had failed, the temple was doomed. Hence He points them away from the type to the Antitype. The temple was defiled, but He was holy. God had deserted it, but now He dwelt in His Son. The sacrifices were of no avail, they only wearied Jehovah. Then it was that He came to do God's will (Heb. 10<sup>5-10</sup>). They would shudder at the thought of razing Herod's temple. They would never be guilty of such an awful crime against God! Yet their very zeal for Jehovah led them to destroy the true temple, His body. Mere religion, even if it is divine, only darkens the mind and hardens the heart. Forms are futile; it is the spirit that gives life. The very priests are ignorant of sacrifice. They not only defile the literal temple with leaven, but are absolutely blind to the true temple of God when He appears in their midst. Even when He speaks of it they fail to find the force of the figure.

<sup>24</sup> Our Lord's intimate insight into humanity is fully illustrated in this very evangel. No matter of what class or spiritual condition, all hearts were open to His gaze. He discovered the spiritual ignorance of Nicodemus, the teacher in Israel (3<sup>10</sup>), yet recognized in Peter, the fellaheen fisherman, a spiritual (14<sup>2</sup>) and a fond and faithful friend (21<sup>17</sup>). Guileless Nathanael is amazed at His acumen (14<sup>7</sup>), while Judas' treachery was ever before Him from the very first (13<sup>11</sup>). The woman of Samaria concluded that He knew all her past (4<sup>17</sup>), and the impotent man at Bethesda found that He fully understood his former failure (5<sup>6</sup>). The applause of the crowd did not blind Him to the motive which prompted it. He knew that they had no hunger for spiritual food. He is aware of all things (21<sup>17</sup>). Our character, our conduct, our condition, our inmost motives are transparent to His view. No wonder He did not entrust Himself to faith secured by signs!

<sup>1</sup> We have found an unholy temple, an unspiritual priesthood, and now we are introduced to an ignorant teacher! Intense application to a single text book for a whole life had not taught him the elements of the truth! Nicodemus, however, was impressed with the Lord's works, little as he understood His words. Like the rest, he takes literally what is figurative. He should have known from Ezekiel, the prophet, that Israel could not enter the kingdom without a new spirit (Eze. 36<sup>26</sup>). Spiritual regeneration, the one imperative condition, apart from which the kingdom cannot be entered, is utterly beyond his erudition. All that he considered vital was physical relationship with the favored nation.

The Lord did not give out regeneration as good news, but as bad news. This is not the gospel, even for the Circumcision. The evangel is always concerned with God and His Christ, never with man and his needs or efforts. Of the latter nothing good can be said, no evangel can be formulated. The new birth is not an evangel in any sense. It makes a demand he has no means of meeting.

For one like Nicodemus, expecting to enter the kingdom by physical generation, it would be quite a blow to demand spiritual regeneration. Men are utterly helpless in regard to their physical generation. They can do no more to accomplish their spiritual regeneration. It is the sovereign work of God's spirit.

Searching as the figure is, it does not probe nearly so deeply into human helplessness as the truth for the present economy of God's grace. Now, if any one is in Christ, there is a new creation (2 Co. 5<sup>17</sup>). In spirit, we skip the era of the kingdom, the renaissance, and enter the new creation, over a thousand years later. A new birth will fit them for a life on earth during the millennial eon. The new creation fits us for our celestial destiny. They will receive a rejuvenation of the faculties, we will be changed at the resurrection and receive powers and capacities far beyond our present possibilities. Regeneration keeps company with repentance and baptism. The new creation accompanies the dispensation of the conciliation (2 Co. 5<sup>18</sup>).

<sup>14</sup> Nicodemus chose the cover of night, to save his reputation; for he was a proud Pharisee who would not care to have his name coupled with Christ's. How it must have humbled him to be compared with the serpent-bitten Israelites of the wilderness! Scholar that he was, he could not understand regeneration, but the most foolish could look away from themselves to the serpent and find life. This he undoubtedly did, for later he ventured to speak in Christ's behalf (7<sup>50</sup>) and he came openly in the day time to bring spices for His burial (19<sup>39</sup>).

<sup>16</sup> This gives us, not the measure, but the character of God's love—not "so", but "thus". Nor is it a thing of the past—"loved". The gift of His Only Begotten is an expression of His timeless love. Whenever man's love is mentioned it is circumscribed in time and extent. But God's love knows no bounds except those it imposes on itself. The character of the God Nicodemus knew confined Him within Israel's narrow pale, and represented Him as a Lawgiver, demanding, and giving only as a reward. Now His love breaks through the narrow confines of the favored nation and shows Him a munificent Giver, imparting eonian life to all who believe. This evangel is especially adapted to the coming eon, when Israel is once more the channel of blessing to the nations. Good as it is, it falls far below the outflow of favor for the present economy. Now we have not only eonian life, but justification and reconciliation. Now God's love urges Him to actually beseech His enemies to be conciliated to Him. Grace will flow out through Israel to the nations in the regeneration. Now it overflows to the nations in far more lavish measure. Compare the grace here revealed with that displayed in Romans and especially Ephesians. Life alone is promised here; there we have righteousness and peace and exaltation to celestial honors far beyond the range of the fullest interpretation of this passage.

<sup>17</sup> While it was not the mission of Christ to condemn, yet, being the Light, He exposed the darkness. The priests and Pharisees were judged by their hatred of the Light.

<sup>25</sup> Ceremonial cleansing is the true definition of baptism. Before this, baptisms were a common feature of the Jewish ceremonial system, but were usually connected with the temple and the laver and were done by the person himself. John was called "the baptist" because he introduced the new method of doing it for others. This created a new unity. All baptized by John were distinguished from the rest of the nation by their cleansing. Now, however, the Lord's disciples baptize and John's disciples are going to Him, thus forming a new group and threatening to absorb John's disciples. So John defines his relation to Christ. He is simply a forerunner. He is glad to have his disciples leave him for the Messiah, his Master.

<sup>29</sup> Christ is the Bridegroom. The baptized Israelites are the bride, John the baptist is the friend. Israel of old was the wife of Jehovah, having been espoused to Him in the wilderness (Jer. 22:31<sup>32</sup>). She treacherously departed from Him (Eze. 16<sup>3,15,59,60</sup>). He divorced her (Jer. 3<sup>8-16</sup>). Though the law does not allow it (Deut. 24:1-4), yet He will invite her back again (Jer. 31:14). She will yet marry Him under the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-37). Meanwhile He has pledged Himself to keep her for Himself (Hos. 3<sup>5</sup>). Babylon is the false bride, for it will be an imitation of the true. The new Jerusalem, containing the twelve tribes of Israel, will be the bride of the Lambkin (Un. 21<sup>2-9</sup>). The nations are outside (Un. 21<sup>24</sup>). So far as we are aware, marriage is confined to the earth. It is not a figure of heavenly realities, but of earthly bliss. It is for the faithful in Israel. We have a nearer and dearer place, as members of Christ's body. So close are we that He cannot hate us, but nourishes and cherishes us as we do the members of our own body (Eph. 5<sup>29</sup>).

<sup>31</sup> John the baptist was of the earth like other men: the Lord came from above.

<sup>36</sup> This must be left to the time in which John was speaking. God is conciliated now, since Christ has died and Israel has been set aside, so that His indignation is not against the stubborn now. He is beseeching all to be conciliated (2 Co. 5:19).

<sup>4</sup> He *must* come through Samaria. This is the compulsion of grace, for Samaria had small claim upon His consideration. The seventeenth of second Kings shows us what a mongrel race they were, and how incurably idolatrous. They never had conformed to the divine ritual. The Jews had no intercourse with them. We do not wonder, then, that the Lord meets an outcast woman at Jacob's spring. Nicodemus was too proud to visit the Lord during daylight. The woman was too shamed to visit the spring in the evening, when all other women came. So she endures the heat of the midday sun to avoid their insults. Nicodemus offered the Lord no refreshment. The woman thought she could give Him none. But it is from sinners, not the self-righteous, that God derives joy.

This scene suggests a marvelous thought. The Lord first presents His need, and then hers. This is the true order. It is God Who is thirsty, first of all. He needs and desires the affectionate fellowship of His creatures. He would not condescend to make His desires known to a haughty Pharisee, but to the humiliated outcast He does not hesitate, even though it was considered a disgrace to talk to a woman in such circumstances.

<sup>11</sup> Like Nicodemus, she fails to fathom the figure of speech. As physical life is dependent on water, so spiritual life is sustained by the Spirit and word of God. We are so accustomed to a plentiful supply of water that the force of the figure is largely lost with us. In the arid East, the thirsty traveler knows something of the delight of a drink of pure water. There the professional water seller carries a porous clay jar, which keeps the water cool by evaporation, and two tinkling cups, in which he serves it to customers, as he goes along shouting (Isa. 55<sup>1</sup>). A spring was a prized possession. They often cost enormous labor, and were very deep. A whole town depended on this spring for its very life.

But a physical figure of spiritual realities always falls short. Jacob's spring was a deep well. There was no windlass or bucket. Travelers were expected to carry their own long leather buckets. But the Lord and His dis-

ciples were not equipped with comforts. This was well, for it gave Him a good excuse to break the stringent etiquette which forbade a man speaking to a strange woman.

How different is the spirit He imparts! It is an artesian spring welling up and overflowing with blessing to all around. No need to draw, or a bucket to lift a scant supply! No need to walk a long distance with huge water jars! The spirit is within and becomes a stream surging forth to others.

<sup>19</sup> The ancient controversy between Jerusalem and Samaria was most bitter in connection with the proper place of worship. Of course Jerusalem was right and Samaria was wrong, for God had chosen the city of David for His dwelling place. Yet now we are confronted with the strange contradiction that, whereas He found idolatry in the temple at Jerusalem, He finds true adoration in Samaria! We would go to the magnificent ritual at Jerusalem to find pure worship. We would go to the rebellious unauthorized shrine at Samaria for idolatry. Not so He.

The same is true of our Lord's message. We would have demanded a new birth from the moral outcast and discussed the nature of God and worship with the religious Jew. But He, with wisdom from above, insists on regeneration when dealing with the respectable religionist, and reveals His spiritual secrets to the moral leper of Samaria.

<sup>24</sup> True worship is not a matter of place or of ritual, but must correspond with its Object, Who is spirit. In the present era of grace, we worship Him wherever and whenever we please, and He deigns to dwell in us. Heartfelt adoration is hindered by forms and set ceremonies. Prayer that flows forth freely; praise that pours forth spontaneously; beseeching that breaks the bands of convention and precedent, mean more to God than petitions repeated like a prayer wheel and supported by custom or habit. The religious "exercises" of Christendom are like the sacrifices of old, which He could not bear. Let us not draw near with our lips when our hearts are far from Him.

<sup>27</sup> In the stringent etiquette of the

East it was not proper for a man to speak to a woman. Only such an excuse as a drink of water made it possible for Him to address her at all.

<sup>28</sup> The fruitfulness of God's grace shines forth in this narrative. Her need was great and it became the measure of her satisfaction. Nicodemus knew little lack and did not feel constrained to tell his joy to his friends and neighbors. We know of none who were reached through his efforts. But this poor woman is so filled with joy that she forgets how her message reflects on her own sad life. Here was a Man Who knew all her sordid past, and yet she did not shun Him! His grace had captured her heart and filled it overfull. She must share her joy with others. Her fervor was infectious. The men of the city did not murmur at the morals of the messenger, but marveled at her message. She did not ask them to believe her, but constrained them to come and hear Him. Such are the blessed results when grace grows in the fertile field of sin.

<sup>31</sup> Perhaps the most notable result of this marvelous meeting was the satisfaction which it brought to Christ. And this is still more marvelous when we reflect that it is the indirect result of the most sordid of sins. Throughout His ministry He emphasized the fact that sinners were a necessary complement to His message of love and grace, but this seems to be all unheeded in this self-righteous generation. Sin is a necessary factor in the revelation of God to man and indirectly essential to the satisfaction of His love. Love cannot be lavished on those who are deserving. But to be undeserving presupposes sin and all its train of evils.

There can be no Saviour without a sinner, no Healer apart from sickness, no Justifier where there is no unrighteousness, no Reconciler unless first there be enmity. Let us enjoy the great satisfaction of knowing that the evil influences in the world are not merely beneath the control of God so that they cannot get beyond bounds but their limited exercise provides the most potent ingredient, not only in the ultimate bliss of His creatures, but in that of the Creator.

<sup>46</sup> The first sign, at Cana, signifies the blessing of Israel in the kingdom. This, the second sign, is also at Cana, hence is also concerned with the coming kingdom. The wine prefigured the joy of the favored nation. This second sign foreshadows the healing of that nation. The effect of human government is aptly figured by a burning fever. Never was this more evident than after the great European conflict. The delirium, the weakness, the oppression, the dread of death, possesses the nations. It will be far worse at the time of the end. It will not be cured by human medicaments, but by the coming of Christ. The seventh hour is suggestive of the seventh seal, and the seventh trumpet which proclaims that the world kingdom became our Lord's and His Christ's . . . (Un. 11<sup>15</sup>). Christ is the Way and the Truth and the Life. He will assuage the pain and unrest which possesses Israel today. He will change their feverish delirium into a quiet, restful peace.

<sup>49</sup> "Lord, descend!" is the only cure for the earth's political ills. The resort to arms has not healed but rather aggravated the sores which caused it. Instead of being the last war it seems to be the seed of further conflict. Even if the war weary world should patch up a truce, it would not last. There is no other cure but "Lord, descend!"

This sign does not signify blessing to the nations now, during Israel's defection. At present the fever of the nations continues unabated and all our blessings are spiritual and celestial. The fact that the courtier was connected with the king, suggests that the rule of Israel over the nations is in view, and that they are included in the blessing. The Lord does not visit the son, but heals him at a distance. So He will deal with the nations in the millennial era. When He comes for us we are snatched away to meet Him in the air and enter His very presence, and remain with Him, and share His heavenly rule for the eons. The nations on earth in that day will not be so highly blessed.

<sup>52</sup> Yesterday, that is, before sunset of the same day.

<sup>1</sup> The third sign brings before us another picture of Israel before and after His advent. They are not only joyless, but weak, infirm through the flesh (Ro. 8<sup>3</sup>), unable to put into practise the precepts of that holy law which had been given to them. They cannot walk in the commandments. The occasional presence of a prophet sent from God stirred them up and recalled them to righteousness. But it had been a long time since a prophet had risen in Israel and they became almost hopeless of such help. They lay in the portico, outside. Christ is the Door.

Here we have Israel under the old covenant, which they are powerless to fulfill. Their infirmity followed the breaking of its precepts (<sup>14</sup>). It was given to teach them the excessive sinfulness of sin, and, by transforming sin into transgression, show them their utter helplessness to fulfill His will apart from His enabling grace.

The sign signifies that none other than Messiah had given strength to the infirm man, even as He will do for the whole nation when He confirms a new covenant with them, in the days of His coming. Then, like the infirm man, they will have a due sense of their own impotence, and will be looking for some one outside of themselves to introduce them into the sphere of God's healing power. But, as it will be in the future, His Word will be sufficient to turn their weakness into strength. He will put His law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts . . . He will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more (Jer. 31<sup>33,34</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> "Bethesda," in Hebrew, signifies "House of Kindness," an apt designation. Israel abode under the law of Moses, with its five books.

In that day, instead of ineffectual efforts to fulfill the law, and being dispersed among the nations for their failure, He will gather them together from the peoples, and gather them from all of the lands in which they have been scattered and give them the land of Israel. And He will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. He will take away their stony heart and give them a heart of flesh, to walk in His statutes (Eze. 11<sup>17-20</sup>).

<sup>10</sup> The day on which the cure was effected indicates that its fulfillment will find place in that great sabbatism that remains for God's people of the Circumcision (Heb. 4<sup>9</sup>). As a pallet was a mere bundle of bedding, the only burden which the Lord put upon the man who had been infirm was the means of rest. The Jews had no rest in their spirits even on the sabbath. So we have the astonishing absurdity of Jews striving to take away the means of rest on the plea that it was work! They, rather, were breaking the sabbath. They did not hesitate to try to kill Him, no matter what the day might be. This is one of the delusions which blinds all who seek to keep the law. They do not allow themselves real rest even on the sabbath, and those who are burdened with the rest of God are deemed lawbreakers. All rest for man can only be based on God's work.

<sup>18</sup> The charge of equality with God brings out a clear statement of the relationship of the Son to the Father. Of Himself the Son is unable to do anything. He does not claim divine power independent of the Father. Neither does He claim to exercise His own will. That is God's prerogative (<sup>30</sup>). As He has neither the ability nor the will of the Father, the charge of making Himself equal with God was false. Nevertheless, because He did not exercise His own will and because He did nothing except by the power and sanction of the Father, and was sent and commissioned by Him, He is entitled to all the honor due to the Father, for only thus can the Father receive the homage of His creatures. The healing of the impotent man was done by the power and will of the Father. If it was a desecration of the sabbath, then the Father was responsible.

How few today really enter into God's rest! His grace and love are bartered for so much faithfulness or service. Instead of the exultant consciousness of His settled smile, there is a constant striving to do something to appease His wrath or fulfill His imaginary demands. God will not have our hands without our hearts. He does not want us to work *for* Him. *He* wishes to work through us.

<sup>20</sup> The Father's fondness for the Son is one of the most intimate and delightful revelations of Holy Writ. The fondness is not the love which flows out to those least deserving it, but the affection founded on the fellowship of purpose and of work, and agreeable association. It is liking rather than love. It is the great Master Workman initiating His Associate into His great designs.

<sup>21</sup> To appreciate fully the greatness of the work of the Son we must grasp the fact that He is more than the Resurrection. He is the Resurrection and the Life (11<sup>25</sup>). Great as resurrection is, vivification far surpasses it. Resurrection is for the dead. Vivification is for the living or those who have been raised (11<sup>26</sup>). Resurrection imparts physical life, subject to decay and death. Vivification is the life abundant. Those who have it do not die for the eons. All who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, yet for some it will be a resurrection of judgment, for others it will be a resurrection of life. As all resurrection implies life in its ordinary sense, the resurrection of life must impart life in a superlative sense.

<sup>22</sup> Judgment is not, in itself, condemnation. It consists in setting things to rights. It is the prerogative of the Son to correct all wrongs, whether done to God or man. He is the Supreme Arbiter and Adjudicator of the universe. All men must submit their cases to His decision. Hence the honors due to God are accorded Him. As the accredited representative of the Father all affronts He receives are affronts to the Father Who sends Him.

<sup>24</sup> Belief is followed by eonian life, or vivification. For such there is no judgment possible, for they receive much more than is right in the gift of life for the eons.

<sup>25</sup> This is vivification, for only those who hear shall live. It is for those who believe. It will be fulfilled in the former resurrection (Un. 20<sup>6</sup>).

<sup>28</sup> This is resurrection, for all hear His voice. Both believers and unbelievers are included. This will be fulfilled at the great white throne judgment (Un. 20<sup>12</sup>).

<sup>31</sup> The usual rendering, "If I bear witness of Myself My witness is not true", *is not true!* The Lord Himself insisted, on another occasion, that His testimony concerning Himself *was* true. "And if I should be testifying concerning Myself, true is My testimony..." (Jn. 8<sup>14</sup>). He was not like other men who need references from others to establish the truth of their own account of themselves. Though John the baptist had come for the very purpose of bearing witness to the Coming One, yet He is not dependent on any human testimony whatever.

The credibility of Christ's account concerning Himself may be tested in two ways, by His acts and by His fulfillment of the Scriptures. John the baptist did no signs or miracles, but He did many, every one of which was an attestation to His messianic claims. The sign under discussion is an example of this. The correspondence between the thirty-eight years of Israel's wanderings after the spying out of the land and the length of time the infirm man had suffered implies that the One Who can bring Israel into the kingdom is present. The very point to which they objected—healing on the Sabbath—should have spoken in His favor, for when Israel is healed it will be the great millennial sabbatism for them.

<sup>39</sup> The Jews prided themselves greatly on being the depository of the oracles of God, and on knowing His will. How could they fail to see in Him the long promised Messiah? Does it not seem strange that He should ask *them* to search the Scriptures. They did search them to disprove His claims (7<sup>52</sup>), but their search was neither accurate nor honest. Instead of finding that Isaiah (91-2) foretold His ministry in Galilee, they were offended at it and used it against Him. They searched and found that Christ should be *born* in Bethlehem, and inferred without reason that that should be His home as well. We, as well as they, need to search and believe accurately, honestly, whole-heartedly, if we are to enjoy the fullness there is in the Scriptures.

<sup>41</sup> Who else could say this? The true servant of God may be known by this mark. Is he seeking to please men or God? Popularity is often a mark of apostasy.

<sup>1-13</sup> Compare Mt. 14<sup>13-21</sup>; Mk. 6<sup>31-44</sup>; Lu. 9<sup>10-17</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This is the fourth sign in this account. The first figured Israel's joy in the coming kingdom (2<sup>1</sup>), the second the healing of the nations (4<sup>46</sup>). The third showed the source of its power (5<sup>2</sup>). The fourth deals with its sustenance. Christ is the Life of the world. He is the true Bread. Man-kind is figured by the five thousand, hungry and far from food. The spiritual famine will become so acute that what might suffice for five is all there is for five thousand. Even the great literal famine of the end time does not approach this (Un. 6<sup>8</sup>). Then food will be eight times its normal price. Here the lack is a thousand fold. What does this signify?

We know that man shall not be living on bread alone, but on every declaration going out through God's mouth (Mt. 4<sup>4</sup>). The coming eon will be a time of plenty (Amos 9<sup>13</sup>), but the life of the world is not sustained by the stomach, but by the head and heart. It comes from the knowledge of God. In the day when Jehovah shall acquire the remnant of His people, the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11<sup>9-11</sup>). Such was the spiritual dearth in the nation when our Lord came the first time that their spiritual sustenance was but a thousandth part of what it should be and what it will be when Messiah comes. The feeding of the multitude is a sign of His presence.

A comparison of this sign with the feeding of the four thousand is startling and instructive (Mt. 15<sup>32-38</sup>; Mk. 8<sup>1-9</sup>). God's provision comes in inverse ratio to human help. When seven loaves and some fishes were used to feed four thousand they gathered seven hampers full of fragments. Surely when only five loaves and two fishes are distributed among five thousand the remnants will be scarce! Not so! For, after feeding the larger number with the smaller provision, there is a larger surplus left. Seven loaves among four thousand left seven hampers. Twelve large panniers remained after the five thousand were fed with only five loaves. And, while the hampers

were full, the panniers were packed, crammed to their utmost. It is evident that, the less there is of human help, the greater is His grace. This principle applies to His dealings with Israel and the world at the coming of Christ. The spiritual plenty of that day will not be approached gradually by natural development, by character building and education, but by a miraculous diffusion and multiplication of the knowledge of God. In its personal application, we may deduce that the possession of natural talents is not essential to God's operations. He prefers a famine, where He can furnish food, to a feast where His hand is not needed and His heart is unheeded. He can use the humblest means and mediums to accomplish His miracles.

<sup>15</sup> Exactly a year later (12<sup>12-16</sup>) He presented Himself to them as their King. This effort to make Him King was premature and arose from the fact that they had not comprehended the significance of the sign. They had not been filled with the knowledge of God, the true sustenance, but with perishable provisions. His kingdom is not food and drink (Ro. 14<sup>17</sup>). It will not be established by human hands, but by divine power. It will not be set up in man's day, but in Jehovah's day. Most significantly He retires into a mountain alone and His disciples descend to the sea. So He later ascended to His heavenly throne, while His followers were dispersed among the nations.

<sup>16-21</sup> Compare Mt. 14<sup>22-33</sup>; Mk. 6<sup>45-52</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> The parallel is continued. Israel is now in darkness, tossed about by the raging sea of the nations, which has been stirred up by the spiritual forces of wickedness who rule the world during the absence of the Messiah. The Jews will be scattered among the nations and hated and persecuted with the utmost cruelty and injustice and inhumanity. It is evident to all who have studied their history that there must be some cause which cannot be seen. Just as the wind lashed the waves of Galilee into a fury and threatened to drown the fearful disciples, so malignant spirit forces are at work, stirring up hatred to the Jews, for they know God's purpose concern-

ing the nation, and resent it, and would prevent it if they could. For this reason men persecute the Jews without reason, and both men and demons carry out the doom they decreed for themselves when they cried that His blood be on them and on their children (Mt. 27<sup>25</sup>).

But when Christ comes He will still the wind and the waves and bring them to their desired haven. He will bind Satan (Un. 20<sup>2</sup>) and judge the nations (Mt. 25<sup>31-46</sup>), and establish the kingdom (Un. 11<sup>15</sup>). Then, and not till then, will His word be fully fulfilled, "It is I, be not afraid!" This is the fifth sign.

<sup>26</sup> The miracle of feeding the five thousand brought the Lord to the highest pitch of His popularity. Up to this time He had not been despised and rejected. The turning point came when He filled them with food, and they were too blind to see its significance. Now that He explains this to them, they stop following Him.

He is not flattered by the large following which flocks after Him, and does not hesitate to offend them by disclosing their own hearts to them. They came to be filled with food and cared nothing for the spiritual sustenance for which it stood. They wanted food and needed faith. Instead of reading this sign and recognizing the Messiah, the Son of God, they actually asked Him for a sign! He had just given them that. They further display their blindness by reminding Him of the manna which God gave their forefathers in the wilderness (Ex. 16; Ps. 78<sup>23-25</sup>). The true Manna was with them and they ask Him for a sign such as Moses gave! He Himself was all that the manna signified.

<sup>28</sup> After being fed gratuitously, and having heard that God would give them the true bread, we would expect them to see that God had not put a price on His presents. But, instead of this, like Jacob their forefather, they try to strike a bargain with God. Blind pride demands that they *do* something. Thus today, though man is taught in all spheres how dependent he is on what God does, the moment he gets into the presence of God, it is "what must I do?" Faith, not deeds, is what God demands.



<sup>34</sup> Eating to supply the demands of physical hunger and thirst is but a symbol of the spiritual satisfaction apart from which life is debased to mere existence. Desires and aspirations for spiritual sustenance can never be finally filled apart from the One Who came down from heaven. It is only as we have every heart hunger satisfied in Him that we cease to feel the pangs of famine. It is only as we find all our spiritual aspirations realized in God's Son that our thirst is assuaged. How slow we are to learn that man shall *not* live by bread alone, but by every *word* that proceeds out of God's mouth! It is because Christ is set forth as the Word in this evangel that so much is made of eating and drinking.

<sup>37</sup> How marvelously serene and sure are God's operations! The Jews may murmur and misunderstand Him, but how could they do otherwise? There was nothing in Him to attract them to Him. He is not moved by their murmurs, but tells them plainly that God alone, in His sovereign pleasure, picks out those who come to Him. They are a gift from the Father to the Son. Such not only desire to come to Him, but cannot fail to reach Him, and when they find Him, He counts them as precious presents from His Father, prized much for themselves but most for the Giver. Nothing can possibly arise to estrange Him from them. They are not only His for life, but He will rob death itself to restore them to Him in the resurrection.

<sup>40</sup> That the life here bestowed on the believer is not *everlasting* is clear from the context, for it is not continuous, but waits until the resurrection. Those who received this life died. Their life lasted only a few years. But they will be raised to live for the eons. The life is eonian, not everlasting.

<sup>41</sup> The great truth which begins and pervades John's account, that the Lord was the Logos, the spiritual reality of which the manna was only a type. The manna in the wilderness could only satisfy their temporal, bodily hunger, whereas His words would bring them spiritual satisfaction at all times and all places.

<sup>45</sup> See Isa. 54<sup>13</sup>; Jer. 31<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> This passage should be studied carefully in order to correct the erroneous impression that believers have "eternal" or "everlasting" life. Eternal may be applied only to that which had no beginning and will have no end. No one but God has eternal life. Everlasting should be used only of that which continues without intermission endlessly. Not a single one of the Lord's personal followers is alive today. None of them received "everlasting" life. They are dead. If everlasting life permits of interruption by death now, why not in the resurrection also? All of these expressions denote definite periods of time, measured by eons, or ages. Eonian life begins in the next eon.

Now it is evident that the Lord had no thought of a life lasting for ever. In that case how could He be *raising* him in the last day? The life here spoken of was to be bestowed in resurrection. There could be no resurrection apart from a previous death. In short, our Lord spoke in such a way that we are sure that "everlasting" life, so-called, does not commence until He calls His own from the grave.

As this life has a definite beginning, it also has an end. But as the end does not come until death is abolished, it changes from "eonian" life into actual never-ending life. This will be the portion of all. It is not the special privilege of the believer. The peculiar kind of life promised to faith begins at Christ's presence, when those who are His will be vivified, and continues through the last two eons, embracing the millennium and the succeeding eon in the new earth, until the eons end, and the last enemy, death, is abolished. Hence the life received in vivification is actually "everlasting," though never so called in the Word of God.

<sup>56</sup> The term "masticate" is not the usual word for "eat", and presents some difficulty in translation, for English usage prefers the broader term "eat" in such passages as this. It means to *chew*, *gnaw*, hence suggests the only process in digestion which is voluntary. It represents the actual appropriation of the life of Christ as our own.

<sup>56</sup> Just as Nicodemus failed to see the figure when our Lord spoke to him about the new birth, so now His followers fail to understand when He speaks of feeding on His flesh and blood. There is a subtle irony here, for their religion was primarily a fleshly one. Their title to blessing from Messiah was based entirely on their blood relationship to Him. In that case, if He is to give Himself to them, He must give His physical flesh and actual blood. They can see how preposterous such an idea is, but do not discern how it cuts from beneath them the whole foundation of blessing through a physical channel. They should have seen that life divine is not transmitted by flesh but by spirit. Not material forms, but spiritual realities count with a God Who is spirit. His thoughts, as conveyed to them by the Lord's declarations, are the vital principle from which all life and felicity flow.

<sup>70</sup> Peter and the rest of the apostles probably had the impression that they had chosen Christ, and in this crisis, they seem to be confirming their choice of Him. With this background, how strange to hear Him reverse their thoughts and emphatically affirm His choice of them! On another occasion He asserted that they had not chosen Him. He reserves the right to choose His own. A realization of this principle gives strength and stability to vacillating mortals, who look within and find no soundness, and look without on turmoil and strife, and fear for the future of which they know nothing. To be chosen by One Who has power to keep and knows all gives satisfaction and rest. It is infinitely more precious to be His choice than to have the questionable satisfaction of feeling that we were free to choose Him. If we were, we would have chosen another. There is none that seeketh after God.

<sup>70</sup> Judas was one of "the elect". The Lord "elected" or chose him while fully aware of his future. It was not Judas who chose Christ and then went back on Him. Indeed, he greatly regretted his action and publicly repudiated it. This Peter did not do. He did not betray his Lord until Satan entered into him.

<sup>2</sup> There were seven sacred festivals in Israel: the Passover, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Blowing of Trumpets, Day of Propitiation, Tabernacles, and Ingathering. The latter two were both held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, so that both are referred to here as "Tabernacles". These festivals were typical of God's great dealings with His beloved people Israel. The Passover sets before us the death of God's Lamb. Hence Christ could not be killed at the festival of Tabernacles, for it was not the proper time. Firstfruits typifies His resurrection. Pentecost, fifty days afterward, foreshadowed the work so called in the book of Acts. Blowing of Trumpets and the Day of Propitiation will have their antitypes in the dread judgment period before the thousand years. Tabernacles and Ingathering are the happy harvest festivals, picturing their fullness of blessing in the millennial kingdom. See Lev. 23; Nu. 28<sup>16</sup>; 29; Deut. 16; Neh. 8<sup>13-18</sup>; Zech. 14<sup>16-19</sup>.

This was one of the three times in each year that all the males in Israel were required to appear in the temple in Jerusalem. They were to bring a gift on each occasion. This suggests the three great gifts of God for Israel. At the festival of unleavened bread He gave Himself as the Passover Lamb. At the festival of Pentecost He gave the holy Spirit. At the future festival of Tabernacles He will give them the bountiful harvest of His millennial reign. See Deut. 16<sup>16, 19</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> With the foregoing in view, the action of our Lord is full of meaning. It was not the Passover, hence He could not go up openly and invite death. The time for that had not yet been fulfilled. Still, in obedience to the law, and as a private Israelite, He must go, for in Him must both the letter and the spirit of the law be fulfilled.

It is significant that, while we often read of the Passover, only this once is the festival of Tabernacles brought before us, and now He refuses to go. There is no true Tabernacle festival for Israel until after the true Passover has been slain and all the other feasts have had their fulfillment. In all His acts He was consciously in line with God's revelation.

<sup>16</sup> Here we have the test of a true teacher. The greatest of all Teachers could easily have formulated a philosophy of His own before which all the wisdom of the ages would sink into insignificance. He could have eclipsed Socrates and Plato, discounted Confucius, silenced all the sages. Yet He did not originate a single doctrine, formulate a single principle, invent a single saying of His own. Though the embodiment of truth, He did not claim to be its source, but only its channel.

"My teaching is not Mine, but His Who sends Me" is the disclaimer of the only One Who ever was qualified to teach the truth. It is the highest achievement of the truth seeker to discover that there is no truth outside of God, and originality is inevitably false unless it conforms with truth already immanent in God—which destroys its originality. Truth is one. Its source is God. Its expression is found in Him Who is the Word of God. Happy is the teacher who distrusts his own thoughts, and discards his own theories, and seeks to submerge his own personality by a constant and continuous contact with the living oracles of God! "My teaching is not Mine" will not be a reluctant, humiliating admission, but an exultant and eager desire to give God the glory for truth beyond our powers of apprehension and utterly foreign to our native faculties.

<sup>19</sup> Sinning men are the same today as ever. The truth is always the signal for strife. This is especially so among those who consider themselves the sole depository of truth. We need not suppose that these Jews had a bad conscience in seeking to kill One Who seemed to be undermining their religion. We know that Saul of Tarsus opposed Him conscientiously. So today, Christendom still crucifies the truth, while loud in its professions of loyalty to the Bible. Indeed, so thoroughly has error saturated the atmosphere that it is practically impossible for any one to view the truth except through the haze of error with which each is surrounded. Only continual contact with God's Word will avail us. Only a close acquaintance with the facts of the originals will save us from the prevailing apostasy.

<sup>28</sup> Perhaps nowhere is the utter futility of human efforts to frustrate God's plans so evident as in this scene. It was God's definite counsel that they should slay Him. This they were all too eager to do. But the feast of Tabernacles was not the fit time for His sacrifice. So He boldly enters the sanctuary, the stronghold of His enemies. The Pharisees send deputies to arrest Him, but they simply do not do it, being restrained by an irresistible reluctance which they could not account for themselves. Like Daniel, He was in the lions' den, but God had shut the lions' mouths.

God uses human wrath for His own ends and restrains its activities to accord with His purpose. He has all his enemies on a leash beyond which they cannot range. Satan himself is limited, and allowed to do only that which will eventuate in good. So it proved in the case of Job, and who can doubt that his case was typical?

<sup>33</sup> When the deputies come to arrest Him, He is not disturbed, but calmly gives an outline of what will happen to Him in the future. It was still six months until the Passover, and He knew they could not arrest Him till then. So He says "Still a little time am I with you." Nor does He acknowledge that they will be successful in taking Him then, for it is His permission, not their power, that accomplishes it. So He simply says "and I am going away to Him Who sends Me."

<sup>34</sup> The statement "where I am, there *you* cannot be coming" cannot be taken as their everlasting reprobation, for He uses the very same words to His disciples on a later occasion (13<sup>33</sup>). Indeed, the form of the verb is the present active "be coming", not the indefinite "come". Even the unbeliever enters the presence of Christ in the resurrection of judgment.

<sup>35</sup> The Jews, in our Lord's day, were scattered all over the known earth, but were especially numerous in Egypt. Alexandria rivalled Jerusalem as a center of Jewry, but its culture was strongly Greek.

<sup>37</sup> This last day concluded the cycle of yearly festivals and was a fitting time to foretell the fullness of spiritual blessing which it prefigured.

<sup>41</sup> Ever since the days of Moses the nation of Israel has been waiting for the Prophet Who was to be like him, and lead the nation out of worse than Egyptian bondage into the heritage of the kingdom. Those who knew Him for that promised Prophet little realized that, as Moses was rejected by his brethren when he first came to deliver them, so the great Antitype of Moses must also be rejected by them.

A prophet, in the Scriptures, is not primarily one who predicts the future, but one who has a message from God. It is a well-nigh universal rule that God's message and its bearer must first be refused. Indeed, the "Prophet like Moses" must follow the footsteps of the type, and, in his first efforts to save His people He must be opposed by the people themselves. This shows us that we must not lay too much stress on human "responsibility" (a term unknown to the Scriptures), for, if the Jews had received the Lord, He would not have been the true Prophet. They were obliged to reject Him!

<sup>41</sup> "Galilee of the nations" and especially the town of Nazareth, were held in contempt by pious Jews. The term "Nazarene" is a term of reproach, never used by His friends. From it could come no Christ. Messiah must be born in Bethlehem, the city of King David, and as they should have known, the birthplace of his greater Son. Let us never be guilty of calling Him a Nazarene, and thus class ourselves with His worst enemies and murderers.

<sup>46</sup> Throughout this account it is the incarnate Word which is before us. The testimony of the deputies is a notable tribute to the supernal nature of that which came from His lips. How lame their excuse must have seemed to the hard-hearted Pharisees! Why do they not arrest Him? Why do they not do the duty assigned them? "No man ever speaks thus!" Not His superb looks, or august appearance, but His utterances arrest them, and all power to perform their part vanishes.

<sup>50</sup> Nicodemus, the half-hearted disciple, is afraid to champion His cause boldly, so he seeks to hinder them in their lawless act. But such a weak supporter is soon silenced, and by the very law to which he appealed.

<sup>53-11</sup> As this passage is not contained in any of the three manuscripts on which the CONCORDANT VERSION is based, it was not included in our Greek text. Two leaves of Alexandrinus are lost at this point, but a careful calculation of the number of lines shows that the lost leaves did not contain this story. Besides, the evidence of ancient versions and other manuscripts is so much against its retention in the text that no editor gives it a place, unless within brackets.

Nevertheless, the story is so fully in harmony with the grace of Christ that we question whether it could have any other source. Hence we are constrained to class it among the many things which He did of which there is no inspired record.

The Greek text of John 7:53-8:11, together with an English sublinear, is available from the publishers on request. A literal translation follows:

[And they went each to his home.

Yet Jesus went to the mount of Olives.

Now early He again came along into the sanctuary, and the entire people came to Him. And, being seated, He taught them. Now the scribes and Pharisees are leading a woman who has been overtaken in adultery, and, standing her in the midst, they are saying to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been overtaken and detected committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses directs us that such are to be stoned. You then, what are you saying?" Now this they said to try Him, that they may have something to accuse Him of.

Now Jesus, stooping down, wrote down something with a finger in the earth. Now as they persisted asking Him, He unbends and said to them, "Let the sinless one of you first cast a stone at her. And, again stooping down, He wrote in the earth. Now those hearing it came out one by one, beginning with the elders, to the last.

And Jesus was left alone, the woman also being in the midst. Now, unbending, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Does no one condemn you?" Now she said, "No one, Lord!" Now Jesus said, "Neither am I condemning you! Go! From now on by no means any longer be sinning."]

12-29 Nothing would so swiftly and surely prove the undoing of an impostor as the claim that he always pleases God. Of all living, only One has been able to stand such a severe test. In the mouth of any one else the claim to perfect obedience would sound preposterous. The very assumption itself would be displeasing to God and derided by men. It would be a proof of spiritual pride. But in His mouth it was perfectly natural. Instead of taking exception to it they seemed struck by the fact and what it involved, and, as a result, believed on Him.

This is one of the glories of Christ which makes Him a solitary figure in the annals of mankind. There have been philosophers and good men, but the best have not been flawless. Indeed, they do not dare to claim absolute perfection. Yet we see this apparently humble peasant of Palestine challenging a hostile world to discover in His acts a single word or work which does not glorify God and benefit man. Whoever should dare to criticize Him condemns himself.

44 All sin, in the Scriptures, seems to be traced back to the Adversary or Satan. Adam sinned at his suggestion. He is the father of all that is false. Being a creature of God, it has been a perplexing problem to account for him without incriminating God Himself. It is usual to insist that he was created perfect and, at a later stage, fell into sin. But this is no real relief. The impulse to sin, in that case, came from without instead of within, and it, in turn, demands an explanation. The Adversary sinned from the beginning. He was a murderer from the beginning. The Scriptures plainly teach that he was created an Adversary and a Satan.

The solution of the ultimate source of sin lies in its nature. Sin is essentially a mistake. It means to miss the mark, to fall short of a given standard. With this definition in mind, it is easy to see how God could create a creature to sin, if that were necessary to the fulfillment of His purpose. He would not be making any mistake in doing this. He would not sin. On the contrary, if He created Satan perfect, and had no intention or desire that he

should sin, then God did make a mistake. The sinfulness of Satan is the strongest evidence of the sinlessness of God.

The essence of God is love. It demands exercise. God must be made known. He will be a Saviour; His purpose demands the presence of sin. He makes a medium—the Adversary—to inject the virus into creation. He rescues His creatures and gains their affection. He banishes sin. Sin is His servant. He will justify all sin when He has made it a means of bringing His creatures into heart intimacy with Himself.

46 What a challenge to the self-righteous Jews! They claimed a sinless God for a father, yet hated His sinless Son. Without any pretentious effort whatever, He calmly went His way without making a single misstep!

57 The Jews seemed to be utterly unconscious of the great spiritual truths connected with Abraham's family. They claimed physical descent from him, without realizing that Ishmael had the same right. He was the son of Abram's flesh—and unbelief. They were Ishmaelites, slaves of sin in spite of their noble father. They knew nothing of the faith of Abraham which produced Isaac, after the flesh was as good as dead. They failed to see the significance of Abraham's harsh measures with Ishmael. Were he to visit them he would cast them out, just as he had the slave girl Hagar and her son.

58 The Word was in the beginning with God, long before Abraham was born. All came into being through it, and apart from it not even one thing came into being, including Abraham himself. Such was His glory before He became flesh. Then no human could see Him and live (Ex. 33<sup>20</sup>). It was not until "the last of these days" that God spoke in His Son (Hebrews 1<sup>2</sup>), that is, after He had emptied Himself to be in the likeness of humanity (Phil. 2<sup>7</sup>). In those days He used messengers of inferior rank in communicating with mankind. Two of these visited Abraham just before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. The Jews could not understand how One so glorious could condescend to take human form.

<sup>1</sup> The sixth sign brings before us Israel's blindness, and the opening of their eyes when they recognize Him as the One Whom God has commissioned, at His return. It anticipates the crisis of His ministry, which was fast approaching, when He quoted the words of Isaiah, "He hath blinded their eyes, . . . that they should not see with their eyes . . ." (12<sup>40</sup>). The interest is centered in two distinct thoughts, the reason for his blindness, and the means of its removal.

Why was this man born blind? The Jews took it for granted, as many do today, that all evil comes from sin, and that every one is responsible for his own condition. This is absolutely false. Evil and sin are not outside of God's plan. They are essential to the highest happiness of the creature and the greatest glory of the Creator. This man's case was a concrete example. His healing was not because he was blind, but he was blind in order that he might recover sight, and thus God's acts may be manifested and God Himself may become known. This is true of all evil and all sin. God has introduced it into the world in order that He may display His attributes in coping with it and in removing it when its mission has been accomplished. The experience of evil and sin is transient; the memory of it will never pass away, but will always remain as the essential background apart from which God's goodness and grace never could be revealed. God's heart would always remain hidden apart from evil and sin.

If this man's blindness had never been removed it would have revealed God's impotence and hate. So, if evil and sin are eternal, they will throw their darkest shadow upon the character and feelings of God, and thus defeat the very object for which they exist. But they are not eternal. Sin will be repudiated at the conclusion of the eons (Heb.9<sup>26</sup>). Only in this way can the works of God be manifested. It is useless for us to blame our parents for our sin, for they also inherited it. Even Adam could point to Eve and Eve to the serpent. We should rather thank God for it, and rejoice in the glory that it brings to God.

<sup>4</sup> Adam in innocence knew no good. He could not appreciate what God had done for him. The only way he could know of good was to eat of the tree, which, however, also gave the knowledge of evil. The knowledge of good and of evil are inseparable.

The blind man represents Israel. Why were they blind? Paul tells us in the eleventh of Romans. God locks all up together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all (Ro.11<sup>32</sup>). Because they were blinded they refused their Messiah and thus made it possible for God to pour out the riches of His grace on the nations. Their blindness makes it possible for Him to save them with a great salvation when He once again takes them to Himself, and thus He engages their affections. Those who see, revile Him. The blind man worships Him.

<sup>6</sup> Before healing the blind man He increases his blindness by covering his eyes with mud. What does this mean? It corresponds with His treatment of Israel. He finds the nation blind, but instead of healing them then, He fulfills the saying of Isaiah, "He has blinded their eyes and callouses their heart, lest they may be perceiving with their eyes, and should be apprehending with their heart and turn about, and I should be healing them" (12<sup>40</sup>). Siloam means "commissioned". He continually referred to Himself as the One Whom God had sent. When the Lord appears in glory, then they will wash in Siloam and see Him Who has been commissioned by God for their blessing. The blind man's spiritual recovery corresponded to his physical healing, for he said "Except this Man were from God, He could not be doing anything" (33).

<sup>13</sup> The Pharisees were the blindest of the blind. Though the most zealous and religious of all the Jewish sects, their self-confidence and hypocrisy made them the bitterest enemies of Christ and the truth. They claimed to be the spiritual leaders of the nation, hence receive the greater judgment. They boasted that they were not blind like the rest so that their sin remained. The disciples were confident that either the blind man or his parents had sinned; the Lord shows them that

the Pharisees are the real sinners. This they soon demonstrate by their attempt to prove that His gracious act was not in accord with God's holy law. They had corrupted the law by their tradition.

<sup>16</sup> It is notable how many of our Lord's recorded signs were done on the sabbath. Doubtless this indicates the fact that their antitype is to be found in the sabbatism which comes at His epiphany. When man ceases work, then is the time for God to act. Man's struggles hinder His operations and obscure the glory which invests His deeds. How blind the Pharisees were to this great truth is apparent from the fact that some of them actually insisted that the Lord Himself was the sinner! How far astray are all of man's perceptions! The disciples supposed it must be the blind man or his parents, the Pharisees fasten guilt on the Lord, but only He sees the truth, that the religious, self-righteous Pharisees are blind sinners above all the rest.

<sup>24</sup> The double testimony given to the Pharisees may be a premonition of the second witness to the truth which was given to the nation, as recorded in the book of Acts. There also they give Moses and the law a place above our Lord and His apostles, who were "unlettered and plain men" (Acts 4:13), not fit to teach scholars like themselves! But what the blind man lacked in scholarship he more than made up in common sense and spiritual discernment. He is amazed at their ignorance!

<sup>34</sup> "They cast him out." This was most dreaded among the Jews, for it meant social as well as religious ostracism. How painful it is, even now, to be cast out of religious organizations, for it has all the semblance of being cast off by God Himself. But today, even as it was then, it usually is a token of divine favor such as the Philipians enjoyed (Phil. 1:29), and leads to a more intimate and precious acquaintance with our Saviour. Indeed, we should deem it an exalted privilege to suffer for and with Christ and His truth. There is no higher token of His regard or surer way to His reward than association with Him in His rejection.

<sup>38</sup> Salvation, whether from physical or spiritual blindness, or lameness or any disability, is not an end in itself. It is largely futile if it fails to lead to a close acquaintance with God through His Christ. His grace captivates our hearts. The harsh measures of men only show His love in a better light. So, when the man who had been blind was cast out he was immediately taken in and was introduced to the One Who had restored his sight. Nor is this all. Once he knows Him, his heart goes out in adoration, and God gets the worship He craves. This is the true end and consummation of all evil and all blessing. How blessed that he had been born blind! What a pity that the Pharisees had not also been blind! Yet when they are recovered from their spiritual blindness, they also will bow their hearts and worship the One Who opens their blind eyes.

<sup>1</sup> The Eastern sheepfold was an enclosure surrounded by a wall of rough jagged stones, skilfully piled, without mortar, about three feet wide at the base, tapering to one foot at the top, and from four to eight feet high. A narrow opening in this wall formed the entrance. There was no movable gate or door, but the shepherd blocked up the entrance at night with his body and so was himself the door. To be safe from wild beasts at night the sheep must come in between his outstretched limbs.

The sheep runs were usually in wild, unfrequented spots, infested by bold Bedouin robbers and by wild beasts, such as the jackal, the hyena, the bear, the leopard, and the lion. David battled with a lion and a bear while he kept the sheep of his father (1 Sa. 17:36). For this purpose the shepherd had a stout oak club (A. V. "rod") about two feet long, with a large knob on one end studded with heavy iron nails. The other end had a noose for his wrist to help him hold it, or for fastening to his leather girdle when not in use. The shepherd had this club and a crook (rod and staff), one for the sheep's enemies, the other for the sheep themselves. With one he led them, with the other he defended them, even at the risk of his life.

The Psalmist insists that "We (Israel) are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand" (Psa. 95<sup>7</sup>. See also Ps. 74<sup>1</sup>; 77<sup>20</sup>; 78<sup>52, 70</sup>; 79<sup>13</sup>; 80<sup>1</sup>). Isaiah foretells the time when He shall feed His flock as a Shepherd (Isa. 40<sup>11</sup>). Jeremiah pronounces a woe on the spiritual shepherds in Israel and predicts their return out of the countries whither He had driven them (Jer. 23<sup>1-4</sup>). Ezekiel speaks at length of the nation under this figure (Eze. 34<sup>1-24</sup>). Now our Lord takes up the same metaphor and announces Himself as the true Shepherd of Israel.

This figure is carried through the Circumcision epistles. Peter is especially commissioned to feed His sheep (21<sup>16</sup>) and exhorts his readers to do the same. This figure is never used of the nations in the present economy of grace, except in the faded metaphor "pastors". It is a figure peculiarly adapted to the kingdom, for the true King is a shepherd, as David was. Instead of His people guarding and gorging Him, He feeds and defends them. Our translators have actually rendered the verb "rule" on four occasions (Mt. 26; Un. 22<sup>7</sup>; 12<sup>25</sup>; 19<sup>15</sup>). The nations, as such, are figured by wild beasts, such as a lion, a leopard, or a bear. Our relation to Christ is far more intimate than even the tender Eastern shepherd toward His sheep, for He is our Head, and we are members of His body. The actual body of Christ is the only living form from earth in the heavens and it is the picture of our celestial place and dignity, as well as our vital contact with our Head.

<sup>3</sup> John the baptist was the door keeper who opened the door to the true Shepherd. Many another has come claiming to be Israel's shepherd, but they did not come in God's appointed way.

<sup>4</sup> The Eastern shepherd never drives his sheep. He calls them. They will not follow a strange voice.

<sup>11</sup> In His humiliation He was the ideal Shepherd defending His sheep. In His exaltation He is the great Shepherd, feeding them (Heb. 13<sup>20</sup>).

<sup>16</sup> The dispersion, outside the land, was reached by Peter (1 Pet. 1<sup>1</sup>), in his two epistles.

<sup>22</sup> The Dedications must refer to the rededication of the temple, after three years' profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes, in the days of Judas Maccabeus, for Solomon's temple was dedicated in the seventh month, which was about the autumnal equinox, Zerubbabel's temple was dedicated in the twelfth month, the beginning of spring, but Judas Maccabeus held his dedication for eight days, beginning on the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month—in the midst of winter. Besides, neither Solomon nor Zerubbabel made it an annual celebration. Josephus tells about it in his Antiquities, book XII, chapter 7. He takes his account from the first book of Maccabees, IV, 36-59, and the second book, X, 5-8.

This festival was not of divine appointment, and mars the great series of seven festivals which are a prophetic forecast of Israel's history. These are in two groups, one of which has been fulfilled, and one still future. The Passover, Unleavened, Firstfruit, and Pentecost are history now. Trumpets, Propitiation, and Tabernacles will be fulfilled when Israel is again in God's reckoning. After the millennium, which is the antitype of Tabernacles, there will not be a rededication of the temple. On the contrary, the temple and its worship will be superseded by reconciliation where no ritual is needed.

The Dedications was a sentimental, human anniversary, which never would have been instituted had the people not been blind to the marvelous meaning of Jehovah's perfect series of festivals. It is usually called the feast of Lights. Such it was to the blind man! But to the Jews as a nation, this light—human amendment of the law and the ritual—was darkness, and how great was their darkness! If our faith is in man and his works, how futile it is!

The many church festivals of today are like the Dedications, without foundation in truth, however they may appeal to religious sentiment. God's festivals were filled with spiritual significance and force, which now demands the non-observance of days and set seasons.



<sup>34</sup> The term "gods" is translated "judges" in Ex. 21<sup>6</sup>; 22<sup>8,9,9</sup>, where it refers to men. But our Lord does not appeal to this, but to Psalm 82<sup>6</sup> where the context clearly excludes men. The mighty spiritual powers of the past who overrule the affairs of mankind are called sons by God Himself. Even Satan is called a son of God (Job 1<sup>6</sup>). He is called the god of this eon (2 Co. 4<sup>4</sup>). Now if God said to these subjectors, "Gods are you," notwithstanding the fact that they failed to right the wrongs of earth, how much rather shall He have called Him God Who shall dispossess them? To Him God says (Psa. 82<sup>8</sup>):

Rise, O God! Judge the earth,  
For Thou shalt be allotted all nations.

He had been undoing the deeds of these sons of God and doing all that was foretold of Him before their very eyes. And yet they thought they were not blind!

1 The rousing of Lazarus from among the dead is the seventh and last sign in John's account. Each succeeding sign finds the nation on a lower level. At the marriage feast of Cana they lacked the joy and gladness of the kingdom; the infirm man at Bethesda's pool lacked power; the disciples on the sea, tossed by the tempest, lacked peace; the blind man lacked sight; but Lazarus lacked life. The apostasy of the nation had developed to such a degree that death was the fittest symbol to describe them.

This is the condition of Israel in the latter days, as the prophet Ezekiel saw them in the valley of dry bones (Eze. 37<sup>3</sup>). The question is asked, "Shall these bones live?" And the bones are roused from death, and enter the land of Israel.

4 The cause of Lazarus' infirmity was not sin, as in the case of the man at Bethesda. It was the necessary prelude to the manifestation of His glory. Indeed, the Lord deliberately delayed His departure in order that he should die. So He deals with Israel. Their great cry is "Till when?" (Isa. 61<sup>1</sup>). Their restoration to life is postponed until they are beyond all hope, until their resurrection, spiritually as well as physically, is manifestly the work of the Lord.

9 The day, in the East, begins with sunrise and ends with sunset. It is always divided into twelve hours. In summer these are longer than in winter. As the sun is nearly always shining any one can tell the time of day by merely glancing at his shadow.

11 Repose is the favorite figure of death in the Scriptures. Only four times is it used of the actual repose of sleep (Mt. 27<sup>52</sup>; 28<sup>13</sup>; Lu. 22<sup>45</sup>; Ac. 12<sup>6</sup>). Fourteen times is it found in its figurative sense (Jn. 11<sup>11,12</sup>; Ac. 7<sup>60</sup>; 13<sup>36</sup>; 1 Co. 7<sup>39</sup>; 11<sup>30</sup>; 15<sup>6,18,20,51</sup>; 1 Th. 4<sup>13,14,15</sup>; 2 Pt. 3<sup>4</sup>). It is used of both believers and unbelievers (1 Co. 7<sup>39</sup>). It likens death to that beneficial aspect of sleep which restores us to physical vigor and vitality. Death itself is an enemy, so we must look to the resurrection as the true inspiration for this figure. This is beautifully pictured in the case of Lazarus. Had he actually found repose in sleep he would doubtless have recovered. But his death amounted to no more than this after the Lord has restored his life by resurrection.

Of his experience in death we are told nothing, for this figure precludes the thought. Normal sleep is itself without sensation, and "the repose of sleep" is unbroken oblivion until the awakening.

15 We know that the Lord was fond of Lazarus (<sup>3</sup>). How strange, then, to hear Him say "Lazarus died. And I am *rejoicing* . . .!" We might have said, "I am *sorrowing*." It is our privilege, also, to look about us on all the distress and disaster and death and rejoice, not in the calamities themselves, but in the glory which will accrue to God when He deals with them. It is only as we see God's beneficent purpose in our trials that we can really endure them with joyfulness.

17 The four days may suggest the time during which the nation lies lifeless, before the resurrection of the day of the Lord. First they were under the law, and this dealt out death. Then came the personal ministry of Messiah which showed them to be but a corrupt corpse. The rejection of the apostolic testimony in the Acts leaves them still worse. They become most offensive in the day of wrath.

<sup>25</sup> The striking phrase "and the Life" is the clue to the great truth here unfolded by our Lord. To His assertion that "Your brother will be rising" Martha assents, for she knew that all would rise "at the last day". But this falls far short of the truth. There are two resurrections. One He called "the resurrection of life," the other "the resurrection of judgment" (5<sup>29</sup>). As resurrection necessarily implies life, it will be seen that the word "life" is used in an intensified sense. The "resurrection of life" imparts eonian life, while the resurrection of judgment leads to eonian death.

Our Lord is seeking to comfort Martha by that best of all consolations, the vivification of all His own at His presence, long before "the last day," at the very commencement of the millennial eon. Seventy-five days after His glorious epiphany He will rouse the saints in Israel and commence their righteous reign over the earth. "Happy and holy is he who is having part in the former resurrection: over these the second death has no jurisdiction, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will be reigning with Him the thousand years" (Un.20<sup>6</sup>).

The saints of this present economy of transcendent grace will be given life even before this, as explained in 1 Th.4 13-18; 1 Co. 15<sup>51-55</sup>; Eph. 1<sup>12</sup>; Phil. 3<sup>20</sup>. The presence, or *parousia*, of Christ spreads over a period of time, in which all His own are called out of death to eonian life.

Only three resurrections lead to immortality. First, that of Christ Himself, second, that at His future "presence" including those who are His, and, lastly, all mankind, at the consummation, when all will be made alive (1 Co. 15<sup>22-28</sup>). This great truth is the only real comfort in the presence of bereavement. Christ never stood in the presence of death without vanquishing it. He is the Life! Since this life beyond the reach of death is imparted only on these three occasions, it follows that every other resurrection is not a "resurrection of life". Those raised in the past and those at the great white throne are still subject to death. They are not made immortal until the consummation, when death is abolished, and life is the portion of all.

<sup>35</sup> What tender compassion His tears reveal! He could deliberately remain away so that Lazarus should die and by his death prepare for the revelation of God's glory in his resurrection. He could comfort the sisters with the great truth that He is the Life. But with Him truth was not the stern, heartless dogma that overrides all natural feelings and condemns all sorrow as unbelief. His heart was moved with pity and compassion and He stops to mingle His tears with theirs ere He wipes them away by His marvelous miracle. So we, too, are not charged by the apostle to refrain from all sorrow as sinful, but not to sorrow as others who have no blessed expectation to anticipate (1 Th. 4<sup>13</sup>).

We have here a touching example of the experience recorded by the apostle Paul: "as sorrowing, yet ever rejoicing" (2 Co.6<sup>10</sup>). Or, in our Lord's case, we should reverse it, for He rejoiced first of all, yet felt for His friends who had not His faith. It is a mistake to suppose that confidence in the ultimate benefits of sorrow will put us out of sympathy with it. It is intended to stir our emotions. It is designed to touch us to tears. Otherwise, it would fail to accomplish the object for which it exists. Our sorrows and heartaches are none the less real because we know their glorious outcome. All their ultimate value lies in their contrast with the tearless felicity for which they are a preparation.

<sup>39</sup> Of the three who were raised from the dead by our Lord, Jairus' daughter had scarcely started to go to corruption (Mk. 5<sup>35-42</sup>), the widow of Nain's son was on the way to his burial (Lu. 7<sup>11-16</sup>), but Lazarus had been dead long enough to be offensive to smell and to sight. No wonder Martha objected. Who wishes to see the gruesome spectacle of a corrupting corpse? How their hearts must have marveled at His words "you should be seeing *the glory of God.*"

The glory of God in such ghastly association! Yet such is the only place its full effulgence can be manifested. This is one of many examples which are given us in the Scriptures, which illustrate the essential and beneficial function of evil in the universe. It reveals God. All those deepest and most

precious excellences which spring from love would be buried within His breast, unknown and unappreciated, if evil did not force it to the front. If Lazarus had not died, we would not have known of Christ's compassion and His tears. Even Mary had not learned this lesson yet, though she had sat at His feet and listened to His teachings. His heart was most touched by her complaint "Lord, if Thou wert here, my brother would not have died!" Did she know that He had delayed His coming?

It is the great problem that baffles men today put into a simple simile. Why does God allow evil? Why does He not hasten to remove it? All that is needed is His presence. But He delays. His delay confirms the great truth that evil as well as good is from Him (Is.45<sup>7</sup>). It is the necessary foil for the display of His glory. It is the essential ingredient of future bliss. Good cannot be known and appreciated except in the presence of evil. It needs a dead, loathsome, fetid corpse to flash forth the effulgent love of God.

<sup>49</sup> The high priest's prophecy is another clear indication of the overruling and sovereign power of God. His enemies fulfill His will even when they are most opposed to His plans and purpose, as they see it. The very arrogance of the chief priest reacts on himself. Not only the Sanhedrin, whom he accused of crass ignorance, but he also was unaware of the great truth which his lips uttered. How pitiable is man's "free will" in the hands of such a God! Man is utterly at the mercy of his heredity and environment, and these are beyond his control. God alone decides the factors of which our lives are composed and hence He is the final Arbiter of our deeds and destiny. Once we know Him we would not have it otherwise.

<sup>53</sup> How vivid are the contrasts in this account! Christ has proclaimed Himself as the Life, both by word and by deed. *From that day, then, they plan that they may kill Him.* They deliberately decide to murder the One Who not only has life in Himself, but Who is to give life to all mankind!

<sup>55</sup> "The Lord's Passover" (Ex.12<sup>27</sup>) has become "the Passover of the Jews"! The Lamb was not there.

<sup>1-8</sup> Compare Mt.26<sup>1-13</sup>; Mk.14<sup>8-9</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> We are now treated to a beautifully symbolic picture of the three-fold phase of resurrection life. The saints shall serve Him as Martha did. They shall share with Him, as Lazarus. They shall worship Him, like Mary. In these degenerate days we have forgotten that there is need of *one* thing, and that is not service or sacrifice, but of sitting at the feet of our Lord and hearing His Word. Service has its place, but it is not, as Martha thought, the great need. God can get servants. He has many much more powerful than we are. He can make the very elements do His bidding. He is looking for worship, and true worship comes only from the heart attuned to His grace. Martha served, as she always did, though she had learned not to be worried by its details. Mary no longer *sits* at His feet but *worships* there, and "wastes" a woman's prized possession on them, and wipes them with a woman's glory. It is the most exalted act of any of His disciples. Like us, they were usually after blessing for *themselves*, instead of seeking to give Him what His heart craves. It is not what we get but what we give to God that fulfills the purpose for which He formed and favored us. Let us become so enamored of His excellences that we, too, shall *waste* our most precious possessions in worship at His feet. Nothing is too good for Him! Nothing is lost that serves to express our adoration, nothing is wasted that conveys our love.

But worshipful response is impossible apart from the preparation of heart which comes only to those who search the treasures of His Word. The discoveries of His wisdom and grace alone can constrain the heart to the impulsive and uncalculated displays of lavish affection which are His delight. One heart, responding to His love, is better than all the service and ceremony of a myriad of slaves driven by fear or favor.

<sup>3</sup> The term "ointment" is now used especially for fatty or fixed oils, of heavy consistency, but the perfumes used in the Orient are essential oils, or attars. This seems the only satisfactory English term for the precious perfume used by Mary.

<sup>7</sup> While facing the terrible ordeal of death our Lord found no fellowship with His disciples in the sorrows before Him. Like Peter, they could not entertain such a thought. But it seems that Mary alone, of all His friends, had learned to believe His words. She looked forward to His death and the tomb. Is it any wonder that she is first at the tomb on the resurrection morning and first to speak to the risen Christ?

<sup>12-19</sup> Compare Mt. 21:4-11; Mk. 11:7-19; Lu. 19:35-40.

<sup>13</sup> See Ps. 118<sup>25,26</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> See Zech. 9<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the surest index of the spiritual state and experience of believers is the way in which they use the name and titles of our Lord. The prevalent use of His personal name is shocking to the spiritual ear. Only His enemies and those unacquainted with Him, as these Greeks, addressed Him or spoke of Him familiarly by the name given Him at His birth. Those who knew Him and had learned to love Him always gave Him a title suited to the occasion. He was Teacher to His disciples, Adept, or Doctor, in reference to His wisdom, Lord or Master to His slaves, and Christ or Messiah to His loyal subjects. To them He was Jesus the Christ, in humiliation. To us He is Christ Jesus, in glory. Surely it is a small thing for us to speak of Him as He deserves! Let us not degrade His high dignity by using His human name without at least one of the titles of His glory.

<sup>23</sup> It seems that here we have a preview of the coming kingdom. He enters Jerusalem in triumph exactly, to a day, as foretold by Daniel the prophet (Dan. 9<sup>25</sup>). The indignant Pharisees acknowledge that the world went after Him, and even the Greeks seek His acquaintance, as the nations will come up to Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom.

There is no intimation that the curiosity of the Greeks was satisfied. In the kingdom they will have their place, but before that, immediately athwart His path, is the death that will open the way for the blessing of all. The Greeks must wait until the grain of wheat has died.

<sup>24</sup> The millennial vision fades away and gives place to the black shadows of Golgotha. The King has come, but they do not know Him. The kingdom proclamation is withdrawn. Death looms large ahead. The Wheat kernel must die. Only in resurrection can be realized the close unity with His own which He craved.

<sup>25</sup> We fail to feel the force of this if we confound the *soul* with *life*. We could hardly say, in verse 27, "Now is My *life* disturbed," yet it is the very same word. The soul has to do with sensation. Some forms of life, as plants, have no soul, or sensation. He who is fond of his soul will shrink from discomfort and suffering. He will not endure the affliction which precedes the kingdom. He will lose the joy and blessedness of the reward. He who hates his soul will not allow any sorrow to stand between him and faithfulness to God.

<sup>27</sup> The Lord Himself is the first to hate His own soul. His darkest hour has come. Shall He shrink from its horrors? No! Let God's name be glorified whatever the bitter cost! The rendering "life", in place of "soul", fails to give the true thought. A man may love life, yet hate his soul. Those who fear persecution and distress for Christ's sake are fond of their souls, and they will forfeit the very ease and delight which they crave, when the kingdom comes.

<sup>31</sup> "Now is the judging of this world" suggests that God was, at that time, about to judge mankind. But He did not. Judgment still waits. It is the *world* that was doing the judging. This is confirmed by the same form of the word in "the judging of Gehenna" (Mt. 23<sup>33</sup>), "the just judging of God" (2 Th. 1<sup>5</sup>). See also Un. 14<sup>7</sup>; 16<sup>7</sup>; 18<sup>10</sup>; 19<sup>2</sup>. The world would hardly judge Satan, so the Chief here spoken of must be Christ Himself. This title is used again in 14<sup>30</sup> and 16<sup>11</sup>, where further evidence is given that our Lord is speaking of Himself. The judging is His exaltation on the cross, for it was a reference to the manner of His death. So it was that the throng understood the term. We should not give one of His titles to Satan. Christ is the world's Chief.

<sup>37</sup> What better proof could be found that they were walking in darkness than their rejection of the Man of Sorrows? The prophets plainly foretold their action and yet they are too much in the dark to see.

<sup>38</sup> Our Lord has now come to that stage of His ministry which was so graphically described by His namesake, Isaiah. His public ministry is at its close. He hides Himself. As the prophet continues (Isa. 53<sup>2-3</sup>):

He has no shapeliness or honor,  
And, seen by us, He is no sight to be  
coveted.  
He is despised and shunned by men,  
A Man of pains and knowing illness,  
And, as One concealing His face from  
us,  
He is despised, and we take no account  
of Him.

<sup>39</sup> Outside the Scriptures we hear much of human responsibility, and that those who reject the light deserve the judgment they have invited. This passage makes us pause. These men had heard the most powerful of all preachers and seen the most marvelous of all miracle workers, yet we are distinctly told that *they could not believe*. The reason given is that *the Scriptures must be fulfilled*. God's purpose demands a measure of unbelief as well as of faith. He looks up all in stubbornness that He may have mercy on all (Ro. 11<sup>32</sup>). To damn these men who *could not believe* with irretrievable and irrecoverable ruin is unthinkable of God.

<sup>40</sup> Isaiah's message of doom to Israel is always quoted when their apostasy has passed repair. It divides our Lord's ministry and the accounts given of it into two distinct and different epochs. He begins His proclamation of the kingdom and continues until its rejection. Then, after quoting the sixth of Isaiah, He speaks to His own of His suffering and death. See Mt. 13<sup>13-15</sup>. In the Pentecostal era we see the same. The kingdom is proclaimed to the whole nation once again, but when their rejection is irrevocable, Paul quotes from Isaiah and seals their doom for the eon. This rejection is the basis on which the present secret economy of transcendent grace has been established.

<sup>1</sup> The path of our Lord as brought before us in John's account may be compared with the path of a priest who comes out of the tabernacle and returns thither within the curtain. We find Him first with God (<sup>1</sup>). Then He is the Light (<sup>19</sup>), reminding us of the seven-branched lampstand. At His baptism (<sup>129</sup>) we see Him at the laver and as the Lamb He is on the brazen altar of sacrifice. Thus He came out from God. Now that He is rejected, He goes back to God. The order is reversed. He bears witness to His death (<sup>124</sup>)—the brazen altar. He washes the disciples' feet (<sup>135</sup>)—the laver. He partakes of the "last supper"—the shewbread. The holy Spirit—the lampstand. Within the curtain in chapter seventeen—the mercy seat. Thus we see how really He came out from God and is going back to God (<sup>3</sup>). He returns whence He came.

<sup>2</sup> This act is characteristic of the Adversary's opposition. He was to "bruise His heel" (Gen. 3<sup>15</sup>), a special phrase denoting the treachery of one who seems to serve while he plots destruction. The name Jacob, literally "heeler" or supplanter, conveys this same idea of unfair advantage (Gen. 25<sup>21-26</sup>). The tribe of Dan is "a horned snake in the path to bite the horse's heels" (Gen. 49<sup>17</sup>). Its treachery excluded it from the list of tribes in the Unveiling (74-8).

<sup>3</sup> The majesty of humility is seldom so splendidly set forth as in this passage. First we have His high place in reference to the world. All is in His hands. Then we are told of His relation to God. Did not such dignity and power entitle Him to the highest esteem? Yet, *as such*, He stoops to the meanest humility.

<sup>5</sup> Many features of oriental life are very different from our customs. We remove our hats on entering a house, as a token of respect. In the East they keep on their turbans, but remove their footgear, leaving it in the small, lower entrance to the reception room (See Ex. 3<sup>5</sup>; Josh. 5<sup>15</sup>; Ac. 7<sup>33</sup>). It is then the duty of the humblest slave in the establishment to wash the feet of the guest, by pouring water over them, and wiping them off with the towel with which he is girded.

<sup>6</sup> The most menial service the Lord could perform for them was the washing of their feet. No wonder Peter protested! He has not fully learned the lesson that the Lord is abasing Himself even to death, before His exaltation. He is giving them an example which has had very few followers among His disciples. Those who have aspired to be teachers and masters have not stooped to lowly service, but have held to high honors and dignities. The true slave of Christ, in this day of grace, will emulate the example of our Lord as set forth by Paul in his Philippian epistle. There he traces His descent from the form of God down to the death of the cross. God will see to His exaltation.

It was not only a lesson in humility but a condition of fellowship. Not being under pure grace or having been justified as we are, but having only a probationary pardon, fellowship with Christ depended on continual confession and cleansing (1 Jn. 1<sup>9</sup>). The daily washing of the priest at the laver (Ex. 30:19-21) was absolutely essential to continued communion, but it was not necessary that they be bathed as at their consecration (Ex. 29<sup>4</sup>).

18-20 Compare Mt. 26<sup>20-25</sup>; Mk. 14<sup>17-21</sup>; Lu. 22<sup>21-23</sup>.

18 See Ps. 41<sup>9</sup>.

18 It is very evident that the Lord chose Judas—he was one of “the elect”!—for the purpose of betraying Him. He knew him from the beginning, and now He quotes the prophecy which foretold his act and sets forth most vividly the extreme treachery of it. According to the custom of the Orient, those who partake of food together are enjoined by the most sacred obligations from doing harm to one another. The great depth of Judas’ degradation is not in the betrayal alone so much as in his previous privileges and position of trust. It is one of the marvels of our Lord’s life that He never “betrayed” Judas to the other disciples. He treated him as the rest, and so successfully concealed his true character from them that, at the very last, they did not guess why he went out, neither did they understand what our Lord said concerning him. His treatment of Judas is worth copying.

<sup>28</sup> In the East all eating was done with the fingers, no knives or forks or spoons being used at a meal. In their place a small three-cornered piece of the thin, hard biscuit, like pancake, which is always served, is used to convey the food to the mouth. This is eaten with the morsel. How surpassingly kind and delicate was this method of indicating His betrayer! Only one would understand. The others would look upon it as a special mark of His favor, for the giving of the morsel was considered the highest mark of respect and honor which a host can show his guest. It is evident that not one of the disciples except John knew what it meant. It was the last loving act of the Lord for Judas, before His betrayal. Who can doubt that His grace will save him yet?

<sup>27</sup> Satan entered into Judas. This statement lifts the veil of the invisible powers of darkness and greatly modifies our judgment of Judas. It is evident that the Adversary did not think him capable of committing the capital crime, so forces him forward by actually obsessing him, and controlling his mind and his actions until it had been accomplished. He was not himself when he did it. But later, when he realized what he had done, his heart was filled with bitter regret and he did not hesitate to fling the money he had received into the faces of the chief priests, and acknowledged his terrible trespass.

<sup>30</sup> The day of Christ’s ministry was done. Now it was night, the time when man does no work, but when the authority of darkness is most active. Not Judas, or the chief priests, or the scribes or Pharisees were the most malignant opponents of Christ. They, like Judas, were but puppets in the hands of His unseen spiritual adversaries. He was the One Who would crush the serpent’s head; but He was also the One Whose heel the serpent would bruise. And now was the time. Satan uses all his arts and exerts all his power to crush Him. The cross is not merely the crisis of man’s enmity to God. It is the culmination of the enmity of the spirit world as well. It is not confined to earth. It is the moral center of the universe.

<sup>34</sup> As our Lord is about to leave His beloved disciples, He compresses His ministry into one new precept—love. That was to be their law and their life and make them a light in the world. This should characterize His saints in this gracious economy in an even greater degree, for we have quaffed far deeper draughts of grace than His disciples ever tasted.

<sup>36-38</sup> Compare Mt. 26<sup>33-35</sup>; Mk. 14<sup>29-31</sup>; Lu. 22<sup>31-34</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Impetuous Peter's heart was in the right place, but it took many bitter trials to teach him the truth concerning Christ and His sufferings and his own cowardice. How graciously the Lord overlooks his failures by immediately following his present inability by a prophecy of his future martyrdom! It is probably true, as tradition reports, that Peter was crucified, like his Lord. Typically, he represents those in Israel who suffer and die before the kingdom comes, while John stands for those who live through until the kingdom is established.

<sup>2</sup> The temple in Jerusalem was the Father's house. In the walls were many abodes for the priests and Levites who officiated in its precincts. There is no hint anywhere in the Scriptures that the disciples go to heaven. A celestial destiny was not revealed until the apostle Paul was in his Roman prison. Then he first made it known in his Ephesian epistle. But it is not for the saints of the Circumcision. All their blessings are heavenly in character and, like the new Jerusalem, come down out of heaven, but they are all enjoyed on earth. Only those in the present secret economy of God's grace are blessed with all spiritual blessings among the celestials. The Circumcision enjoy the days of heaven on earth. Hence Christ comes again and is with them in the kingdom.

<sup>7</sup> Christ's usual character in this evangel is the Word of God. Here, however, He gives us a glimpse of Himself as the Image of the Father. No man can see the invisible God. But surely the disciples had seen all the attributes of the Father manifested in Him, as He loved them and led them, taught them and fed them, giving them all the care and keeping of little

children. He was not the Father, but the Father was in Him, and could be seen nowhere else. But this glimpse of the Father is (as is fitting in this account) most evident in His words and works. These were not His own, but the Father's.

<sup>12</sup> We have here an intimation of the marvelous miracles accomplished by the apostles and others in the Pentecostal period, following His ascension, and also of the still greater marvels which will inaugurate the kingdom in the future. The spiritual blessings of the present are in reality far greater than any of these, but they were not in view at this time, for they were a secret, hidden in God, and could not be even hinted at until Israel's final failure was assured.

<sup>14</sup> These words have proved a snare to many. They have requested much in His name which has not come to pass. This seems to reflect on His faithfulness. The difficulty vanishes when we see that this is not for the Uncircumcision (Ro.15<sup>8</sup>). Far higher truth is ours. It is set forth in Phil.4<sup>6</sup>. We make our requests known to God with thanksgiving, and leave them with Him to act upon as His love determines, not as we dictate.

<sup>16</sup> The Lord Himself was the Consoler of the apostles while He was with them. Now that He was about to leave they would not only need the consolation He had given them, but a special measure to make up for His absence as well. It is most touching to see, as the dark shadows of the cross are crowding His soul, that He is not concerned for His own relief, but for the sorrows of His beloved disciples. The spirit He had promised after His glorification (7<sup>39</sup>) was to be a living spring, but, in view of the sorrow so soon to engulf them, it is now called a consoler, for this would be its first function.

It is called "the spirit of truth" in contrast to "the spirit of deception" (1 Jn. 4<sup>6</sup>). The world seeks comfort in its false philosophy but God's saints find consolation in the truth. The spirit of deception is that false flood of spirit force which is sweeping the world on to the worship of the anti-christ. The spirit of truth is its opposite.

He told them that the *declarations* which He spoke are spirit and are life. It is the spirit that vivifies (6<sup>33</sup>). Hence we may take it that the impartation of the spirit, after His vivification, when He inflated and said "get holy Spirit!" (20<sup>22</sup>), corresponds to the impartation of the breath of the living to Adam (Gen. 2<sup>7</sup>), so that he became a living soul. In this way the last Adam showed Himself a life imparting Spirit (1 Co. 15<sup>45</sup>).

Pentecost was not the reception of holy Spirit to give life, but its baptism for cleansing, its filling for utterance, and its coming on for power.

The reception of holy Spirit was dependent on repentance and baptism in the evangel of the kingdom (Ac. 2<sup>38</sup>). In Samaria, the gift waited on the prayer and imposition of the hands of the apostles (Ac. 8<sup>15-17</sup>) according to the authority which the Lord conferred on them when it was first given (20<sup>23</sup>). In the present economy of transcendent grace it is the portion of all who believe (Eph. 1<sup>13</sup>). It is an earnest of all the spiritual possessions which are ours in Christ Jesus, among the celestials.

<sup>28</sup> In the East they do not say, as we do, "I am going", but rather "I am going and returning" when speaking of an ordinary journey. So the Lord assures them that He was not about to leave them permanently, but only for a while.

<sup>30</sup> When our Lord spoke of Himself in relation to the world He often used the third person. Witness the Son of Man (9<sup>37</sup>). See also 7<sup>18</sup>; 9<sup>37</sup>. He is the Coming One, for Whom all creation waits. Yet, when He came, the world had nothing at all in Him. It rejected His chieftainship just as Israel also rejected His messiahship and "there is nothing for Him" (Dan. 9<sup>26</sup>). None of the glories pertaining to Him were allowed by Israel and He will not assume them until He comes again in power and glory as revealed in the Unveiling, when He appears as the White Horse Rider, crowned with many diadems, the King of kings and Lord of lords (Un. 19<sup>11-16</sup>). He, and not Satan, is the Chief of the world. This title occurs only in this account. See 12<sup>31</sup> and 16<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> What grace is there here! The world judges Him and casts Him out, so He immediately uses their hatred to reveal the love of God to Him and to them. Indeed, here we have love's greatest triumph. Men could not do worse or God better. His love needed their hatred for a foil and makes good use of it to emerge into the open where all the world can see.

<sup>1</sup> The fig, the olive, and the vine are used by God to picture the political, the spiritual, and the social blessedness of Israel as a nation. He brought a vine out of Egypt, cast out the nations, and planted it. It filled the land, but was destroyed (Ps. 80<sup>8-16</sup>). The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel (Is. 5<sup>7</sup>). Jeremiah laments that Jehovah had planted them an excellent local variety, yet they had turned into a foreign vine by their unfaithfulness and their joylessness (Jer. 2<sup>21</sup>). Jotham, in his parable of the trees, tells us that grape juice gladdens both God and mortals (Jud. 9<sup>13</sup>). But Hosea cries "Israel is a vacant vine. The fruit is equivalent to it" (Hos. 10<sup>1</sup>). Israel failed to gladden either God or mortals. Christ came and did both. He is the true Vine. The fruitless branches, those who remained not in Him, are taken away. His own are cleansed by the belief of the truth. All gladness for God or mortals must now come through the Messiah.

<sup>5</sup> He now restates the truth as to the vine. Only those with Him are the branches. Israel as a nation has no part in Him.

<sup>6</sup> The salvation proclaimed by our Lord and the twelve apostles was probational. There was always the danger of "drifting by" (Heb. 2<sup>1</sup>). They were His house if they retained the boldness and glorying of the expectation confirmed unto the consummation (Heb. 3<sup>6</sup>). They could withdraw from the living God (Heb. 3<sup>12</sup>). Many of those once enlightened fell aside (Heb. 6<sup>4-6</sup>). Such are those who did not remain in the vine, but withered and were destroyed. We, however, are not in the vine, but members of the body of Christ. And the members of a body cannot be lopped off like the branches of a vine. We are saved by grace, and do not depend on our own abiding, but



on His power and love. We are vitally and organically a part of Christ Himself. He would be maimed by the excision of members of His body. How thankful we should be that we are not branches in that vine!

12 As the Lord had explained in His kingdom proclamation, the whole law was included in the one word, love. Love to God and love to man is far more than all the precepts of the law. So, in His final charge, as He is about to give them the greatest example of love the universe has seen or ever will see, in the offering of His soul to God for the sin of the world, He presses home to their hearts the excellent way of love.

Paul, in his appeal to us, the Uncircumcision, lays even greater stress on love. We have no law, no precepts. But love remains, and conduct in accord with love needs no law, but soars far above all its righteous demands.

16 Too often is salvation made a matter of the sinner's choice. This sadly mars the full and clear apprehension of God's love which it is intended to reveal. All active effort in redemption is the outflow of divine love, and is entirely on God's side. All the sinner's activity is a hindrance. He would choose any one but God. His part is a passive or a negative one.

This basic truth is much more forcibly revealed later on in connection with the call of the nations. We were chosen by God in Christ before the disruption. Sin itself was subsequent to His choice of us. Hence, sin, either past or present, cannot affect God's purpose for us, or our acceptance of His grace. He chooses, He calls, He glorifies. He does not give man his choice or a chance. He has the wisdom and the power to impel men to fall into line with His purpose no matter what their natural inclination may be. All human experience confirms the divine declaration that He it is Who is operating in us to will as well as to work for the sake of His delight (Phil. 2<sup>13</sup>). Man can carry out his own will only so far as it accords with the purpose of God. When men rage against God, He uses their wrath as far as it is useful to His plans. The remainder of their wrath He restrains.

1 There is no hatred like religious hatred, no persecution so fierce as that fired by a mistaken zeal for God. Not only were the apostles persecuted in their day, but the truth of God is just as offensive to the recognized heads of Christendom now as it was to the chief priests of Judaism then. Those who boldly defend some doctrine, will just as boldly do their best to denounce and destroy the testimony to a truth of which they are ignorant, or which conflicts with their accepted creed. Happy is that servant of God who bares his brow to the storm in the consciousness that God not only knew and knows of all the opposition to His truth by the religious world, but who realizes that this also is a part of His purpose. Lack of success will not sadden, apparent failure will not make him faint. His only real defeat will follow any attempt to retaliate. Let us never be found on the side of those who persecute. Blessed (not happy!) are the persecuted! Their reward is sure. May His grace enable us to enjoy suffering for Him!

8 The world is to be convicted on three counts by the spirit, now that Christ is absent. His sinless life, His righteousness, His proclamation of the kingdom all cease with His return to His Father. But all are used by the spirit to convict the world. Even the unbeliever is convinced that all have sinned except the Christ of the Scriptures. No other man is acknowledged to have been perfectly just. They assent to the injustice of His judgment.

If we make "the Chief of this world" a title of Satan we involve ourselves in a maze of difficulties. If the world or God had judged Satan, how would that convict the world? And he certainly has not been judged yet. Christ is the great Chief of the world. He was judged and crucified by it. We question whether any sane man, today, will justify its action. The world has been convicted or convinced by the spirit of truth even though it knows it not.

11 The three occurrences of the title "Chief of this world" (12<sup>31</sup>; 14<sup>30</sup>; 16<sup>11</sup>) are most difficult and contradictory if assigned to Satan, but clear and consistent if connected with Christ.

<sup>12</sup> The words of our Lord preserved for us in the four accounts of His life come very far from giving us all that He had to say. They were sadly limited by the incapacity of His hearers. Even His closest disciples could not understand some of the simplest facts, simply told. They would not listen to the story of His supreme sacrifice. His temporary departure was a puzzle to them. As the great galaxy of truth subsequently revealed depends on His shameful death and glorious exaltation for its very foundation, how could they begin to understand?

Hence it will be seen that the transcendent truths of Scripture should not be sought in the words of our Lord, but in the subsequent utterances of the spirit of truth. Furthermore, much could not be revealed until Israel had once more definitely refused the proclamation of the kingdom by the apostles, as recorded in the book of Acts. This, and the fact that the spirit is given a much larger place in Paul's ministry than ever before, leads us to look in his epistles for the supreme revelation. And a thorough study will convince us that this is so, for he it is who reveals those secrets which enabled him to "complete the word of God" (Col. 1<sup>25</sup>). He takes us back before Genesis (Eph. 1<sup>4</sup>), and brings us far beyond the Unveiling (1 Co. 15<sup>24</sup>).

Any system of theology which plays our Lord's words against Paul's, or does not recognize the predominant place of Paul's epistles for the present, is in practical opposition to the plain statement made by our Lord Himself. Much of what our Lord wished to say He has spoken through His apostles, by means of that spirit of truth which would enable them to apprehend what would otherwise be beyond them.

The great apostasy of the present time is largely fortified by the refusal to heed these clear declarations of the Lord Himself. The truth especially given for the nations is ignored and the truth intended only for the Circumcision, more especially that taught by our Lord, is wrested from its place and forced into a position for which it was never intended.

<sup>27</sup> There is a common but false feeling that God is a stern Judge but Christ a lenient Saviour. This is very wrong, for Christ is but a reflection of the Father. Christ Himself in His time will be a Judge and deal out justice. But let us not imagine that He came to appease God's wrath entirely of His own volition. All that He did was in obedience to the will of God and in order to display the heart of God. It is a sure sign of true spiritual progress when we are enabled to look through Christ to the God that He portrays.

<sup>28</sup> His miraculous entry into the world is more than matched by His marvelous exit. He alone knew what His childlike words implied: "I am leaving the world and going to the Father." Little did His disciples dream of the shame and suffering, distress and death that lay upon that appalling path to the Father!

<sup>31</sup> Their belief in His return to the Father fled when the hour of His trial arrived. Had they believed they would not have forsaken Him at a time when He needed them most.

<sup>32</sup> Compare Mt. 26<sup>31</sup>; Mk. 14<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> "I have conquered the world." Who thinks of the lowly Nazarene as a world conqueror? Who would include Him in such a list? The world would mention Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Napoleon. These have written their names in blood on the bar sinister of the world's escutcheon. No one gives them homage now. The sober and sane shudder at their sinful excesses. Christ is the real world conqueror! He has held the homage of men's hearts and will bend them into perfect acquiescence with the will of God.

<sup>3</sup> The knowledge of God is not given as the definition of eonian life, but eonian life is imparted *that they may be knowing* Him. Eonian life is life during the eons of Christ's reign and glory. Two methods are used by Him to acquaint His saints with Himself. First, they are left to taste the sorrows of sin at a distance from Him. Then, in the eons of the eons, in glorious fellowship with His Son, each high tide of bliss will mark some new discovery of His love, some fresh token of His affection.

<sup>4</sup> The charge against all mankind is that all sin and are wanting of the glory of God (Ro. 3<sup>23</sup>). God guarantees to give glory and honor and incorruption to all who endure in good acts. Our Lord is the only one who can claim the reward. He is the only one who glorified God on the earth. He is the only one who accomplished the work God gave Him. Hence it seems perfectly natural for Him to demand glorification. Yet He does not ask for the glory His work deserves, but the glory which He had before the world is. He leaves His reward with God Himself. The saints will be a precious part of it.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew names were usually most expressive of character, life or ministry. Even we speak of a good or a bad "name", referring rather to character than sound or significance. Among the Jews the name of their God was given the honor due to the deity, hence it was never pronounced. Christ manifested God's name by displaying His attributes in His life and conduct.

It is a precious thought to consider the disciples as a gift from the Father to His Son. As such, He valued them, not for their own sakes alone, but because of the Giver. It is this interweaving of human lives into the affections of God and His Christ which should give us the greatest cause for confidence and comfort. Our little lives are bound up with the love of God for His Son and the Son's response to the Father. As He says (<sup>10</sup>), all His belong to God, and all God's are His. It is a great thing to have a God. But it is a much greater to know ourselves as the valued possession of God and His Beloved.

<sup>10</sup> Glory consists in the esteem in which we are held by others. In the world Christ had no glory then, but in His own He was esteemed more than ever was the lot of man, and it has come to pass that, even in the world that rejects Him and repudiates His teaching, His name is placed upon the pinnacle of moral glory.

<sup>11</sup> It seems evident that, in spirit, the Lord is beyond the cross. There it was that He finished His work (<sup>4</sup>), and until then He was still in the world.

<sup>19</sup> That holiness, or sanctification, is not essentially a cleansing from sin is evident from this statement, for our Lord would not cleanse Himself from His own sin, for He had none, and He was not cleansed from, but bore, the sins of others. When the priest was consecrated, his hands were filled with the sacrifice. Real holiness consists in a positive occupation with the things of God, rather than a negative absence of sin.

<sup>22</sup> The unity existing between the Son and the Father is here defined, for He desires the same oneness for His disciples. It is a unity of spirit and a community of interests which characterized the early disciples. This is the unity which exists between the Son and the Father. There is no thought of identity. How distinct they were in will, which is the vital element in personality, was to be seen a little later, in the garden of Gethsemane, where the will of Christ was not in line with God's. The cross was not His will, but the subordination of it to His Father.

<sup>23</sup> It is with awed hearts and unshod feet that we enter into the pure precincts of God's love to His Son. We feel most unworthy to listen to such sacred secrets. Before the disruption, before sin or sorrow or a single sigh had sent its shadows across this scene, God's love for His Son had its birth. He came into the world, not to win God's love, but in response to it. His whole ministry was an exhibition of it, and an appeal for a suitable response. Now He reveals its fullest force, when He declares that God loves them as He loved Him. Few of His followers at that time, or even after the enlightening aid of the spirit that He had promised, entered into the fullness of this marvelous manifestation of God's affections.

<sup>1</sup> The visits to this garden seem to have been the only pleasure the Lord allowed Himself during His ministry. In the arid East a watered garden is a delightful spot in contrast to its surroundings. How sad that this should witness the awful agony, instead of providing rest and refreshment!

1-3 Compare Mt. 26<sup>36-50</sup>; Mk. 14<sup>32-46</sup>; Lu. 22<sup>39-48</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Darkness is the day, for evildoers. The Lord worked in the day. Satan fears the light. Even in the night they need a squad of soldiers and armed deputies to take a gentle, unarmed Man and His timid disciples. His simple words cast them to the earth. He calmly orders them to leave His disciples alone. It would seem that He was in authority, rather than they.

<sup>4</sup> We must look behind the scenes to appreciate the tremendous issues involved in this betrayal. The cohorts of darkness were in command of Satan. The one who had deluded Eve in the garden of Eden was hurting the heel of the woman's Seed. He had managed to enlist mankind against Him. Christ Himself had called the Jews children of their father, the Adversary. Satan had actually obsessed Judas, and in him was present as chief actor and spectator. The Prince of light and the Prince of darkness meet in the treacherous kiss of Judas.

<sup>10-14</sup> Compare Mt. 26<sup>51-57</sup>; Mk. 14<sup>47-53</sup>; Lu. 22<sup>49-54</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Impulsive Peter has not yet learned the lesson of the cross, and so he does the very worst possible thing. The difficulty with the Lord's enemies was that they had no ears that heard. What use is it to strike off the very thing they lacked? But the Lord has a heart for His enemies even in this time of His sorest distress. Elsewhere we read that He healed the hurt of the one who came to take His life. What a marvelous hint of the blessings to which His sorrows would give birth!

<sup>11</sup> The Lord was aware of His enemies' thoughts. He perceived the opposition of Satan, yet He saw behind it all the will of His Father. The cup He was to drain was a bitter one. He had no wish to drink it. He knew what men would do, but did not blame them for it. He prayed for their forgiveness. He knew the craft of Satan, but He also knew that behind all these was, not only the iron will of a sovereign God, but the loving affection of a Father. He received it all from His hands. He not only bends beneath the stroke, but He leaves it all to the Father's love. He could trust, though He slay Him. His was the faith that never failed.

<sup>15-21</sup> Compare Mt. 26<sup>58-69</sup>; Mk. 14<sup>54-65</sup>; Lu. 22<sup>54-71</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> We can imagine what a tumult was in the heart of the impetuous, warm-hearted, self-confident Peter. *He* would never disown His Lord! *He* would suffer anything for His sake! He would not believe the Lord's plain prediction of his faithlessness. He was ready to face torture and death—some great thing which would bring him applause—but he was not ready for a simple question from a mere maid. Perhaps he prided himself on following the Lord into the house, but his pride must have suffered severely as he pondered his craven conduct. He was having a practical experience of what the apostle records concerning those who seek to please God in the flesh—"What I am hating, this am I doing" (Ro. 7<sup>15</sup>). How many since have found that they, too, were like Peter, strong to will, but unable to carry out the desires of their heart. And the best part of such an experience is that it destroys confidence in the flesh and drives us to the ground of grace, where we receive power and ability to carry out the mind of the spirit.

<sup>18</sup> Houses in the cities of Palestine are heated by means of a charcoal brazier. It is a copper stand about two feet high, with a chafing dish on top. This pan is filled with ashes and on this the charcoal is placed. It is taken outside and lighted and kindled by the breeze or a fan. Then it is brought into the house.

<sup>19</sup> Contrast Peter's craven course with the firm fortitude of his Master. The chief priest, the symbol of holiness and truth, masks his diabolical design by a hypocritical inquiry into the Lord's teachings. But the Lord reads his heart and tears off his mask. There was not the slightest weakness or compromise. It never occurred to Him to deny aught of His teaching or to evade the sufferings which threw their gloomy shadows across His path.

<sup>24</sup> Annas was made chief priest by Cyrenius, but was deposed seven years later. After three others had held the office, his son-in-law, Caiaphas, became chief priest, and he always seems to be reckoned as holding the office with him. Luke tells us that both were

chief priests (Lu. 3<sup>2</sup>). This alone shows how little regard they had for God's law, which prescribed a single succession absolutely independent of human interference. They were false, chosen by ungodly alien enemies, He was the true Priest about to offer up the true Lamb. They were supposed to put away the sin of the people. Instead, they are the instigators of the sin of sins.

25-27 Compare Mt. 26<sup>71-75</sup>; Mk. 14<sup>69-72</sup>; Lu. 22<sup>58-62</sup>.

28-32 Compare Mt. 27<sup>1-2</sup>; Mk. 15<sup>1</sup>; Lu. 23<sup>1</sup>.

28 What insufferable hypocrites they were! Plotting the death of God's holy One, and afraid their bloody feet would be defiled by entering where He was! The law said, "You shall not murder." And their greatest regret was that they could not kill Him themselves! The only accusation they could bring was that they demanded His death.

29 In marked contrast with the high priest is the conduct of Pilate. They were enlightened by the law, but their light had become darkness. He had nothing but the feeble flicker of natural conscience, but he wished to follow it. His first thought, however, was for himself. If possible, he would get out of this dilemma by turning Him over to them. In so doing he would not invite their displeasure and would avoid the immediate responsibility of doing what was undoubtedly an unjust act. But they did not want to try Him. They wanted to murder Him.

33-38 Compare Mt. 27<sup>11-14</sup>; Mk. 15<sup>2-5</sup>; Lu. 23<sup>2-12</sup>.

36 Scripture knows of five "worlds", which correspond to the five eons. Before Christ's kingdom will be set up there must be the great judgments which usher in a new eon and a new world. Had the Jews received Him, humanly speaking, the kingdom would have come, but, since they reject Him, He could say "Now is My kingdom not hence." Ever since the crisis in His ministry when it became evident that the nation would not hear, He had put off the kingdom to a distant time. For some time He had not been proclaiming the kingdom, so that Pilate had no fault to find.

37 Pilate, like many others who have mistaken the Lord's meaning, thought that He denied being a King. Perhaps he thought that He was founding a "spiritual kingdom." But the Lord corrects this false supposition. He solemnly asseverates that He is in very truth a King. This was a very serious matter for Pilate to pass upon, for he was the political head of the people. It is this charge alone that appeals to him, hence he gives our Lord the private investigation noted only in this account. Many zealous impostors arose from time to time among the Jews, proclaiming themselves to be the Messiah, and inciting the Jews to insurrection against the Romans. The real issue between Pilate and our Lord was to settle the question whether He intended to lead an armed resistance to the rule of Rome. In case He did, Pilate perforce must act to suppress the incipient rebellion and to execute the leader. But, as the Lord had no thought of establishing His kingdom in this manner, He convinces Pilate of His innocence in that regard. The other charges were religious and did not interest Pilate. Hence he desired to set Him free.

38-40 Compare Mt. 27<sup>15-23</sup>; Mk. 15<sup>6-15</sup>; Lu. 23<sup>13-25</sup>.

40 The people choose Bar-Abbas, which signifies Son-Father. They preferred a son of their own father, the Adversary, a man who was a robber and a murderer, to the Son of the Father, Who not only brought them an untold wealth of blessing but actually brought the dead to life again. What a contrast between these two, whose names are so similar! The Saviour suffers: the sinner is set free! Bar-Abbas is a type of the great mass who will eventually be saved without faith.

1-3 Compare Mt. 27<sup>24-31</sup>; Mk. 15<sup>15-20</sup>.

1 The Roman soldiers mock the Messianic hope of Israel by making Him a mimic monarch. The royal purple and the thorny wreath are accompanied by mocking adulation of His imaginary majesty. Some day that bleeding brow will wear its many diadems. But all the regal rank that these reveal will not endear Him to our hearts like the cruel wreath of thorns. It is the symbol of a power and a glory that compels a willing homage and an adoring loyalty.

<sup>7</sup> It appears on the surface, that Pilate's question, when he heard that the Lord claimed to be the Son of God, was ignored. Not so. Since the Lord *was* the Son of God it was far beneath His dignity to reply in words. His conduct was far more convincing. Pilate understood His silence far better than any words.

<sup>8</sup> The magnificent bearing of Christ before Pilate is without a parallel in the annals of justice. He should have been afraid of the cruel and unscrupulous Roman minion, but it is Pilate who fears. And when the haughty Roman threatens Him He calmly tells him that there is a higher authority. What a triumphant trust in God sustained Him in all this terrific and heart rending ordeal! Can we not picture to ourselves the furious, blood-thirsty mob, keeping its distance for hypocritical fear of contamination, yet fouling the very atmosphere with their false and fiendish accusations; the disdainful governor, who has no wish to become involved in their religious controversies, arrogant, yet fearful, strong, yet weakly catering to their unjust demands; and the solitary, self-composed, lowly Man. He was meekly bowing to the will of God; they were ignorantly fulfilling the behest of Satan.

<sup>12</sup> Pilate was submitting to what he deemed a political necessity. We must concede that he did all any Roman governor would have done under the circumstances. The Jews could easily have caused trouble at Rome if he should fail to deal summarily with one who was popularly hailed as a political opponent of Cæsar.

<sup>14</sup> The reading "third" (instead of the usual "sixth") is used on the evidence of the editor of Sinaiticus. Many ingenious explanations have been offered in order to harmonize the sixth hour in this passage with the third hour in Mk. 15<sup>25</sup>, but none of them are satisfactory. The darkness did not fall until the sixth hour, which is midday, but that came not only after His own crucifixion, and that of the malefactors, but also after the robbers had been impaled.

16-24 Compare Mt. 27<sup>24-35</sup>; Mk. 15<sup>15-24</sup>; Lu. 23<sup>24-34</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Stoning was the mode prescribed by the law of Moses for the death penalty. It was a comparatively swift and painless death, as a single blow on the head would stun the victim into unconsciousness. The Roman cross or stake was far more painful and shameful. The victim was nailed to a single upright stake and left to die, a lingering and humiliating spectacle to all who beheld.

The glamour with which religion seeks to surround the cross is false and misleading. Its only halo is dense darkness, its power weakness, its glory shame.

The shamefulness of crucifixion is the fitting climax to the descent of Christ from the highest glory to the lowest humiliation. Even as He had been far above all, so now it was meet that He should come down to the lowest depths of degradation. It is this aspect of His death which is intended by the term "cross" or "pale." This registers, not the fact of His death, but the manner of it. This, in turn, throws a lurid light on the world that had so little respect for the One Who had the highest place in heaven.

But, besides this, the cross is the place of the curse. It was necessary for the sinless One to become sin. It was needful for Him to forsake the place of the blessing for the place of the curse. "Accursed is every one being hanged on a pole" was a portion of the law which He had never fulfilled. This form of death—crucifixion—robbed Him of His last refuge. God Himself became His enemy, and forsook Him.

<sup>23</sup> As our Lord belonged to the lower class, He would doubtless dress accordingly. They wore only five articles of clothing, a long cotton shirt, a girdle, usually of leather or worsted, a turban, sandals, and a tunic over all made of goat's or camel's hair or worsted. The four soldiers could readily divide the first four among themselves, but the fifth, being specially made without a seam, was probably of more value than all the rest together. It would spoil it to divide it, so it was that they were compelled to cast lots and fulfill the Scriptures.

<sup>24</sup> See Ps. 22<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Physical relationships are temporary, and will be superseded by spiritual ties. All lasting spiritual bonds are made at the foot of the cross.

<sup>28-30</sup> Compare Mt. 27<sup>45-51</sup>; Mk. 15<sup>33-36</sup>; Lu. 23<sup>46</sup>; see Ps. 22<sup>15</sup>; 69<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Perhaps in no other circumstances could we realize the intense passion of Christ for the word of God. His work was accomplished. We may know a little of what He felt from the words of the Psalmist (22<sup>14-15</sup>):

I am poured out as water,  
And all My bones are dissected.  
My heart becomes as wax;  
It is melted in the midst of My bowels.  
My vigor is dry as earthenware,  
And My tongue is clinging to My jaws,  
And on the soil of death,  
Thou art setting Me as the hearth stones.

Death, at the hands of God, not His enemies, was before Him. Yet one passage of Scripture was not fulfilled. He had done His part, but men had not done theirs. The Psalmist had foretold (69<sup>21</sup>):

And they put poison in My repast;  
And for My thirst they cause Me to drink vinegar.

So He prompts them, and they fill the sponge and fulfill the passage.

Truly, not one letter of the law shall fail till all is fulfilled! If He could drink that bitter draught in the moment of His greatest weakness and deepest despair, *that the Scripture may be perfected*, what will He do in the day of His power and glory? He will surely see that not a single line of the Scriptures will fail of fulfillment.

<sup>30</sup> The death of Christ was not due to the failure of His faculties, or to exhaustion. It was a deliberate act of His will. After having accomplished the work the Father set for Him to do, there was no need of further suffering. So He laid down His soul of His own volition; He gave up His Spirit to God.

<sup>31</sup> There were many sabbaths in Israel beside the weekly one. This sabbath was the first day of the festival of Unleavened bread (Lev. 23<sup>7</sup>). As it introduced the seven day festival when all leaven was excluded from their houses, it was considered a far greater day than a weekly sabbath. It may be that the Spirit of God is hinting also at

its real greatness. Leaven is a type of sin. Now the great Sin Offering had been slain, and sin was indeed put away! It was the greatest day in the Jewish calendar.

<sup>32</sup> The course of the narrative here clearly shows that there were four others crucified with Christ. There were two malefactors and two robbers. The soldiers crush the legs of two before they come to Christ, so there must have been two on each side. There were no "thieves". One of the malefactors believed on Him.

<sup>36</sup> See Nu. 9<sup>12</sup>; Ex. 12<sup>46</sup>; Ps. 34<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> With His supernatural vitality He would have remained alive long after the others, and suffered the breaking of His bones if He had not laid down His soul of Himself. It is remarkable that, in all this, there is a divine intelligence behind the ignorance of man. They marred His flesh but did not break His bones. They poured out His blood, but did not mutilate His form. So that, in resurrection, His body is composed of flesh and bones and has no blood. The soul of the flesh is in the blood, but the spirit needs no blood. The wanton hands of His enemies were used to transform His body to the new condition needed in resurrection!

<sup>37</sup> See Zech. 12<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>38-42</sup> Compare Mt. 27<sup>57-60</sup>; Mk. 15<sup>42-46</sup>; Lu. 23<sup>50-54</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> What a notable change the crucifixion makes in two of the secret disciples of our Lord! Joseph of Arimathea was afraid of the Jews, but now he has the courage to go to Pilate and he takes the body away before the eyes of those he once feared. Nicodemus, also, does not wait till dark to bring the spices for embalming the body. He comes forth in the light of day. It is the cross, the suffering and shame, the agony and the degradation, of the One Who had won their hearts which took their timidity away. And it is still the inspiration for brave deeds and noble acts free from the fear of man.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Mt. 28<sup>1</sup>; Mk. 16<sup>1-4</sup>; Lu. 24<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> "One of the sabbaths" is the true rendering. The usual "first day of the week" is absolutely devoid of scriptural evidence.

<sup>2-10</sup> Compare Lu. 24<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> There is a blessed contrast between the resurrection of Lazarus and the vivification of our Lord. Lazarus saw corruption. Christ saw none. Lazarus was raised bound foot and hand with grave clothes and his face was covered with a handkerchief. These are the signs of mortality and corruption. These are the symbols of weakness. Our Lord was raised in power. His feet were free, His hands untrammelled, His face uncovered. He had the power to take up His soul again. He had the strength to remove the grave clothes and roll aside the stone. He is not merely the Resurrection, but He is the Life!

<sup>8</sup> How tragic is unbelief! Peter and John, His closest companions, refuse to credit His word when He tells them of His sufferings and death and resurrection. Now they had witnessed His shameful death, they had seen His empty tomb, and still they doubt His word!

<sup>11</sup> Mary Magdalene, probably from the town of Magdala, had been possessed with seven demons. The Lord healed her and she became part of that elect company of women who dispensed to Him of their possessions (Lu.8:2-3). She seems to have been among the last to leave the tomb, after witnessing where Joseph of Arimathea had laid Him. Along with some of the other women she seems to have been at the tomb very early, in order to complete the preparation of His body for burial.

Peter and John seem to have left her. She does not take a look and leave. She lingers, and her faith is rewarded by the unspeakable boon of being first to behold the risen Christ. Peter and John, when they looked, saw the grave clothes. She saw the messengers, but is not satisfied with any one but her Lord.

<sup>11-18</sup> Compare Mk.16:9-11.

<sup>16</sup> What a world of pathos lies within the range of the human voice! There was no need to tell Who He was, once He had caressed her name as He only could intone it. "Miriam!" And immediately she recognizes the voice of her beloved Lord and Teacher. She alone is told of His victorious ascension to the Father, immediately after His resurrection. She carries the glorious news to the rest.

<sup>17</sup> In the Scriptures, omissions are often of supreme significance. To accord with the character of the account, this ascension of our Lord is mentioned only here. The other narratives omit it entirely. But it is still more significant to note the silence as to the nature and object of this ascension. The reason is clear. John is not detailing the celestial glories of Christ. That belongs to Paul's later ministry.

The conquest of the cross of Christ is not confined to earth. It places Him at the head of the whole universe. Messengers and sovereignties and authorities and powers among the celestials are all made subject to the Crucified One. After His resurrection He was proclaimed throughout the universe as Lord of all. When was this proclamation made? When was His public investiture with the tokens of His universal sovereignty? Surely that could not wait for forty days, until after His public ascension. Doubtless it was done soon after He delegated Mary to carry the news to His disciples. Then He ascended, and the crucified King of the Jews is acclaimed the Conqueror over all the powers of evil and the universal Suzerain. How little did His disciples dream of His exalted honors!

<sup>19-20</sup> Compare Mk.16:14; Lu.24:38-48.

<sup>22</sup> Here is where the disciples received the holy Spirit. Pentecost was an endowment with power. Spirit is the vital force in the universe. Adam became a living soul as soon as the breath of God entered his body. So here the breath of Christ imparted the vital spirit which He had promised them after His glorification. Our breath is poisonous, death-dealing. His is vital, life-giving.

<sup>23</sup> In the proclamation of the kingdom the disciples certainly were given the right to forgive sins, or the opposite. Though the claims of priestcraft to this power at present are false, this should not blind us to the fact that such authority was given to His disciples by our Lord, and was exercised so long as the kingdom was proclaimed to Israel. This promise should make us hesitate in appropriating all in this account to ourselves, or to claim all its promises as our own.



<sup>27</sup> While we hardly care to sympathize with doubting Thomas, yet we feel grateful for the unanswerable evidence his case called forth. The reality of our Lord's resurrection is put beyond all question by his lack of faith. The very body that was marred by the nails and the spear, which saw no corruption, was actually made alive and could be felt and handled, to the satisfaction of one who refused to believe on less evidence.

<sup>31</sup> It is evident that the signs in this account are a selection, chosen to give a complete picture of Israel's failure and Israel's Saviour. They are intended to signify to all who have ears to hear that the One Who speaks and acts is no other than the Messiah foretold by the prophets of old, and the further fact that He is also the Son of God. Eonian life is for all who receive this testimony. As we have seen, His present exaltation, while Israel is apostate, is carefully overlooked. Hence we must not expect to find present truth in John's account. He never had a commission for the nations, not even for proselytes, as Peter had. Because his ministry seems especially intended for millennial days, when the nations will be blessed *through* Israel, his allusions to world-wide blessing are often mistaken for that which has come to us while Israel is apostate.

<sup>3</sup> Peter had a commission to fish for *men*. But he returns to his old trade and takes his companions with him. They toil all night and net nothing. Undoubtedly there is a solemn lesson in obedience here. The path of self-will brings much labor but no results. The path of obedience is fraught with blessing. But there seems a deeper lesson here than this. Peter's failure is a dispensational forecast. Peter and the apostles labor much to proclaim the kingdom during the darkness which has fallen on Israel. But their efforts are unavailing. Israel is not recalled to repentance. But in the morning, when the Lord comes again, the kingdom will once more be proclaimed. Then the results will be miraculous. All Israel will be saved. The miracle will be repeated then, and the net will include the 144,000 as well as a throng innumerable.

<sup>6</sup> There are several methods of fishing from the shore in the day time. A baited hook was cast by Peter when he got the redemption money for himself and the Lord (Mt. 17<sup>27</sup>). Simon and Andrew were using a purse net when they were called to become fishers of men (Mk. 1<sup>16</sup>). A seine or drag net was also used (Mt. 13<sup>47</sup>). The net here used was a large one let down from a ship. On one occasion, though the net broke, the haul filled two boats overfull (Lu. 5<sup>4-6</sup>). Boat fishing was done at night. Seines were set and the fishermen, with flares and the beating of old metal pans, drove the fish toward the net. This cannot be done in the day time. After scouring the waters all night it must have seemed silly to lower the large net. It took faith to do that. And it was nothing less than a miracle that the net was not rent.

<sup>11</sup> The night of futile fishing seems to correspond to the time typified in Israel's yearly calendar by the period between the festival of Unleavened Bread and the festival of Trumpets, which was about one hundred and fifty-three days. It may be that the number of fish caught is an allusion to this. The past labors of the twelve apostles seem to have netted nothing, yet when He appears in the future, there will be a rich harvest. At present their ministry is not in force.

<sup>12</sup> A whole night of toil did not provide a breakfast for the faithless fishermen. Yet He makes manifest His care and provision by supplying their need. The meal is all ready and cooked. They do not do anything to provide it. This is the gracious rebuke of the Lord to Peter's fishing expedition. We never hear that he went back to fishing again.

<sup>15</sup> The rich pathos of this passage will be apparent only if we carefully keep the finer shades of meaning conveyed by the original, as "fond" and "love", "graze" and "shepherd", "lambkins" and "sheep". This is the special commission given to Peter which he fulfills in the writing of his epistles. His humiliating experiences, in disowning the Lord and doubting His care and provision (of which the other apostles were not guilty) has chastened his spirit, so that he no longer boasts of his loyalty, though all the rest prove

to be cowards. He knows that he loves his Lord, despite his craven heart, but he refuses to boast that he *loves* Him more than his fellows. He hides behind a weaker word, denoting the attractive force of friendship. But he does not put himself behind the assertion, but rather appeals to the Lord's omniscience. His humility is rewarded by the charge to provide sustenance for those weak in the faith.

The Lord repeats His question, but without any reference to Peter's boast or failure. Peter again refuses to vouch for himself, and is given charge of the Lord's flock.

The Lord now descends to Peter's profession of fondness, but questions even that. This touches Peter very sorely, but he refuses to vaunt. He feels full of love to the Lord but he is aware how dismally he had failed but a few days before. So he once more refers the Lord to His own omniscience. He has learned his lesson well. So the Lord commissions him to provide food for the mature saints.

<sup>18</sup> Peter had boasted that he would lay down his soul for Him (13<sup>37</sup>). It was this that led the Lord to predict that he would disown Him. Now He assures Peter that he will some day fulfill his

boast. There is a tradition that Peter was crucified. See 2 Pe. 1<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Now we are given a hint of John's commission. In a veiled way we are given to understand that John was to remain alive until the Lord's return. This is fulfilled in his vision of the Unveiling. There, in spirit, he sees all the events leading up to the kingdom and the kingdom itself. Truly, in spirit, he remained until the Lord comes.

The thought that John's special ministry, as distinct from Peter's, finds its fullest expression in the future when the kingdom is set up, is further enforced by the fact that we hear nothing of it until after the close of the Pentecostal era. Had it been intended to be used in that day, or in connection with Paul's evangel to the nations, it seems that Peter would have mentioned it. Only in the light of Israel's glorious future, as a blessing to all nations, can we fully appreciate the special message it contains.

<sup>25</sup> In the glory we shall know of all His acts. Till then we know of more than we can at present appreciate. May they fill our minds and hearts!

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

THE ACTS is a continuation of Luke's Account. No longer does the Son of Man-kind Himself make known the evangel, but by the Spirit of God through His apostles. He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they are not aware what they are doing." Thus the unbelieving nation once more hears the evangel of the kingdom, enforced by His resurrection from the dead. Israel had rejected Jehovah under the law. They rejected their Messiah when He came in mercy. Acts is a record of their rejection of the spirit of grace which lingers over them until blindness overtakes them for the eon. It begins with the descent of the spirit. It traces the rejection of the spirit. It ends with the spirit's repudiation of Israel. In the beginning, Peter unlocks the door of the kingdom for the Jews; at the close, Paul, in Rome, shuts the door of the kingdom and locks up Israel in obstinacy.

This treatise is transitional. From the first extreme where the nations seem to have no place at all, it leads us on until we arrive at the opposite, where the Jew loses his priority.

It is a record of Israel's response to the renewed proclamation of pardon, and chronicles their apostasy and their gradual rejection. But it also records God's answer to their defection, so that He, instead of being balked in His purpose to bless the other nations, makes their apostasy the basis of a much greater and grander grace than the nations could have experienced if Israel had not apostatized. There is no definite statement of this, for the subject of the book forbids it, yet all the symp-

toms of the present grace will be found, and each symptom follows a crisis in the apostasy of the chosen nation. In reading Acts let us remember that God is concerned with the kingdom to Israel, yet all the while He is making room for that distinct display of grace which we enjoy and which is fully expounded in Paul's epistles, most of which were written during this interregnum.

This account is a series of acts and counteracts. Jerusalem's stoning of Stephen is followed by the introduction of Saul of Tarsus. The persecution in Judea and Samaria is followed by his call on the Damascus road. The murder of James is succeeded by the severance of Saul. When the Jerusalem believers try to kill Paul, he is sent to Rome, where the nation of Israel is set aside and the salvation of God is sent to all the nations.

Peter appears prominently in the first parts of Acts to 12<sup>24</sup>, but Paul replaces him in the latter portion. All that Peter did was more than matched by Paul. Every miracle the chief of the Circumcision apostles wrought was eclipsed by a similar sign, greater in glory and grace.

No truth characteristic of the present actually appears on the pages of Acts. Yet the distinctive doctrines we enjoy did not fall from heaven like a meteor; they gradually rose to view like the sun. In Acts we see their early refracted light before they appear above the horizon. Justification of a kind is preached at Pisidian Antioch, conciliation becomes clear as

## MINISTRIES OF THE TWELVE

Ac.1<sup>8</sup>

*The Rejection of Israel*

Testimony in Jerusalem  
2-7<sup>36</sup>

Judea and Samaria  
8-40

The Limits of the Land  
9:31-11:30

Decrees Issued for the Nations  
15:1-29

Persecution of Paul  
21:30-25:11

Israel is Thrust Aside  
28:23, 28

*The Reception of the Nations*

Saul Introduced  
9:1-3

Saul Called  
9:1-31

Saul Separated by the Spirit  
13:1

Paul Repudiates the Physical  
19:21 2 Cor.5:16

Reveals the Secret  
Eph.3<sup>9</sup>

*Dispensation* Pardon for Repentance and Baptism

Justification

Conciliation

Celestial Glory

## OUTBREAKS OF ISRAEL'S APOSTASY

Christ Crucified  
1<sup>8</sup>

Stephen Stoned  
7<sup>58</sup>

Disciples Scattered  
8<sup>1</sup>

James Killed  
12<sup>3</sup>

Paul Stoned at Lystra  
14<sup>29</sup>

Paul about to be Killed  
21<sup>31</sup>

Paul Imprisoned in Rome  
28<sup>16, 31</sup>

the evangel reaches the nations through Jewish opposition, and the way is opened for the celestial secret of Paul's prison epistles by the public repudiation of Israel in Rome. The ministries of Paul, as recorded in Acts, bring us up to, but never into, present truth. That is found alone in his epistles.

This transitional era, from our Lord's crucifixion to the full establishment of the present secret economy, was marked by a series of changes in dispensation and administration. It is of prime importance that we understand the trend and character of these dispensational divisions, so that we may intelligently follow the inauguration of the economy or administration which is in force today.

These changes may be viewed from two entirely different standpoints. In the book of Acts they mark the steps which led to the rejection of the kingdom by Israel and of Israel by God. In Paul's epistles the same crises are seen as they prepare for the introduction of the present administration. The trend of truth is continually away from the earthly and physical to the celestial and spiritual.

The accompanying outline suggests the steps in Israel's defection and the gradual reception of the nations into blessing. One line is associated with the ministries of the twelve, the other with the apostle Paul. The two lines overlap. Paul is introduced immediately after the murder of Stephen by Jerusalem and each successive lapse of Israel is followed by adding another step in the course which culminated in the revelation of the present secret economy when he became a prisoner in Rome.

Paul's ministries keep pace with each phase of Israel's apostasy. Their unrighteousness is offset by faith righteousness as proclaimed at Pisidian Antioch. When their folly and poverty are manifest, he proclaims God's wisdom and wealth in Corinth, the commercial capital of the day. When their priestly functions fail, he goes to Ephesus, the religious center of the gentile world, and reveals the concilia-

tion. Finally, when the promise of political supremacy is taken from them, Paul is in Rome, the world's political capital, and there he proclaims a new economy based on their political repudiation.

According to the prophets of old, all blessing for the nations is through and with the nation of Israel. So it will be in the kingdom. The distinctive truths of the present secret economy are based on the opposite of this. They follow Israel's failure and apostasy. So far as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, in the accounts of our Lord, and in the Circumcision epistles, there is no basis for blessing at all now, for Israel is the only channel that they know. The book of Acts fills the chasm between the kingdom economy and the present and traces the many steps which lead up to the blessing of the nations during this period, while Israel is thrust aside. It prepares the devout student of previous revelation for the astounding declaration with which it closes, that the salvation of God is to be sent directly to the nations, apart from Israel's mediacy, and that the nations will hear it.

Throughout the Acts the nations are treated as subjects of the kingdom and subordinate to the Jewish nation. This is the case even in Paul's early epistles. The nations were debtors to Israel (Ro.15<sup>27</sup>). But Israel's blessing waits until the fullness of the nations has come in (Ro. 11), and when the apostle reveals the great secret that those under Paul's ministry are to be joint enjoyers of a celestial allotment, and a joint body and joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph.3<sup>a</sup>), the entire kingdom economy vanishes and a new, secret economy takes its place. The great confusion among the saints today will vanish to a large extent if they will recognize the transitional, kingdom character of Acts, and draw their doctrine from Paul's epistles, especially those written at its close, before which the present secret administration was not revealed, and its doctrines were undeveloped, while God lingered over His ancient and beloved people Israel.

<sup>1</sup> Acts is a continuation of the account of our Lord's ministry as recorded by Luke, who presents Him as Son of Mankind. As Theophilus is mentioned elsewhere only in Luke's account, it seems that the latter is the writer of Acts (Lu.1<sup>3</sup>). Though carried on through His apostles, it is the same ministry which the Lord began. It is largely confined to the one aspect treated in Luke's narrative—Christ as Man—but covers all the characters in which He is presented. He is the King of Israel, as in Matthew, the Servant as in Mark, and the Son of God as in John. The distinct commissions in each previous account are often combined in this continuation of the history of the kingdom proclamation.

<sup>3</sup> The interval between His resurrection and ascension was used by our Lord to present indisputable proofs of His resurrection and to instruct His disciples concerning the kingdom of God. This was the preparation He deemed necessary for the ministry recorded in this book. These two subjects dominate it to the very end.

<sup>6</sup> He had been telling them about the kingdom of Israel, but did not tell them *when* it would be restored to them. He does not correct their ideas as to the *character* of the kingdom, but keeps them in suspense as to the *time*. That would depend on the reception accorded their testimony, hence could not be foretold without unfavorably affecting its proclamation. Indeed, we are kept in suspense throughout the book, till the very close, when the kingdom is rejected by the Jews in Rome, and even then we are referred to Isaiah's question, "Till when?" God alone knows when, though in these days there are many signs that the longed-for time is near.

<sup>8</sup> The ministry of the twelve apostles was devoted to three spheres—Jerusalem, Samaria, and the rest of the earth. They did not go to all nations (Lu.24<sup>47</sup>). Paul was called outside the land and commissioned for the regions beyond. The first seven chapters deal with their ministry in Jerusalem, the eighth and ninth with Samaria, and the tenth, eleventh and twelfth with the proselytes and Jews in the land. The balance of the book leads us outside the sphere of the ministry of the Twelve.

<sup>9</sup> The resurrection and ascension of Christ are the two dominating factors in the kingdom testimony in this book. The kingdom had been proclaimed by the King in meekness and humiliation. Now it was about to be proclaimed in power by His apostles while He is glorified in heaven. They rejected Him when He spoke on earth. Will they refuse when He speaks from heaven? They scorned Him before His death. Will they hear One Who had risen from the dead?

<sup>11</sup> The manner of His descent upon Olivet is to be precisely that which Zechariah had foretold (Zech.14<sup>3-4</sup>):

And Jehovah shall go forth and fight  
against those nations,  
As the day He fought in the day of  
the attack.  
And His feet stand in that day upon  
the mount of Olives  
Which faces Jerusalem from the east.

He will come with the clouds of heaven (Dan.7<sup>13</sup>, Un.17) with power and great glory (Mt.24<sup>30</sup>) as the Son of Mankind to a handful of faithful Israelites, just as He left. But for the church, the body of Christ, He comes, not to Olivet, but to the air, not to judge and make war, but to save us and take to Himself in glory all the members of His body, long before He returns to the mount of Olives.

<sup>12</sup> The apostles seem to have had permanent quarters in Jerusalem. The list is probably arranged according to rank, for Peter and John, the "pillars", come first, followed by James. Simon the Zealot, so named from a class in the nation which arose at the time of the Maccabees, who were excessively zealous for the Mosaic law, is called a Cananite, the Hebrew equivalent of zealot, in Matthew (10<sup>4</sup>) and Mark (3<sup>18</sup>). Judas James was surnamed Thaddeus (Mt.10<sup>3</sup>) and Lebbeus.

<sup>16</sup> The buying of a freehold was typical of Judas' loss of his allotment and going to his "own" place. Almost all land in Israel was held in common and allotted each year. But there were a few parcels of ground, such as the garden of Gethsemane, the titles of which were held by individuals. Judas bought one of these. This shows that he had no faith in the coming kingdom, when lands would be re-distributed. Contrast the course of the believing disciples (4<sup>34</sup>).

<sup>20</sup> It seems that Judas did not pay for the freehold, but returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests. They had a consultation, and used the money to complete the purchase. The freehold was called the Field of the Potter and was used for the burial of strangers (Mt. 27<sup>r</sup>). But Judas not only lost his land and his life but also his place among the apostles.

<sup>21</sup> These qualifications shut out the apostle Paul. He could never be one of the twelve, for he had not known the Lord at all during His earthly ministry. That the kingdom to Israel is in view is apparent from the very necessity of *twelve* apostles. Why would not the eleven be enough? Paul was associated with an indefinite number of apostles, but there must always be exactly twelve kingdom apostles, one for each of the tribes of Israel (Mt. 19<sup>28</sup>).

<sup>26</sup> The casting of lots was quite the opposite of a "lottery" in Israel. It was a constant recourse in order to know the mind of the Lord (Prov. 16<sup>33</sup>).

The lot is cast forth in a bosom,  
And from Jehovah is all its judgment.

Matthias was duly and lawfully chosen and will have his place in the kingdom ruling over a tribe of Israel. That his name is not again mentioned does not disprove this, for several of the lesser apostles are never heard of afterward.

<sup>1</sup> Pentecost is simply the Greek word "Fiftieth", because it was fifty days after the Passover. There were three festivals in Israel each year (Ex. 23<sup>14</sup>). The first was the feast of unleavened bread, after the Passover; the second, the feast of harvest, or firstfruits (which is here called Pentecost because it was held seven weeks after the Passover), and the feast of ingathering. As the latter is a type of the time when all Israel shall be saved, so Pentecost is a picture of the salvation of a firstfruit of the nation. This is what occurred, both on the day of Pentecost and during the entire period covered by this book (Jas. 1<sup>18</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> This is not the reception of the spirit by the apostles, for they had already received it (Jn. 20<sup>22</sup>). This is the "coming on" of *power* which the Lord had promised a few days before (1<sup>8</sup>). The baptism of the spirit was

given for *cleansing* (not power), and the filling for *utterance*.

<sup>5</sup> To this day it has been the hope of the pious among the dispersion to return to Jerusalem. Many aged Jews have spent their last days there. So, on the day of Pentecost, there were many in the city who had been born abroad, but who had returned to dwell near the temple. They were typical of that return to the land of their fathers which will precede the setting up of the kingdom. Then salvation and deliverance will be in mount Zion and in Jerusalem (Joel 2<sup>32</sup>). To be in that remnant is the highest privilege open to the pious repatriate of the dispersion.

<sup>5</sup> These men came literally from every nation under heaven. Then, as now, the Jew had penetrated to every part of the known world. The list of countries mentioned includes practically every language or dialect spoken at the time. They are grouped accordingly into Eastern Aramaic, Central Grecian, Western Roman and Southern Egyptian dialects.

<sup>12</sup> The object of this manifestation, as found in Joel, was to make them know that God was in the midst of Israel. (Joel 2<sup>27</sup>). *Afterward* the signs which usher in the day of the Lord were due. In other words, Pentecost was the prelude to the era of *judgment* which precedes the setting up of the kingdom. This shows that it was not intended to be the commencement of the present economy of *grace* which was later introduced through Paul's ministries. In that future judgment period the signs foretold by Peter will take place. The salvation offered at Pentecost was principally concerned with these judgment scenes through which they hoped to be saved for a place in the kingdom when Christ would return to the Mount of Olives.

<sup>14</sup> Peter *declaims*. He does not address them in common words, but uses choice and rare expressions in making this oration. Perhaps this was done partly to meet and refute the charge of drunkenness. His immediate appeal is to their own Scriptures, which he brought home to them with power.

<sup>16</sup> *This is what*. Such is Peter's interpretation of Pentecost. It was a

fulfillment of ancient prophecy. God was in their midst as foretold in Joel (2<sup>27</sup>). This, however, was introductory to the terrible celestial convulsions and earthly upheavals which prepare for the dreadful day of the Lord. It promised a time of trial and affliction unparalleled by any that earth has suffered hitherto. It introduced God in the character of an Avenger of His people, Who is about to gather the nations to battle and Who will destroy them in His fury. Had the nation of Israel repented, and the Pentecostal economy continued without interruption, there would never have been a parenthetical period like the present of which none of the prophets ever spoke, which was a secret hid in God (Eph. 3<sup>9</sup>) and which presents God as a Supplicant, petitioning for conciliation, and preserving peace at all costs (2Co. 5<sup>20</sup>), Who showers His richest blessings on the nations and gives them a celestial allotment immeasurably beyond the highest thought of Pentecost.

<sup>18</sup> Peter, not Joel, speaks of prophesying. It is an inspired break between that part of Joel's prophecy which was fulfilled at Pentecost and that which is yet future.

<sup>22</sup> In the evangel of the kingdom the appeal is to the life of our Lord during His earthly ministry. Paul never knew Him in this character. He did not meet Him until after His ascension, and the present economy, based on Paul's experience and revelations, does not recognize Christ after the flesh. Peter's appeal, in proclaiming the kingdom, is no model for us now. Our relationship to Christ begins with His death, burial, resurrection and ascension.

<sup>23</sup> The Jews knew that Christ should suffer. Their sacred scrolls were explicit. This was the counsel which determined His death beforehand.

<sup>24</sup> The resurrection is the central and essential theme of every evangel. As Peter is proclaiming the kingdom, he proves His resurrection by referring his hearers to king David and his throne. David is the one with whom the throne covenant had been made (2Sam.23<sup>5</sup>). It is as David's Heir that Christ will sit on the throne, ruling the nation of Israel, during the thousand years.

<sup>27</sup> Death is a return. The spirit returns to God Who gave it (Ecc.12<sup>7</sup>). The soul returns to the unseen. The body returns to the soil (Ecc.12<sup>7</sup>, cf. Gen.3<sup>19</sup>). In the case of our Lord, He commended His spirit to the Father (Lu.23<sup>46</sup>). Here he speaks of His soul in the unseen. But His body did not return to the soil. In this His death differs from others. There was no dissolution or decomposition which accompanies the death of other men. His resurrection was unique alone. Others who are vivified, will not rise with the same body which was put into the tomb, but God will give each one a body according to His pleasure (1Co.15<sup>38</sup>). But He arose with the identical frame which bore our sins, pure, spotless and unsullied even by the hand of death.

<sup>30</sup> God's covenants are of two kinds, conditional and unconditional. All those conditioned on human effort, such as the covenant at Sinai, end in failure. All dependent entirely on God, as the covenant with Abraham concerning the land, and with David, concerning the throne, are sure of fulfillment. Moreover, God interposes with an oath, so that there is nothing more sure than that One shall sit on David's throne ruling the sons of Israel.

<sup>34</sup> The whole passage shows that Peter is proclaiming a literal king and a literal kingdom for Israel. The descent of the spirit had nothing to do with the formation of the body of Christ, but was a well known sign which indicated the approach of the judgment era which precedes Messiah's advent. In accordance with the burden of his message Peter chooses to bring before them king David and the covenant God made with him, because, if they accept his words, it is this covenant which would be fulfilled. They had crucified Him as the King of Israel. His resurrection proves Him to be the One Whom David foretold. All that remains to be done, should Israel, as a nation, repent, would be the judging of His enemies. This will occur in the judgment era. Here is no hint of, or preparation for, the present interval of undiluted grace, in which God is raising up His enemies, like Saul of Tarsus, to sit with Christ on His celestial throne.

<sup>38</sup> Repentance and baptism lead to a probationary pardon, which may be withdrawn. This pardon is extended by Christ as the King. Its operation is illustrated by the parable of the ten thousand talent debtor (see Mt.18<sup>27-34</sup>) whose debt was remitted, but who refused to remit the smaller sum which his fellow slave owed to him. Hence the remission of his debt was canceled. So it is with Israel in this chronicle. Many of those who, in the beginning, received the pardon of their sins, refused to share their pardon with the other nations, objecting to proselytes like Cornelius, raising a riot on the supposition that an alien has entered the sanctuary, seeking to kill Paul even though he brought alms to Jerusalem. They finally fall away (Heb.6<sup>8,10</sup><sup>27</sup>) where there is no longer any room for repentance, but a fearful prospect of judgment. This pardon, however, is in sharp contrast to our justification, or acquittal, which comes from the Judge on the sole grounds of grace and faith, and from which there can be no fall, as it places us beyond the sphere of judgment. Conciliation (Ro.5<sup>11</sup>) is immeasurably beyond any pardon, as it places us in the unclouded favor of God's grace.

<sup>39</sup> The promise was to Israel, both in the land and in the dispersion (Dan. 9<sup>7</sup>). Those "afar" were Jews in the lands where God had driven them, and not Gentiles or the church.

<sup>40</sup> The salvation was from the judgments about to visit that crooked generation.

<sup>42</sup> The "breaking of bread" is an idiomatic Hebrew expression like our "taking tea" or the Arab's "eating salt", and denoted an ordinary meal. The bread, or flat cakes, which they used, were broken into convenient bits by each person and used as a spoon to convey the liquid portions of the meal to the mouth.

<sup>45</sup> Each Israelite had an allotment according to the law, which could not be permanently disposed of, but came back to him at the jubilee. Those who had bought such allotments would lose them when the kingdom would be set up, for then there will be the great jubilee, when each allotment will be returned to its true tenant. These believers did not sell their own allot-

ments, but those which they had *acquired*, which they would forfeit in the jubilee. This showed their faith in the coming of the kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> It is evident that, at this time, there was no thought among the disciples of severing from the customs and worship of the nation. The sanctuary was their principal place of resort until persecution drove them from it.

<sup>2</sup> Can we not see, in the man lame from his birth, a close likeness to the people of Israel? They had a beautiful way of approach to God, but it availed them little, for they were unable to walk through it, into the divine presence. The healing of the lame man was a *sign* (4<sup>16</sup>). As a miracle it was full of significance. To those who read its message it proclaimed the advent of One Who could heal Israel's impotence and bring them, like the lame man, into God's house and fill them with joy and praise. But above all, it was a sign of that day when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the narcissus, for then shall the lame man leap as a fallow deer (Isa.35<sup>6</sup>). The powers of the eon to come are present in Israel! No wonder the devout and reverent worshipers in the sanctuary are filled with awe and amazement! To them it was no mere prodigy, no unmeaning exhibition of supernatural power, but the key to that kingdom which was the goal of all their hopes and aspirations. It meant the end of the Gentile yoke, the sovereignty of Israel over the nations, the coming of Messiah and a thousand blessings for a thousand years.

<sup>5</sup> How like are we to the lame man! We look to God for a bare alms, and He pours upon us the true riches and adds the joy of His presence. It was worth while to be lame for forty years to become the object of God's mercy and a signal instance of His power for the blessing of His people. So we, too, will one day bless the impotence and the trials which afford Him a field for the display of His favor. This is the "beautiful gate" which leads us into the sanctuary where the Divine Presence assures us of joy unending and unalloyed. Let us ask, expecting to receive.

<sup>5</sup> God gives more and better than we seek, or hope to obtain.



<sup>13</sup> The word "Boy" is here used because it, like its Greek equivalent, may be used both of a child and a servant. The common version renders it *servant, child* and *son*. Each of these, however, better represents another Greek word, and all fail to give the dual meaning which this word seems to have. It is usually restricted to a boy or girl between seven and fourteen years of age. It is used of our Lord when He was twelve years old and remained behind when they went home from the festival (Lu. 2<sup>43</sup>).

<sup>14</sup> The complete restoration of Peter to divine favor is nowhere more clearly seen than when he charges them, "You disown the holy and just One!" None of them were as guilty as he himself had been, yet he does not allow his personal failure to hinder his faithful proclamation of the evangel. In order to get them to repent, or change their minds regarding the Messiah, it was necessary to press home their awful guilt. Yet the most important point is the witness he bears to the resurrection of Christ. This it is which proves His Messiahship. The healing of the lame man is but one more proof that He is alive and able to do all that the prophets foretold of Him.

<sup>17</sup> Under the law, sins of ignorance were distinguished from willful disobedience. This was the ground of the Saviour's prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they are not aware what they are doing" (Lu. 23<sup>34</sup>). This is the real clue to the so-called "unpardonable sin." The sin against the Son of Mankind was forgiven, for it was done in ignorance. But the sin against the testimony borne by the holy Spirit in the book of Acts was unpardonable because it was done deliberately and willfully, after the resurrection of Christ.

<sup>21</sup> The times of restoration include the terrific judgments of the Unveiling, when, by means of seals, trumpets and bowls, the earth is restored to the sovereignty of Christ as Son of Mankind. It has no reference to individual destiny, but to redemption of the enslaved and the disinherited by their Kinsman Redeemer (Lev. 25).

<sup>23</sup> Christ is the Prophet like Moses sent to lead Jehovah's people out of Egypt, through the wilderness, into the kingdom. The whole period of the book of Acts is typified by Israel's wilderness journey. Because the people did not hearken to Moses they were strewn along in the wilderness and never entered the holy land. Likewise, because the nation did not hearken to One Who was more than Moses, they did not enter the kingdom.

The threat of extermination is an inspired alteration. In Deut. 18<sup>19</sup> the Hebrew is, literally, "I will *inquire*," or, as we say "I will *require* it of him." The LXX renders this "I will *take vengeance* on him."

<sup>28</sup> The term "Boy" is used here with all reverence, for want of a better. The difficulties encountered in its translation are apparent from the variety of renderings in the common version, all of which are better fitted to some other Greek word. They use *child, son, servant, young man, maid*, etc. It is used of the boys under two years of age in Bethlehem (Mt. 2<sup>16</sup>). It is used of Jesus when He was twelve years old (Lu. 2<sup>43</sup>). It is quoted from Isaiah when he spoke of Him (Mt. 12<sup>18</sup>). It is applied to Him four times in this book (3<sup>13</sup>, 4<sup>27-30</sup>). It is a word like our "boy" or "girl" which may be applied either to a child or a young servant.

<sup>1</sup> The apostles offended both the priests and the Sadducees by their action. It was the privilege of the priests to teach the people. They should have been the chief support of the apostles in heralding the proclamation of the kingdom. But they are jealous because these common men command a hearing and usurp their authority in matters of doctrine. The Sadducees are especially offended, inasmuch as they denied the doctrine of the resurrection, which was the principal point in the proclamation of the apostles. Apart from the resurrection Messiah was dead and all hope of His kingdom was crucified with Him. But, given the power of His resurrection, all the promises of the kingdom are confirmed. The officer of the sanctuary was in command of the Levitical guard which had the military oversight of the sacred precincts, where the Gentiles could not enter.

<sup>5</sup> This was the supreme spiritual judiciary in Israel. It comprised the heads of the twenty-four courses of priests, the scribes, and elders, said to have been in all seventy-one. The names of the chief priest and his immediate associates are mentioned for their official weight. Christ admitted their authority (Mt.23<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>8</sup> The evangel of the kingdom is now for the first time since the death of Christ, proclaimed to Israel as a nation, as represented by her chiefs and elders and scribes. Hitherto it has gone to individuals in the nation with considerable success. Now everything hinges on the attitude of the official heads of the people. They had rejected Messiah Himself and were responsible for His crucifixion. The chief priests and elders knew that He had foretold His resurrection (Mt.27<sup>63</sup>). They had the evidence of the guard detail whom they had bribed to tell a false story (Mt.28<sup>13</sup>). To this the apostles now add their testimony and confirm it by healing the lame man. When Peter speaks they are quite unable to answer him. Surely now they are convinced that Jesus is the Messiah! If He can save the lame man He can save the nation. Here was Israel's opportunity. They stood on the verge of the kingdom. If they accepted Him, He would soon rid them of their enemies and come to set up the sovereignty promised by the prophets. Should they refuse the testimony of the holy Spirit as they had rejected Him it would involve the whole nation in an eonian sin, and the kingdom could not come.

The disciples' question concerning the restoration of the kingdom *at this time*, is here answered for us for the first time. Again and again, during the course of its proclamation, the Jews reject the King and the kingdom. Here, however, we have the first refusal. This is the supreme crisis in the book of Acts. Had they accepted the apostles' testimony, the nation would have followed their lead, and the success of the apostles' proclamation would have been assured. Now that they reject the testimony to His resurrection, it is clear that Israel's rightful sovereignty will *not* be restored to them at this time.

<sup>13</sup> Peter and John were not *ignorant* men by any means, though they lacked the culture and affectation which marked the learned class of that day. They had been in the school of Christ.

<sup>19</sup> The attitude of the Sanhedrin had the immediate effect of abrogating their authority. They should have ruled for God, now they are arrayed against God. They should have been a terror to evil-doers: now they menace those who are carrying out His will. Peter, as an apostle of the Messiah, was one of the real rulers in Israel, and will one day sit upon a throne in the kingdom (Mt.19<sup>27</sup>). Hence he has the right to oppose the Sanhedrin and to carry out the commission which he has from his Master. This is no example for us to follow in this economy. We are to be subject to the superior authorities (Ro.13<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>22</sup> The healing of the lame man is called a sign, hence has some typical significance, especially in regard to his age. May this not suggest the forty years which followed, during which Israel was not able to walk before God?

<sup>23</sup> The threats of the Sanhedrin produced a powerful effect on the believers. They were accustomed to obey their religious rulers implicitly. In fact, they gave their own chiefs and elders a place which the Roman power never could obtain. They must have some divine direction for continuing in a course prohibited by the highest Jewish authority. This is found in the second part of the first Psalm (usually called the second Psalm). Here their own chiefs are associated with the nations in hostility to Messiah. The Psalm should be read to the end. The threats of the Sanhedrin are as nothing compared to Jehovah's threats against them. The judges of the land are exhorted to be instructed and serve the Lord, lest they perish when His anger is burning but a little (Ps.2<sup>10-12</sup>). The fact that their chiefs are no longer under Jehovah's protection but the objects of His indignation emboldens them to go forth with the proclamation in spite of their opposition. Moreover, the Lord's hand had been with the apostles, for many had believed, and it was evident that the Sanhedrin itself was afraid to exercise its full power, or Peter and John would not have been released.

<sup>80</sup> The timid opposition of the Sanhedrin is in contrast to the boldness of those who proclaimed the evangel. God manifested Himself by miraculous interventions, and the powers of the kingdom abounded.

<sup>82</sup> The laws concerning property were so different in Israel from anything with which we are acquainted that it is difficult for us to understand this and similar passages. First of all, each Jew had his allotment, which could not be sold. Even if it was disposed of, it came back to him in the jubilee. This was his means of living. If the kingdom should come, the land would be re-distributed according to the prophets (Eze.47<sup>13</sup>). The action of the Pentecostal believers is all based on this fact. Whatever they had beyond their allotment would go back to its rightful allottee when the kingdom is set up. In view of this they sold the lands and houses they had acquired besides their allotment, and shared their possessions, or personal property such as money, among themselves.

<sup>84</sup> A *freehold* was a piece of property to which actual title could be acquired, as is the custom among western nations today. The name, which means *separated*, shows that a freehold was not land held in common, like an allotment, but held by a title unaffected by the jubilee. Gethsemane was such a freehold (Mt.26<sup>36</sup>). Judas manifested his unbelief by purchasing a freehold with the price of his Lord, and the chief priest completed the purchase by paying the money. This was evidence that they did not believe in the coming kingdom, for they never would have bought the bloody field, only to find its title invalid when the land is reapportioned to the tribes in that day. The disciples, knowing that freeholds were not in line with the law and that they would be forfeited under the righteous rule of Messiah, put the means obtained from their sale into a common fund.

<sup>86</sup> The allotment of the Levites could not be sold (Lev.25<sup>34</sup>). But this field was his personal property. Had the kingdom come, he would have had his share in their allotment (Eze.48<sup>13-14</sup>).

<sup>8</sup> Ananias and Sapphira sold a *freehold* which they had *acquired*, over and beyond their own allotment in the

land. In this they did well. They brought a part to the apostles. This, too, was a commendable act. Their sin seems to have been, not in withholding a part, but in giving the impression that they had contributed all for the common good. Here we have a practical illustration of the righteous rule which will characterize the kingdom of God. The hidden motive is brought to light. An act appearing most praiseworthy on the surface is declared to be tainted with falsehood. No witnesses are needed. The Lord's apostle can detect evil though most skillfully concealed. Judgment is immediate and summary.

<sup>4</sup> Ananias was under no compulsion to sell the freehold. Neither was he obliged to contribute the sum he obtained to the common fund. All this was voluntary. But such a course would have lowered him in the eyes of the disciples and he wished to be well thought of. But his avarice was too strong to allow him to part with the whole sum, so he, in effect, steals a part of the gift, and presents the rest as though it were the whole amount. This was hypocrisy in its most hateful form. In an administration of grace, such as we enjoy today, such sins are not followed by swift judgment. They wait until the tribunal of Christ (2Co. 5<sup>10</sup>). But in the administration of the kingdom, righteousness will reign and sin will be suppressed.

<sup>11</sup> The result of the sudden and severe judgment of Ananias and Sapphira was great fear, both among the believers and others who hear of it. The resultant conduct was not the free unforced desire to please God which is inspired by His love and grace, which should actuate us in this economy, but restraint from evil through dread of judgment. It is based on power from without rather than an impulse from within. We are not in danger of any judgment, hence have no such motive to mold our behavior. Our lives should be the fruit of love.

<sup>13</sup> The awful atmosphere of inflexible righteousness which repelled the unbelieving was an adumbration of the day when a King shall reign in righteousness and through the greatness of His power His enemies shall yield a feigned obedience to Him (Ps. 184;

81<sup>15</sup>; 66<sup>3</sup>). The fear of the drawn sword in the King's hand will repress evil and rebellion.

<sup>14</sup> The prayer of the disciples, after the threats of the Sanhedrin, seems to have been abundantly answered. Not only was the kingdom proclaimed with power but the word was confirmed by many signs and miracles. Multitudes joined the disciples and they met openly in the sanctuary.

<sup>17</sup> As ever, the great point of their proclamation was the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Nothing could be more offensive to the Sadducees than this, for it upheld the Pharisees in the principal point of difference between them. Both, however, united in their common hostility to Christ. The increasing popularity and numbers of the disciples filled them with jealousy. They thought that they must show their authority before the new movement should get beyond their control.

<sup>18</sup> As before (4<sup>3</sup>), the apostles are confined during the night, that they may appear before the Sanhedrin in the morning. Then they were held until the Sanhedrin sends for them. Now, however, the Lord condescends to give the rebellious rulers a token of His power as well as their impotence. He will give a public exhibition of the futility of opposing Him. No evidence shall be lacking to convince them that God is behind Peter's proclamation.

<sup>20</sup> Had the apostles left the city and escaped for their lives, as Peter did on a subsequent occasion, the testimony would have collapsed and the Sanhedrin would have suppressed the further proclamation of the evangel. Their fearless course in resuming their work just where they had left off, was even more impressive than the miraculous deliverance from prison. It gave them a place in the eyes of the people and before the Sanhedrin which demanded respect if not fear. The kingdom which they proclaimed had not only power to set captives free, but to uphold them in their freedom.

<sup>21</sup> Once again all of Israel's rulers are gathered together and given an opportunity to hear the evangel. The fate of the nation depends on their action, for they are the responsible heads of the people. Their rejection involves all the rest.

<sup>25</sup> The popular favor enjoyed by the apostles reached its culmination at this time. The increasing number of the disciples, the many benefits conferred on the sick, which would enlist friends, as well as the well-known fact that the apostles had been imprisoned without warrant and then delivered without human aid, by the messenger of God—all this would act very powerfully with the impressionable populace and give the apostles a prestige they had never before enjoyed. This, too, accounts for the mild attitude of the chief priest and the bold assurance of the apostles when called to account for their disobedience to the commands of the Sanhedrin. It is significant that the rulers ask no questions, and are silent before the disciples and the multitude as to the manner of their release. They did not wish to elicit further testimony to the supernatural deliverances, both of the Lord from the grave and His servants from the prison.

<sup>26</sup> It is evident that, had the apostles wished to do so, they could have started an insurrection even against the Sanhedrin, and this was what the officer of the sanctuary and the chief priest feared.

<sup>29</sup> Peter begins by reminding the Sanhedrin that they were going contrary to God and that, in such circumstances, he had no alternative but to ignore their commands. This is exactly what he had told them before (4<sup>19</sup>). They cannot but infer that any further charge they may lay on the apostles would not be heeded. Peter does not stop to consider any answer to this ultimatum but goes right on and charges them with the murder of their Messiah, Whom God exalts to His right hand. He offers them a pardon. Instead of standing before them to be judged he brings them into judgment before God. The whole situation is reversed. The judges are pronounced guilty by the prisoner.

<sup>33</sup> Having killed the Master, they do not hesitate to assassinate His servants.

<sup>34</sup> This is probably the same Gamaliel who was the instructor of Saul of Tarsus (22<sup>3</sup>), one of the most celebrated teachers of the law in his day. His grandfather was the famous Hillel, and his grandson, of the same name, also obtained great eminence in Judaism.

<sup>36</sup> The fact that this Theudas is not mentioned in profane literature is no reason for doubting the truthfulness and accuracy of the narrative. Josephus, in his *Antiquities*, hints at many disturbances of this character at about the time indicated. He does, indeed, tell of another Theudas, about fifty years later, during the reign of the emperor Claudius, whose career corresponds closely to the one mentioned by Gamaliel, but it was plainly impossible for Gamaliel to speak of an insurrection which had not yet occurred. Such a statement would not have gone unchallenged during the early centuries of our era, if it had no foundation in fact.

<sup>37</sup> Judas, the Galilean, is often mentioned by Josephus (*Antiquities* 18, 1, 1; *Wars of the Jews* 2, 8, 1). He charges him with starting a new sect of Jewish philosophy from which sprang many misfortunes and wars. This sect agreed in the main with the Pharisees, but they had an inviolable attachment to liberty, and said that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They did not hesitate to die any kind of death, nor did they heed the death of their relatives and friends, nor could any fear make them call any man lord. In the book on the *Wars of the Jews*, Josephus characterizes him thus: "a certain Galilean, whose name was Judas, prevailed on his countrymen to revolt, and said that they were cowards if they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans, and would, after God, submit to mortal men as their lords. This man was a teacher of a peculiar sect of his own and was not at all like the rest of their leaders." His followers were dispersed, but the love of liberty was spread among the people and later led to many other uprisings.

<sup>38</sup> Gamaliel's cowardly evasion suited the Sanhedrin because they were afraid of the people. Though God used this speech for the apostles' salvation, his specious reasoning is not to be trusted. So Job's friends falsely argued. "Truth is mighty and will prevail"—yes, ultimately, but not necessarily here and now. Gamaliel left out *faith*, an omission which invalidates his conclusions and makes it impossible to accept as witnesses for God

such as "the last apostles, as death-doomed, for we became a theater to the world and to messengers and to men" (1 Co. 4<sup>9</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> It is important to grasp clearly the distinction between the "Hebrews" and "Hellenists." The latter were not gentiles. They were Israelites just as really as the Hebrews. The Hellenists were those in the nation who had renounced the ancient customs and traditions to a large extent and had taken up Greek culture. All classes spoke Greek, but the Hebrews also used an Aramaic vernacular in familiar intercourse. The Hellenists were largely those Jews who had resided in foreign lands and had acquired the customs and manners of the Greeks. In one sense the Hellenists were Hebrews, but this term gradually came to be confined to those who were true to the old traditions. Thus, when Paul speaks of himself as a Hebrew of the Hebrews he means that he was not a Hellenist, but had clung closely to Judaism and had resisted the influence of foreign culture and customs. The usual definition of a Hellenist, "a Greek-speaking Jew," is not adequate, for all Jews spoke Greek. Our Lord and His apostles used it in their public discourses and the most illiterate could understand them. Only occasionally did they use Aramaic expressions. The Hebrews looked down on the Hellenists, hence they formed a separate class of disciples.

<sup>5</sup> Though these seven names are all Greek, the fact that one proselyte, Nicholas, was included, seems to indicate that all parties were represented. Only the first two are mentioned again in the Scriptures. They do not seem to have confined themselves to the serving of tables, but took a leading part in the evangel.

<sup>9</sup> There were hundreds of synagogues in Jerusalem, some of which were maintained by the various groups of Jews in foreign lands. About B. C. 63 Pompey carried a large number of Jews to Rome. When they were liberated and returned to Judea, they formed the synagogue of the Freedmen. These synagogues seem to have been composed mostly of Hellenists. In all probability Saul of Tarsus belonged to the synagogue of Cilicia.

<sup>13</sup> These synagogues were doubtless very lax in their adherence to the Jewish law and customs, yet they are not ashamed to charge Stephen with this, in order to inflame the Sanhedrin against him. The false witness did not consist in trumping up charges with no foundation in fact, but in perverting the truth, just as was done in the case of our Lord. Indeed, they brought up the very same charge (Mt 26<sup>61</sup>). While Christ was on earth, His body was the true temple of God (Jn. 2<sup>21</sup>). Jehovah did not inhabit Herod's splendid pile. It did not house the Shekinah glory. The only times that it was tenanted by the Divine Effulgence was when He came into its courts. When He left it the last time, He exclaimed, "Lo! your house is left to you desolate!" (Mt. 23<sup>38</sup>). Stephen had doubtless brought this truth home to them, and perhaps had also pressed our Lord's prediction concerning the destruction of Herod's shrine, so that not one stone should be left on another (Mt. 24<sup>2</sup>). But in no case could he have said that Christ (Whom they contemptuously termed the Nazarene) would Himself destroy the temple. On the contrary, He said that, when *they* destroyed it, *He* would *raise it up* (Jn. 2<sup>19</sup>). This He did in His resurrection (Jn. 2<sup>22</sup>). And now the glory of God's presence illuminates the face of Stephen, so that he becomes, for the time, the messenger, or angel of God to them.

<sup>1</sup> The address of Stephen is a model for presenting the Messiah to the Jews. They stumbled at His sufferings and rejection, so Stephen takes up the greatest of the nation's heroes, who were types of Messiah, and shows that, in each case, there was a preliminary separation or rejection. Abraham was compelled to leave his kindred and his father's house, Joseph was hated by his brethren, Moses was not recognized when he first came to help his people, even David, that unparalleled type of the coming King, not only spent years in rejection, but had to leave the building of the temple to Solomon. All of these are pictures of a *rejected* Messiah. In each the glory followed suffering and separation. Such is the picture which the ancient Scriptures draw, and the inference is clear that Jesus is Messiah.

<sup>2</sup> Abram was first called out of his land and from his relatives, and went as far as Haran, accompanied by his father's household. Further obedience to the divine command seems to have been hindered by his father, and they went no further. At his father's death, he leaves his father's house and completes his journey to Canaan. Yet he received none of the land which should become his, and thus prefigures Him Who came to His own and received nothing but a tomb (Gen. 23). The rite of circumcision likewise tells of the cutting off of His flesh on the cross.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph is a marvelous miniature of the suffering and glorified Messiah. The jealous hatred of his brethren placed him in the pit and in the prison, but God was with him and exalted him to the highest place on earth. He became the deliverer, not only of his own brethren, but of all of Egypt also. The one whom they despised and ill-treated became their lord and saviour. The Sanhedrin could hardly miss the application of this to the Messiah Whom Stephen proclaimed. *They* were the brethren of Messiah ben Joseph.

<sup>11</sup> The great affliction of Jacob is typical of the great affliction of the end time, after which Messiah will make Himself known to His brethren.

<sup>14</sup> The Septuagint, or Greek version, differs from the Hebrew text in Genesis 46<sup>26-27</sup> by giving Joseph nine sons in place of two, and thus bringing the total up to seventy-five. But, as the enumeration in Genesis does not necessarily include all who are alluded to by Stephen, there is no reason why they should give the same total. The Septuagint differs greatly from the Hebrew text in regard to numbers, especially in the genealogies, and it may preserve some true readings.

<sup>16</sup> The bones of Joseph were transferred from Egypt to the land by Moses (Ex. 13<sup>19</sup>). So the rest of the patriarchs were transferred to Sychem, where Jacob had bought a parcel of a field (Gen. 33<sup>19</sup>), probably near, or adjoining the sepulcher which Abraham had bought before, of which there is no record in Genesis. If Stephen had made even a minute blunder regarding this the Sanhedrin would soon have set him right. They were much "higher" critics than any we have today.

<sup>18</sup> It is probable that the lot of Israel in Egypt was pleasant under the dynasty which was acquainted with Joseph, who made these rulers absolute masters in Egypt, for he got for them all the silver and the cattle and the land in exchange for grain, in the time of the famine (Gen.47). Such service could not be forgotten. So it was that Israel prospered in the land of Goshen until the reigning dynasty was displaced by a different line of rulers, who knew nothing of Joseph and were not indebted to him for their power.

<sup>20</sup> Moses is a memorable example of God's method of meeting the wisdom of the world. Pharaoh plans the extermination of the Hebrew race, yet he himself nurtures and educates their deliverer!

<sup>22</sup> Egypt is set before us as the sum of human wisdom, as Assyria was of human power. The Egyptian priests had a knowledge of science which, in some points at least, far surpassed what is known today. No scientist can accomplish the feats of Jannes and Jambres. Moses was far beyond our present standards of intellectual attainment.

<sup>23</sup> The incident concerning Moses' rejection by his brethren at his first attempt to become their deliverer must have had a powerful effect on the Sanhedrin, for nothing would appeal to them more than a parallel between Moses and Messiah. Except to the most hardened heart, the fact that Moses was, in the first place, scorned by those whom he came to save, and his efforts in their behalf misunderstood, proved positively that Messiah would receive similar treatment. As Pharaoh menaced the life of Moses, so Herod sought the life of Christ. As his own people cast out Moses and refused to accept the salvation he offered them, so the Jews murdered the Messiah and rejected His deliverance. And we may add, as Moses came back and led them out, so will Messiah return and lead them into the blessings of the millennial kingdom.

<sup>30</sup> The flaming thornbush is a notable symbol of the nation of Israel. They were in the midst of the fire of persecution and have often been since they came out of Egypt, yet they are never consumed. They are the only eonian nation.

<sup>20</sup> He Who is especially referred to as Jehovah in the Hebrew scriptures is here called a messenger or angel. The same term is used of the One seen by Moses on mount Sinai (<sup>53</sup>). Hence it is evident that the theophanies, or visible appearances of the invisible God, were carried out by intermediate agents. Indeed, the deity is identified with the messenger even in Exodus. First we are told that the angel of the Lord appeared in the midst of the bush. And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, Elohim called unto him out of the midst of the bush (Ex.32-4). The same is true of the giving of the law at Sinai. Moses went up unto Elohim, and Jehovah called unto him out of the mountain (Ex.19<sup>3</sup>). Yet we are assured that the law was prescribed through messengers in the hands of a mediator (Gal.3<sup>19</sup>), and that it was spoken by messengers (Heb.2<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>35</sup> The prime point with Stephen is that it was the one whom they had disowned who was chosen by God to be their redeemer and judge. Just so with Messiah. The fact that He had been disowned was no proof that He was false. It was, rather, the great sign which identified Him with the types of old, for Moses was rejected by the people even after he led them out of Egypt and had received the law and wrought wonderful miracles to attest his office. This should be the key note in all evangelism of the people of the covenant. A prophet like Moses must suffer at the hands of his own people. This thought ought also to cheer the hearts of His lesser slaves, who find themselves rejected and despised because of their faithfulness to Him.

<sup>36</sup> The forty years covered by the book of Acts is the antitype of the wilderness wanderings. It is characterized by the same stubborn unbelief which strewed the bones of Israel along the wilderness, so that those who left Egypt did not enter the land of promise. Neither did those of the Pentecostal era enter the kingdom. The epistle to the Hebrews unfolds this likeness, for it was written to explain why the promise of the kingdom waits.

<sup>37</sup> Accused of disloyalty to Moses, he proves the falsity of the charge by his constant reference to Moses' writings.

<sup>41</sup> Idolatry is, etymologically, the offering of divine service to that which can be perceived by the senses. In this way, all objects of worship, even if they are supposed to be representations of the true God, are idols. God will have no images of Himself but One—His beloved Son. He is the Image of the invisible God (Col.1<sup>15</sup>). The idolatry here mentioned is usually referred to Israel in the wilderness. But their conduct at that time was hardly the occasion of the Babylonian exile. In neither Amos (5<sup>25-27</sup>) nor Acts is the time given, but it was, most likely, in the days of the kings, before the captivity. One of the causes of their exile was that they had transgressed very much after all the abominations of the nations (2Chron.36<sup>14</sup>). In the land they corrupted the form of the wilderness worship, substituting the tabernacle of Moloch for the testimony which Jehovah had directed to be constructed according to the model Moses had seen. It is possible that the Hebrew should be translated "your king", rather than "Moloch". Amos writes concerning Israel (Amos1<sup>1</sup>), so that the reference may be to their first king, Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. He, like Aaron, made a "calf" or bull for the people to worship. In fact, he made two, and placed one in Bethel and the other in Dan (1Ki.12<sup>25-30</sup>). In one case it was a revolt from the prophet of Jehovah, in the other it was secession from the rightful king and the house of David. Besides the false tabernacle, they also had a substitute for the glory, which seems to have been an image of one of the constellations. Thus they worshipped the "host of heaven". Raiphan, or Remphan, is sometimes identified with Saturn, but it is not certain.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen is charged with speaking against the temple. Hence he traces God's dwelling place to the temple of Solomon, yet proves from Scripture that the true temple is not made with hands. The God of glory had left that temple tenantless (Eze. 9<sup>8</sup>, 10<sup>4,18</sup>, 11<sup>23</sup>) and had taken up His abode in His Son, as He had tabernacled amongst them, full of grace and truth (Jn.1<sup>14</sup>). And now the glory was in their midst, irradiating the face of Stephen.

<sup>48</sup> The quotation from Isaiah provoked opposition. See Ac.22<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> A review of Israel's history reveals a series of apostasies. All of God's spokesmen suffered at their hands. Even while maintaining the outward form they were always at variance with the holy Spirit. This charge is of special import at this time, for this is the first great crisis in this book. The holy Spirit's testimony to Jerusalem is summarily rejected. The question, Art Thou at this time restoring the kingdom to Israel? receives an emphatic negative, so far as Jerusalem and Judea are concerned. The testimony now goes to Samaria.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen begins his address with "the God of glory" and now he beholds the glory in heaven, and Jesus standing, ready to return and bless them should they repent. After this He is always represented as seated, His work accomplished, waiting until the apostate nation is ready to receive Him as their Messiah.

<sup>59</sup> Like his Master, Stephen prays for his murderers with his last breath. But, for the nation, this sin against the holy Spirit could not be pardoned. Until Paul's last visit, we hear of no further testimony in Jerusalem.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen was the messenger sent after the departed Nobleman with the message "We do not want this man to reign over us!" (Lu.19<sup>14</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> With Stephen was interred the hope of the kingdom. Yet at the same time God begins to hint at another testimony of a very different character. The kingdom called for righteousness. It visited iniquity with swift judgment. In preparing for the new departure, God introduces Saul of Tarsus, not as a just or holy man, but as a malignant and vicious enemy. This is necessary because He is about to deal with those who are sinners and enemies on the ground of grace. Grace cannot be shown to those who deserve aught. Merit mars it and hinders its outflow. Saul was, in very truth, the foremost of sinners. He exceeded the most rabid of the Sanhedrin in his hatred of Messiah and His people. If any man deserved to be damned, that man was Saul of Tarsus. Yet, eventually, he it is who is raised to the highest pinnacle of glory—far beyond the fondest hopes of Stephen or the twelve apostles. Such is the potency of grace when it is unhindered by human help!



<sup>4</sup> We now enter the second cycle of the kingdom testimony. Jerusalem and Judea have not heeded its proclamation. It is now offered to Samaria, then it will go to the limits of the earth, and even to the proselytes like the eunuch and Cornelius. Thus it was that the Lord had commanded (1<sup>8</sup>).

After the ten tribes, whose capital was Samaria, were exiled, the king of Assyria sent colonists to repopulate the country (2 Ki.17<sup>24-27</sup>). They intermarried with the remaining Israelites and thus sprang the mixed race of the Samaritans. Because the Jews would not recognize them or allow them to help in rebuilding the temple, they stirred up the Persian king against the Jews, and hindered the work of restoration. They also built their own temple on mount Gerizim and worshiped according to the law. They recognized only the five books of Moses. Thus sprang up a jealous antagonism between them and the Jews, so that the latter refused to have any dealings with them. As they, however, worshiped Jehovah and taught the law and had a strain of Jewish blood, it was fitting that they should hear the proclamation of Christ, after Judea had been evangelized. Physically they were nearer the Jews than any other nation. Thus the widening testimony to the kingdom spread, until the evangel reaches the limits of the land. Then it is carried beyond by means of Saul, who at this time, was its chief opponent.

<sup>9</sup> The Roman Empire was overrun with fortune tellers and jugglers and magicians, many of whom were Jews. The Samaritans were a simple, credulous people, and in their amazement, they gave Simon the place which belongs to Christ. But when the evangel came, Simon himself was amazed for he could see that it was accompanied with a power such as he had never known. His case is an example of "faith" founded on miracles, which is very different from the faith which is based on God's word, apart from the evidence of the senses. Many believed in the Lord when they beheld the signs which He did, yet Jesus did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew what was in humanity (Jn.2 23-25).

<sup>14</sup> As our Lord told the woman at the well, salvation is of the Jews. And moreover, the twelve apostles were appointed to have jurisdiction over the whole land, including Samaria. Hence, holy Spirit is not imparted to them except through the mediacy of the apostles. This is in marked contrast with the case of Cornelius and his friends, who received holy Spirit without baptism or the laying on of hands. It is evident from this that physical affinity and miracles hinder rather than help the outflow of the spirit.

The exceptional dealing with the Samaritan believers, who were a circumcised people, is seen in the fact that, though repentant and baptized, they had not received the holy Spirit upon these conditions as promised by Peter to the believers in Jerusalem (Ac.2<sup>38</sup>). The ancient schism must now end, and Samaria must acknowledge Jerusalem as God's earthly seat of government. The supreme gift can be bestowed only as they recognize their dependence on Peter and John as come down from Jerusalem.

<sup>18</sup> To this day men fondly imagine that spiritual gifts may be bought with money. One of the most delusive and disastrous notions in the church today is that a billion dollar budget will buy billions worth of spiritual benefit. God's gratuities are not sold to the best bidder; we cannot gain His grace with gold. Any effort to bribe Him can only bring down His displeasure. Would that there were more like Peter, who spurned the silver which sought to buy the benefits of the evangel! The church has sunk so low that it is eager to trade its blessings for sordid gain. Peter would lose prestige today if he would not take advantage of such an opportunity to add a goodly sum to the fund for the furtherance of the kingdom!

<sup>19</sup> Among the nations, in Paul's later ministries, the spirit is received on believing, without the intervention of apostles, or baptism, or laying on of hands (Eph.1<sup>13</sup>). And with the removal of such mediate causes, the effect of holy Spirit's presence also changes. It is no longer manifest in signs which confirmed the coming of the kingdom, such as the gift of tongues and healing, but in the love, joy and peace which become God's dwelling place.

<sup>26</sup> It is notable that the messenger, or angel, who spoke to Philip is also called "the spirit" (<sup>29</sup>) and "the spirit of the Lord" (<sup>39</sup>). This suggests that these expressions may refer to created beings in some places where we are accustomed to understanding it of the holy Spirit of God. In order to leave the subject open and not inject our own opinions or prejudices it has been thought best to spell spirit always without a capital S in the Version. This will leave the matter open to the student's own interpretation.

<sup>26</sup> Gaza, once one of the five chief cities of the Philistines, was located near the southern limits of the land, not far from the Mediterranean.

<sup>27</sup> Ethiopia includes the country south of Egypt, of which the island of Meroe, in the upper Nile, was the chief center. The title, Candace, was usually given to the queens, who ruled in Ethiopia in ancient times. The eunuch must have been a proselyte of Judaism, to come all the way from Ethiopia to worship at Jerusalem. It seems strange that he should not have been reached with the evangel of Christ in the holy city, where the apostles still remained. It indicates the fact that Jerusalem and Judea are apostate, for this stranger is going away without knowing the One Who fulfilled the fifty-third of Isaiah. But where God has prepared such a reader and hearer of His word as this Ethiopian, He always sends His preacher.

The kingdom, when it is set up by Christ in the day of the Lord, will reach all the descendants of Noah's sons. In the early part of Acts they are evangelized representatively. The eunuch probably traced his lineage from Ham. Cornelius was a descendant of Japheth. The Jews, of course, sprang from Shem.

<sup>32</sup> Hezekiah, king of Judah, was the most beautiful type of Christ as the Vicarious Sufferer. The prophet Isaiah probably refers to his experience in the fifty-third chapter, in which are some statements which cannot be applied literally to the great Antitype. But the spirit charges the prophet's words with higher truth and deeper doctrine, so that Hezekiah's typical sufferings foretell the sufferings of His Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Saul was at the stoning of Stephen (<sup>758</sup>). He endorsed his assassination, and seems to have been the leader in the persecution which followed, until Jerusalem was emptied of all disciples except the apostles.

<sup>3</sup> The call of Saul is the most marvelous of all the manifestations of God's grace. It is a pattern for us who believe in this day of grace. He was the foremost of sinners, yet God made him the foremost of His saints. The grace of the Lord overwhelmed him, with faith and love in Christ Jesus (1Tim.1:12-16). The twelve apostles were called by the Lord on earth, before His ascension. Saul was called by the ascended glorified Lord from heaven. They were called in the land. He was called outside the land. Their ministry was confined to the land and the Hebrews of the dispersion. Paul's service was outside the land among the Hellenists and aliens. They were concerned with the earthly life of our Lord before His ascension. Paul begins with the Lord in glory.

<sup>4</sup> This is only a brief outline of what was said. The following combines the three accounts and probably includes all that passed between Saul and the Lord:

**THE LORD:** Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting Me? Hard is it for you to be kicking against the goads.

**SAUL:** Who art Thou, Lord?

**THE LORD:** I am Jesus, the Nazarene, Whom *you* are persecuting.

**SAUL:** What shall I be doing, Lord?

**THE LORD:** But rise and stand on your feet, for I was seen by you for this, to fix upon you before for a deputy and a witness both of what you have perceived and that in which I will be seen by you, extricating you from the people and from the nations, to whom I am commissioning you, to open their eyes, to turn them about from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, for them to get a pardon of sins and an allotment among those who have been hallowed by faith that is in Me. Rise and go into the city of Damascus, and there you will be spoken to concerning all which has been set for you to do.

<sup>7</sup> The apparent discrepancies between this verse and 22<sup>9</sup> are easily explained when we see that the vision was intended exclusively for Saul and

not for his fellow travelers. They were probably a little distance away and heard a sound and saw a light, but did not see the Person Who was speaking or recognize the sound as His voice. At first they fell on their faces, but they rose before Saul. There is a close harmony rather than any discrepancy in the various accounts.

The call of Saul is an entirely novel departure in this book. It is the first exhibition of pure grace—favor shown to one who deserves punishment—and is the key to the character of the ministries of the apostle Paul which occupy the latter half of this treatise on the proclamation of the kingdom. After the failure of the testimony in Jerusalem and Judea, Saul is called to carry it to the dispersion among the nations and to the proselytes and even to the idolaters themselves. Hence it must be founded, not on righteousness, for they had no deserts, but on grace. So he is called outside the land, by the Lord from heaven, while he is still the most malignant enemy of the evangel and deserving of the direst doom.

<sup>10</sup> God graciously gives a double witness to His dealing with Saul. Ananias is quite his opposite, being a devout disciple. Saul would have found it almost impossible to join the disciples as he did without some such confirmatory testimony to his conversion, for Ananias himself was afraid to go to him, knowing what he had done and what he proposed to do.

<sup>15</sup> What grace and sovereignty is seen in terming the terrible persecutor of His people a "choice instrument"! God's choice is not like man's. He works His will in the face of human opposition. The most undeserving are the fittest instruments for the manifestation of His favor.

<sup>15</sup> Here we have the field and scope of Paul's ministries—first and foremost to the nations, later to kings, and meanwhile to the sons of Israel among the nations.

<sup>16</sup> Paul suffered more than any other apostle. Long before his course was completed he claimed to be foremost in this (2Co.11<sup>23-33</sup>). All who are faithful are sure to share in the privilege of suffering for Christ's sake (Phil. 1<sup>29</sup>).

<sup>20</sup> The Jews in the synagogues must have been greatly astonished to find this emissary of the high priest, who had come hither to stamp out the heresy of the Nazarene, boldly proclaim that He is the Son of God. None of the other apostles ever proclaim the Messiah as the Son of God in the Acts. They are chiefly interested in Him as the Son of David (2<sup>29,30</sup>), the King of Israel. But Saul has become acquainted with Him in a higher, heavenly glory, hence proclaims Him, in accord with his own experience, as the Son of God. Besides, he reasoned out of the Hebrew Scriptures, which foretold the Messiah, and deduced from them that He Whom he had been persecuting and Who met him on the road was indeed the Anointed One, the hope of Israel.

<sup>23</sup> At this point occurs one of those striking omissions in the narrative which assure us that it is concerned only with the kingdom, and that Paul's epistles differ from it in purpose and scope. Paul passed a large part of three years in Arabia (Gal.1<sup>17,18</sup>). This journey is included in the "considerable number of days". Where in Arabia he went is not revealed, in fact, the term itself is vague. He may have gone far south into the desert between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, which is properly called Arabia. He may have gone only a few miles from Damascus, and yet be in Arabia in the popular sense of the term. Wherever he went, and whatever he did, it is evident that it has no bearing on the narrative of Acts. Paul uses it in Galatians as evidence that he did not immediately consult those who were apostles before him, so could not have received his evangel from them. As Acts deals only with that aspect of his ministry which had contact with the commissions of the twelve, it is clear why this incident should be overlooked.

<sup>25</sup> Elsewhere Paul tells us (2Co.11<sup>32-33</sup>) that the Jews had gained the help of the governor under Aretas the king, and his soldiers, as well as the Jews, tried to arrest him. His ignominious escape was his greatest boast.

<sup>27</sup> Though most of the apostles were absent from Jerusalem, Paul saw the two real leaders, Peter and James.

<sup>30</sup> Other details of Paul's stay in Jerusalem (not pertinent in this treatise) are interesting. Not only did the brethren lead him away, but the Lord Himself warned him to flee. While he was praying in the temple, in an ecstasy, the Lord urged him to hurry out of the holy city, because they would not receive his testimony (22:17-18). With the true tenacity of a Jew, Saul's heart's desire and petition to God for Israel was for their salvation (Ro.10<sup>1</sup>). He would wish for nothing better than to be the instrument in God's hands to bring salvation to his own kith and kin. He did not yet understand God's greater purpose to bring salvation to the nations through their defection (Ro.11<sup>11</sup>). It needed more than the entreaties of his brethren to make him leave Jerusalem, so God gives him a vision, reminding him of his commission for the nations afar.

<sup>33</sup> There is always a designed contrast between the acts of Peter and Paul, which it is most inspiring to apprehend and enjoy, for Paul dips into depths of grace and ascends to heights of glory unknown to Peter. They illustrate the distinction between mercy and grace, favor shown to those who have some claim on the divine pity and that which is wholly undeserved. Eneas should be compared to the lame man of Lystra (14<sup>8</sup>). Eneas, eight years paralyzed: the lame man never had walked in his life. The former stood up, the latter leaped and walked. These are types of the "walk" of the Circumcision and Uncircumcision. The former made no progress in divine things, the latter advanced joyfully.

Eneas means *praise* and his paralysis symbolizes the paralysis of praise in Israel. His healing is another taste of the powers of the age to come when Jerusalem shall be a praise in the earth (Isa.43<sup>21</sup>62; Jer.33<sup>9</sup>). As Eneas presents to us the healing of the sinners of the people, so Dorcas shows the resurrection of the saints who have been full of good works (Un.14<sup>18</sup>).

<sup>36</sup> Dorcas and Eutychus bring before us a picture of the former resurrection (Un.20<sup>5</sup>), and the eclectic resurrection which Paul preached, which precedes it, for which we look. Dorcas was full of good acts. She was deserving. So will those be who have part in the former resurrection, who live and

reign with Christ the thousand years (Un.20<sup>4</sup>). This was in the day time. But Eutychus' case comes before us at a time which corresponds with our resurrection. It is at night, before the darkness that precedes the dawn. He had no deserts that we know of. He was drowsing (20<sup>9</sup>). Nevertheless Paul brings him back to life (1Thes.5<sup>10</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> The kingdom has been proclaimed in Jerusalem and rejected; it has been heralded in Judea and Samaria, and now is being carried to the limits of the land. The Ethiopian proselyte has been reached by Philip. Now a Roman "proselyte of the gate" is brought before us in the person of Cornelius.

There were two classes of proselytes: the proselytes of righteousness and the proselytes of the gate. The former, by circumcision and conformation to the Jewish ritual, became incorporated into the Jewish people. The latter, called "fearers of God" or "the devout," renounced idolatry and acknowledged the God of Israel as the one true God, but were not circumcised and gave only scant heed to the ceremonial observances. Though highly esteemed, as Cornelius, they were regarded as outside the pale of Judaism, as "uncircumcised" and "of the nations." It was regarded as a crime for a Jew to enter the house of such a proselyte or to eat a meal with him.

Thus the kingdom message, as proclaimed by the twelve apostles, reaches its furthest limit in Cornelius. This accounts for the extraordinary pressure brought upon Peter, for none of the Jews thought that the proselyte of the gate was included in the kingdom commission. First the word was to the Jews only (including proselytes of righteousness), then the Hellenists are evangelized, followed by the despised Samaritans. Now that Cornelius is included, the original commission to the twelve is fulfilled in two of the three spheres—Jerusalem and Samaria (1<sup>8</sup>). They failed to go to all nations as He had told them (Lu. 24<sup>47</sup>).

As Cornelius was a Roman, descended from Japheth, and the eunuch was an Ethiopian, probably belonging to Ham, and the Jews were Shemites, all the sons of Noah were reached through their representatives. This was typical of the spread of the kingdom over

the whole earth when it will be set up in power at Christ's return. His dominion will include all the descendants of Noah's sons, and embrace all the families of the earth. His salvation will be known from sea to sea.

As the Romans despised the Jews, the signs of the operation of the Spirit of God in Cornelius were very marked even before he called for Peter. Centurions were not naturally devout or in fear of God, nor did they give alms to the Jews or pray to God. Cornelius believed the Scriptures or he would not have recognized Israel's supremacy. He knew God or he would not have prayed to Him continually. Hence the salvation here proclaimed to him was not prefaced by repentance. It was of the same nature as that which Peter proclaimed at Pentecost. It was a deliverance which insured his entrance into the kingdom.

According to Solomon's dedicatory petition (1Ki.8<sup>41-43</sup>) that Jehovah should do all that the stranger who prayed toward His house should call for, Cornelius' prayers and alms come up for a memorial before God. Yet he must be taught that all his blessings come to him through Israel. Hence he is told to call for Peter. This is in direct antithesis to the present truth, for now, during Israel's apostasy, we get our blessings direct from God.

The location of Peter at the time is suggestive. The nations are often represented by the sea, and he had gone as far as he could on land for he was at the sea side. His hunger is typical of the hunger of God for the worship of all His creatures—not Israel alone, hence Peter is told to "*sacrifice and eat*." The ceremonially unclean animals must represent those among the nations whom God had cleansed. Hence we must regard Cornelius as one whom God had cleansed before Peter met him.

Peter, like all the Jews, was so prejudiced by birth and training that it was almost impossible for him to conceive of such a thing as having fellowship with a gentile, or even a proselyte of the gate, no matter how devout he might be. Henceforth the apostasy of Israel consists largely in refusing to be a channel of blessing to the nations. This led them to question Peter and persecute Paul.

The vision alone was not sufficient to break through the prejudice of Peter, for he could not make out what it meant. But the presence of the three men, who were ceremonially unclean, like the animals he had just seen in the vision, made his course clear. He dared not refuse to fellowship with them or disregard the call of Cornelius. The character of Cornelius was evidence that God had cleansed him. Peter could no longer class him as common or unclean. The fact that Cornelius gave of his means to the people of the covenant was much in his favor, for in the judgment of the nations which precedes the kingdom the nations are judged according to their treatment of the sons of Israel (Mt.25<sup>31-46</sup>).

<sup>23</sup> The journey from Joppa to Cæsarea would lie along the sea shore. Thus Peter skirted the "limits of the land." The location of Cæsarea is doubtless typical also. Its geographical location corresponded with Cornelius' moral position. It was on the fringe of Judaism, near the outer gentile world.

<sup>23</sup> Later we learn that six brethren from Joppa accompanied Peter to Cæsarea. This was a prudent thing to do, for Peter well knew that he would have to defend his action in thus going against all Jewish precedent and prejudice. True, there was nothing in their Scriptures which forbade all social intercourse with foreigners, but the apostles, as well as the other disciples, were bound by custom and tradition more firmly than by the divine revelation. In view of the storm of protest which was sure to arise, the six men accompany Peter so that they can confirm his account of the event.

<sup>24</sup> Cornelius seems to have carried many of his dependents and friends with him in his regard for the Jews and their religion. They also were in a measure prepared for Peter's message. They were not, like Paul's converts, turned from darkness to light and from idolatry to the worship of the true God. They already had much light and worshiped the God of Israel. So the proclamation to them is much the same as to the Jews.

<sup>30</sup> Cornelius calls the messenger, or angel, he had seen, a *man*. There is no warrant, in Scripture, for the pop-

ular idea that angels always have wings, like the cherubim. They usually appear in a human form.

<sup>31</sup> The conversion of Cornelius is not in accord with the truth for today. Salvation is not offered to those who have access to God in prayer, for such are already saved. It is for sinners, and the ungodly and God's enemies (Ro. 5:1-11). It is not based on works (Ro. 11:6). Cornelius and his friends were acceptable to God because they feared Him and acted righteously, and this *before* Simon was sent to them. They occupied the place of the godly Israelite before Christ came. They lacked the pardon and gifts which came with the proclamation of the kingdom. These are now made theirs through the chief of the twelve apostles. Their blessing is connected with and depends on the blessing of Israel in the kingdom. Our blessing depends on the opposite. It follows Israel's *apostasy*. Cornelius is blessed in accord with the prophetic prediction concerning the nations in the kingdom, as it will be during the millennial eon. We are blessed in accord with a secret administration, of which the prophets knew nothing, which could not be revealed until after the kingdom proclamation had been heralded to the people and the proselytes like Cornelius.

<sup>34-35</sup> This statement teaches, not that the fear of God and righteous acts take the place of faith in Christ, but they take the place of Moses. Such as Cornelius who pant after the living God are candidates for the kingdom, but must hear the word of life in order to be saved (11:14). Such as Cornelius are they who will enter the kingdom when the nations are judged (Mt. 25:34-36).

<sup>35</sup> Peter's proclamation to the nations is in contrast with Paul's. He details the life of our Lord and His beneficent deeds in the land, leading up to His resurrection. Paul begins with His death and resurrection and proclaims His ascension and His heavenly glories. In a word Peter proclaims "Jesus Christ," Paul preaches "Christ Jesus." The former lays stress on His rejection on earth, the latter on His acceptance in heaven.

<sup>39</sup> Paul could have no place in this testimony, for he was not a witness of our Lord's earthly life.

Besides being a specimen of the future blessing of the believing nations in the kingdom, who will be rewarded according to their treatment of Israel, the case of Cornelius was undoubtedly divinely intended to bridge the almost impassable gap between the ministries of Peter and Paul, between the evangel of the Circumcision and of the Uncircumcision. Here we see the blessings of the Circumcision given by God to those who are uncircumcised, and in such a way that His hand could not be doubted. Hence Peter claims (15:7) that God chose him first to speak to the nations, and he was enabled to acknowledge Paul's commission to the Uncircumcision. Unless Peter had been so prepared, it would have been practically impossible for Paul to carry on his earlier ministries among the nations, for he would have had, not only the unbelieving Jews, but the disciples and the apostles themselves firmly set against his work. Paul did not confine himself to converts to Judaism, as Cornelius and his friends, but had a message of grace suited to idolaters who had never heard of the true God. Nevertheless the principle taught to Peter applied to them also, for God acknowledged them by spiritual gifts, which made it evident that He had cleansed them.

<sup>44</sup> At Pentecost the call to repent came to a people who had already rejected Jesus Christ. Peter says nothing of repentance to Cornelius (11:18).

<sup>48</sup> By baptism they were united to the believing remnant in the nation of Israel, for the name used was the same (2:38). It is evident, however, that this was a loose union, for the fact of their uncircumcision would bar them from the temple and from everything which the disciples had in common with the Jewish nation. In practice, even the social communion was always on a most doubtful and hesitating basis. Many of the disciples never would have fellowship with the Uncircumcision, and even Peter himself, after boldly defending his course with Cornelius, as well as the truth involved, was intimidated by the prevailing opposition, so that, at Antioch he first ate with the Uncircumcision and then withdrew and severed himself for fear of the party headed by James, the brother of the Lord (Ga. 2:11-12).

<sup>4</sup> So important is this new departure that Peter's rehearsal before his indignant brethren is given in full, for it removes the great obstacle which lay in the way of the further spread of the evangel. The commission which was received by the eleven from the Lord (Lu.24<sup>33,47</sup>) included the uncircumcised. They had made it known in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and the whole land of Israel, but only to the Circumcision. None of the disciples had any thought of proclaiming it to those of another nation even if they, like Cornelius, were devout and God-fearing men. This conclusion proves that the Pentecostal ecclesia did not include a single one of the Gentiles, but absolutely excluded all except those of Jewish blood. They could not, of course, exclude the Hellenists, or Jews who leaned to Greek culture, for they were not Greeks, but circumcised Israelites.

Neither may we take the case of Cornelius as the beginning of the evangel to the nations, as such. We do not find that this case was followed up by the evangelization of the Uncircumcision in the land. Indeed, it seems to have had no effect at all in this direction. After the death of Stephen and the following persecution, the disciples spoke to none but the Jews only (<sup>10</sup>). Other refugees from Jerusalem, however, being of Cyprian and Cyrenian origin, and having left some of the traditions of Judaism themselves, spoke to those Jews in Syrian Antioch who also had taken up Greek customs. The first time the evangel was proclaimed to the idolaters was probably the case of Sergius Paul, proconsul of Cyprus (13<sup>7</sup>), or Paul's preaching to the people of Lystra (14<sup>7</sup>). Throughout his early ministries, however, Paul not only went into the synagogues and preached to the Jews first, but he also spoke to the devout and God-fearing proselytes, like Cornelius, before going out to the Uncircumcision. Such converts from Judaism formed the nucleus of most of the ecclesias founded by him so far as their Gentile contents were concerned. See 13<sup>43,141</sup>, Lydia 16<sup>14,17</sup>, 4,12,18<sup>4</sup> (contrast <sup>6</sup>) and Justus 7. The gentiles were a distinct class.

<sup>16</sup> Peter saw a new significance in the words of the Lord (1<sup>5</sup>) that he had not seen at Pentecost. John's baptism

never went beyond the Jews. Now as the gospel comes to this gentile proselyte the baptism of spirit takes precedence over that in water, and is Peter's justification for giving Israel's rite to this gentile.

<sup>17</sup> The constant tendency, in this scroll, from the physical to the spiritual, is well illustrated by the gifts given to Cornelius and his friends, as a sign of their acceptance by God. The sign of the covenant, circumcision, was in the flesh. The lack of this excluded them from the blessings of the kingdom. In Israel, the spirit followed the bathing of their physical frames in the rite of baptism. But the Lord Himself baptizes these uncircumcised aliens in spirit *before* they are baptized in water. The spirit supersedes and governs the physical rite. In the case of these proselytes the rite of baptism followed the reception of the spirit (Ac.16<sup>15</sup> Ro.6<sup>3</sup> 1Co.12<sup>14-16</sup>), because of their association with Judaism, but it does not seem to have been universally administered in the case of non-proselytes (1Co.12<sup>17</sup>, Eph.4<sup>8</sup>, Col.2<sup>12</sup>).

<sup>18</sup> Here the narrative goes back to the days of the great persecution in Jerusalem when all the believers were dispersed (8<sup>1</sup>). Some of them came through Syrian Antioch, where they spoke to *Hellenists*. Later (14<sup>27</sup>), when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, they informed the brethren that God opens to the *nations* (such as the Greeks) a door of faith. If the refugees from Jerusalem had ever spoken to *Greeks* in Antioch, this would not have been any news to them. In verse 20, there is almost equal weight of manuscript evidence for either reading, *Hellenists*, or *Greeks*. Alexandrinus has the shorter form, *Hellenas* (Greeks), while Vaticanus has the longer *Hellenistas* (Hellenists). The Sinaiticus scribe copied the longer form, but incorrectly: *euaggelistas* (evangelists). One of his correctors, however, indicated his preference for *Hellenas* by inserting *llē* . . . . . *n* between the lines.

<sup>22</sup> The Jerusalem disciples were most of them full of zeal for the law and the ritual, but Barnabas was full of holy Spirit and faith, and thus was in line with God's purposes.

<sup>25</sup> Barnabas knew that Saul's commission was to the nations, hence he discerned that Antioch was the very field suited to his call.

<sup>26</sup> The name "Christian" is Latin in its termination, so seems to have been given by the Romans. It is mentioned only twice more (26<sup>28</sup>; 1 Pet. 4<sup>16</sup>), and was a term of contempt. It is never used by the saints of themselves, though there are hundreds of passages where we would use the term today. The name probably arose from the fact that here, for the first time, gentiles, Romans, left the worship of the synagogue for the faith of Christ. They would be continually speaking of one "Christ" and their countrymen gave them this new name in derision. Paul never uses this term. Peter alone uses it of his fellow saints of the Circumcision who believed.

<sup>27</sup> "Antioch" (*Antiocheta*) seems to be a compound of *anti* (INSTEAD) and *och* (HAVE, uphold). The prefix suggests that the two cities (11<sup>27</sup>, 13<sup>14</sup>) take the place of Jerusalem in the spreading of the evangel. They are *upheld* as the base of Paul's evangel to the Gentiles, while the Jerusalem ecclesia is eventually dispersed. So this may well be the import of their name: They HAD a place INSTEAD of Jerusalem.

In the Kingdom the evangel will flow again from the holy city.

<sup>28</sup> It is not likely that Saul went as far as Jerusalem with the contribution, for, in his Galatian epistle, he intimates that he did not visit the holy city for fourteen years after his return from Damascus. The reason seems to be that there was a persecution on the part of Herod, as well as a famine in Jerusalem, so that it was not prudent to enter the city.

<sup>1</sup> The failure of the nation to respond to the proclamation of the kingdom is fully manifest, and it is reflected in the events now chronicled. The twelve are no longer sustained by divine power in the city of the King. Herod puts James to death and there is no effort made to fill his place and maintain the due number of the apostles. That James, rather than Peter or John, was taken is significant, for they are typical men. James, or Jacob, brings before us the nation in flesh, and, as this aspect of the kingdom proclamation has failed and is finished, he is removed. Peter (not Simon) was a spiritual name (Jn. 1<sup>42</sup>), representative of the remnant who believed. He is persecuted, but not slain.

The apostasy of the Jewish nation was attested by the death of James. Instead of mourning the fact that one of the apostles of the Messiah was put to death, they are pleased. They prefer the yoke of their hereditary enemy, the Idumean Herod, to the Messiah God had sent them. So will the apostate nation in the time of the end rejoice at the murder of God's two witnesses (Un. 11).

It was contrary to Jewish custom to carry on a trial during the national festivals, so Herod was waiting until the passover week should be over. Then he would increase his popularity by making a public exhibition of Peter's trial and death.

The Lord had told Peter that, when he should be old and decrepit he would glorify God by his death (Jn. 21<sup>18</sup>). That time had not yet come. No power on earth can touch God's servants before the appointed time.

The deliverance of Peter should be contrasted with that of Paul and Silas at Philippi. This will show the vast advance in Paul's ministry over that of the twelve. Peter's deliverance illustrates the power and stern righteousness associated with the kingdom. The grace and salvation revealed in Philippi is in closer accord with that which is ours in Christ Jesus. Peter slept. Paul and Silas, suffering from the Roman scourge and the stocks, sang praises and prayed. Peter was taken out by stealth unknown to the guards. Paul and Silas made no attempt to escape, even when the prison doors were open. The prisoners heard them, and the warden was saved by their testimony. Peter's escape did not bring salvation to his keepers. It brought death, for his guards had to pay with their lives for his. Peter flies from Jerusalem from the face of Herod. Paul and Silas are escorted out of the jail and through the city by the officers who had mistreated them. In every particular, the deliverance of Paul and Silas eclipses the escape of Peter. One figures Israel's deliverance by judgment on the nations, the other the salvation which comes through the temporary setting aside of Israel.

<sup>12</sup> What a touching picture we have here of the disciples praying in the dead of night, and the extreme joy occasioned by Peter's escape!



<sup>17</sup> The death of James and the escape of Peter mark a crisis in the history of the kingdom proclamation. The power in Jerusalem passes out of the hands of the apostles into the hands of James, the Lord's brother. Note that Peter does not ask them to report to the rest of the apostles, but to James and the brethren. Henceforth these have the controlling voice in Jerusalem. The death of James broke the ranks of the apostles. Now there were only eleven. Peter was compelled to flee and John does not seem to have taken an active part.

It is most significant that the leadership now falls upon one who was never commissioned by the Lord, but held his place and wielded his influence on the ground of a close *physical* relationship to the Lord. While He was yet on earth none of his brothers or sisters believed in Him. Our Lord made light of such physical ties. To those who told Him that His mother and brothers wished to speak to Him He said "My mother and My brethren are these who are hearing the word of God and doing it" (Lu. 8<sup>21</sup>). But the believers in Jerusalem have drifted away from spiritual realities and give the Lord's own brother the place which He gave to the apostles. James early had a high place among the Jerusalem saints. Paul makes special mention of him when he went up to Jerusalem (Ga. 1<sup>19</sup>). This is in marked contrast to the course of Paul, which is characterized by the gradual elimination of the physical and a strong tendency toward the spiritual.

<sup>20</sup> Josephus' account of Herod's death agrees with this in all its main features, though he does not seem to know of the reason for the flattery, nor does he ascribe the disease to a messenger of the Lord. In accepting divine honors Herod becomes a type of the great dictator of the end time, who will set himself up, saying that he is God, and will be slain by the Lord Himself.

<sup>24</sup> The death of Herod seems to have stopped the persecution of the apostles.

<sup>25</sup> Barnabas and Saul were commissioned to bring succor to the poor (11<sup>30</sup>). The manuscripts vary greatly as to whether they return *out of*, or *from*, or *into* Jerusalem, or *into* Antioch.

<sup>2</sup> The severance of Barnabas and Saul by the spirit is the prelude to an entirely new departure in the book of Acts. The commission entrusted to the twelve apostles has been attempted and their testimony rejected. They went to the limits of the land of Israel. Beyond this they did not venture. Jerusalem, in Judea, now gives place to Antioch, outside the land. The message now goes to the dispersion among the nations and to the proselytes and even to the nations themselves, and continues until it becomes manifest that the Jews outside the land refuse the Messiah, even as those in the land have done. This ministry is carried on by an entirely new set of apostles. The twelve have no part in it. Saul, or Paul, as he is now called, takes the place of Peter in this new apostolic group.

<sup>2</sup> The choice of Barnabas and Saul *by the spirit* is in marked contrast with the choice of James, the brother of our Lord, *by the flesh*. He leads the apostasy of the pentecostal believers, who insisted on circumcision and law keeping. He was the author of decrees, which were concerned only with the flesh. This new departure takes us in the opposite direction. Saul was chosen by the spirit and led by the spirit until, at length, in his epistles, he gives the flesh no place at all.

<sup>6</sup> Sergius Paul was the first individual among the nations who heard the evangel, without first becoming a proselyte of Judaism. Hence his case is typical. Bar-Jesus stands for the Jewish dispersion, who always resisted every attempt to proclaim the evangel to the nations. Seldom, indeed, do we find Paul performing any judgment miracle, but here he blinds the sorcerer for a season. This is the judgment which has befallen Israel during the present administration of God's grace. Israel, in part, has become calloused until the full complement of the nations may be entering (Ro. 11<sup>25</sup>). Throughout Paul's missionary journeys, when he turned from the unbelieving Jews to the nations, the Jews became jealous and sought to turn the gentiles against him. They became blind spiritually, as Bar-Jesus became physically.

The spiritual tendency we have observed is emphasized by the change of Saul's name to Paul. The name Saul suggested the first king in Israel, who was chosen by the people because of his physical superiority, well suited to Paul before he was called by Christ, and in accord with the trend of affairs in Jerusalem, but not at all in harmony with his present ministry. It is usually derived from the Latin, meaning *little*, but it may also be derived from the root *pau*, in Greek, which means an *interval*, the ending, of course taking the masculine form rather than the feminine of the ordinary Greek term. Saul is Hebrew; Paul is Greek. This change of name coincides with his new commission. This signification is most appropriate to his special ministries, which fill in the interval during which Israel is thrust aside. It is brought in for the first time at the precise point when this doom is pronounced on Bar-Jesus. It marks the beginning of God's new departure, which brings blessing to the nations through Israel's apostasy. It was given when the first real gentile believed, for all before Sergius Paul were proselytes of Judaism, like Cornelius. And it is the more remarkable that the first convert under these new conditions was also named Paul, because he inaugurates that new form of God's activities which is well pictured there by the blessed believing gentile and a blinded unbelieving Jew. Before Saul's severance, blessing could not flow except through a Jew. Samaria could not receive the spirit except through Peter and John (8<sup>14</sup>), and the proselyte Cornelius needed the mediacy of the chief of the apostles ere he was blessed with this gift. But now an alien, having no connection with Judaism, believes and is blessed, while a Jew, a son of the covenant, is blinded. This new principle now governs God's dealings, introducing a new dispensation, and gathers force until it is fulfilled at the close of the book.

<sup>13</sup> John, doubtless, was at fault in thus deserting the apostles. But there seems to be a deeper reason for his defection. Being from Jerusalem, and a nephew of Barnabas, he represented the weakness of the flesh and its inability to channel blessing to the nations, so was not spiritually qualified.

<sup>14</sup> Paul's sermon and course in Pisidian Antioch is doubtless a specimen case. He usually went first of all into the synagogue and preached the evangel of the kingdom to the Jews of the dispersion and to the gentile proselytes who attended the synagogue services. His sermons included all that Peter preached concerning Messiah as the Son of David, yet went further in order to reach the proselytes. The three classes to whom Paul preached should always be distinguished. There were the men of Israel, his brethren, who were under the law and to whom the covenants and promises pertained. But the synagogues amongst the nations were largely attended by proselytes, who are called "fearers of God," "devout," or "reverent," and usually included a company of women. The proselytes, as a class, accepted Paul's message, but the Jews rejected it, with many notable exceptions. Outside of these were the gentiles proper, the idolators who had no leanings toward Judaism. Among these it was that Paul found the greatest response, but it must be remembered that this account does not lay much stress on this part of his ministry. For instance, it is evident from his epistles that the Thessalonian converts were mostly idolators, yet no hint of this is found in Acts, which speaks only of the Jews and proselytes (17<sup>1-4</sup>). Neither are we informed of all that the apostle preached, but only that which concerned the fate of the earthly kingdom. The doctrine contained in his epistles is none of it in Acts, but all is distinct from and above the highest point reached in this treatise. To the Jews Paul spoke of Christ as proclaimed by John the Baptist, and His life before His death and resurrection and ascension, before he knew Him. Paul's epistles, however, are entirely on resurrection ground. Christ was not seen outside the land of Israel until he was seen by Saul on the Damascus road. Let us never mix the testimony in Acts with the truth in Paul's epistles, but let us rather note the great contrast between them. Contrast Peter's first sermon and Paul's. Both quote from David. Peter to prove that Jesus is David's exalted Son (2<sup>30-31</sup>). Paul shows by his first quotation (13<sup>33</sup>) that Jesus is the Son of God.

<sup>33</sup> The rendering *first* psalm in place of *second* psalm demands some explanation. Our three great witnesses all read *second*, and we would have so rendered it, but for the confusion which would result when we come to issue the book of Psalms. There is no longer any question that the first and second psalms of our collection are in reality only one, and this quotation occurs in the *first* not the *second* psalm. Some ancient manuscripts preserve this reading. But it was generally changed to conform to the condition of the Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures. In the Hebrew text of the psalms the text reads right on without any break to indicate the division into psalms except the headings and subscriptions. Consequently it has been discovered that each psalm is thus indicated, and those psalms which have no heading or subscription to separate them are fragments of adjoining psalms. Thus the second psalm, so-called, is not an independent composition, but the conclusion of the first psalm.

<sup>34</sup> Here we have the first intimation of the great doctrine of justification or acquittal. But how far below the lofty teaching revealed in the epistle to the Romans! There justification is apart from the law: here it is associated with the law. True to the kingdom he has just announced, Paul proclaims the pardon of sins. But pardon or forgiveness is but a temporary respite which may be forfeited or withdrawn (Mt. 18<sup>23-35</sup>). Those Pentecostal believers who had been forgiven like the ten thousand talent debtor, yet refused to extend this blessing to the gentiles, who owed much less, had their pardon revoked.

Now, however, the apostle offers them more than pardon. Those who were pardoned still tried to keep the law of Moses (21<sup>20</sup>). He promises an acquittal from their infractions of the law, on the ground of faith. Pardon takes guilt for granted. Justification or acquittal denies guilt. They mingle here for a moment, but in Paul's epistles those who are justified are beyond the necessity of any pardon, for they are pronounced not guilty. The contrast between Moses and Christ is made first by Paul, and in connection with the preaching of justification.

<sup>44</sup> This is the first time we have the evangel preached to the nations directly except the single case of Sergius Paul. Never before this have we any intimation that the word was spoken to any except Jews, Samaritans, or proselytes. Now that the whole city came to hear the word, the Jews, following the example of Bar-Jesus, oppose Paul and Barnabas. Not till then do we hear the memorable words, "*lo! we are turning to the nations.*"

<sup>48</sup> It would be of greatest interest to us to know what Paul preached to the gentiles on this occasion, but there is no record of his words. The reason doubtless is that he went beyond the kingdom proclamation and announced, for the first time, the grand foundation on which God's favor to the nations is based, the doctrine of justification. His previous proclamation was hampered by the fact that his hearers were under the law. Now he is able to set it forth fully and freely as he does in his epistle to the Romans, for his audience is not seeking any justification under law. He announces a divine righteousness, apart from the law.

While there can be little doubt that the apostle preached justification on this occasion in some of the fulness to which his epistles testify, yet it is of the utmost importance for us to note that the account in Acts never attains to the truth taught in his epistles. It leads us up to some of it, but never makes actual contact with it. It prepares for it but does not proclaim it. Not one single doctrine for the present secret economy is found in the book of Acts, though all was made known and committed to writing during this period. We are continually led up to, but never enter into the grace which is ours in Christ Jesus. Acts is not a record of the beginning of the present, but a treatise on the end of the previous dispensation. Most of the ecclesiastical confusion which prevails would vanish if this record of the kingdom apostasy were left where it belongs, and all truth for the present based on Paul's written revelation, which deals with the same period of time, but deals with it from an entirely distinct standpoint. God's program is, some Jews, some gentiles; then Jews and gentiles alike.

<sup>6</sup> Lystra seems to be the first place Paul preached without first proclaiming to the Jews in the synagogue, for it seems that there were not enough Jews to have a place of worship. Hence this is the first time the evangel is preached to the gentiles, apart from Judaism altogether. Here we reach the limit of his journey as well as the moral limits of the evangel. It has now broken through all barriers. From being preached to the "Jews only" (11<sup>19</sup>) it has not only reached gentile proselytes and idolaters through the synagogue, but it has gone outside the pale and influence of Judaism, and won its way to the hearts of the far off foreigners.

<sup>8</sup> The contrast between the ministries of Peter and Paul is reflected in their acts. The lame man at the gate of the temple (3:2-8) was near the dwelling place of God, the source of all blessing. The lame man of Lystra was far off. Neither had ever walked, but the former, picturing the privileged people of God, was carried by his friends. Even the manner of their salvation was different. Peter reached out his hand and lifted the lame man to his feet. Paul did not need to touch the Lys-trian, for he leaped up and walked.

<sup>11</sup> It was commonly believed among the ancients, that the gods visited the earth at times in human form, but more especially those places which were devoted to their worship. Lystra seems to have been under the protection of Zeus, for one of his priests resided before the city. Zeus was usually attended by Hermes, the messenger of the gods. Subsequent revelation suggests that, in a very real sense, the Lycaonians were not much mistaken in their estimate of Paul. He was indeed the messenger of the true God, visiting the earth for a time. The Greek gods were in reality demon spirits who had usurped the authority of the air, who, with Satan, are to be cast out of their heavenly habitations when the kingdom is set up. Paul, together with those who receive the grace which comes through him, will replace them and rule the celestial realms, as the body of Christ. So that the Lycaonians were not far wrong, and we may take their words as prophetic of the grace which God was about to reveal (Ga.4:14).

<sup>15</sup> In speaking to idolaters in Lystra and Athens, Paul does not appeal to the Hebrew Scriptures, for they knew nothing of God's written revelation. He appeals to them through God the Creator and Sustainer, as revealed in nature.

<sup>19</sup> God has a way of giving his servants a vision of the end at the beginning, to sustain them in the trials on the way. Joseph knew God's purpose for him and was prepared for the pit and the prison, for he realized that these led to the throne. So, we may well believe, God made known to the apostle Paul his purposes of grace for the nations long before Paul made them public from Rome. And what time would be so opportune as this, when the evangel for the first time is carried directly to the nations? Indeed, about fourteen years later, Paul seems to refer to his stoning at Lystra as the time when he received his greatest visions and revelations, which he was not allowed to publish until his kingdom ministry in Acts was brought to a close. Such a revelation must have been made in a setting calculated to reveal God's grace. And what occasion compares with this? Let us remember that Paul was stoned but once (2Co.11:25) *and this by the gentiles just as soon as the evangel breaks through to them.* The Jews reject the evangel and call down judgment. How dire must be the punishment due to these uncircumcised aliens for stoning the chosen vessel God had sent for their salvation! This is surely the opportunity demanded by grace to show its potency! They drag his body, battered and bleeding, outside the city, but his spirit flies far ahead to the paradise of the new earth, and soars into the heights of the third heaven. There he sees the despised, undeserving gentiles, who had stoned him to death, ruling the celestial realms as members of Christ's body and "blessed with all spiritual blessings among the celestials" (Eph.1:3). Here we reach the summit of grace, the secret (1Co.2:7) which God had prepared for those who love Him. Though Paul was not really dead, it is well to note that, from this time on, he reckons himself and all believers as having died, and as living a resurrection life (2Co.1:9).

<sup>27</sup> The report in Antioch that *God had opened the door of faith to the nations* sums up Paul's first missionary journey. This is given out as something new, unknown before. It is evident that Antioch itself was composed partly of gentiles, but they had been proselytes of Judaism before the evangel was proclaimed to them. Many of the misconceptions as to the book of Acts, especially in regard to Pentecost and the ministry of the twelve apostles, would vanish if this fact were given the prominence it deserves. The twelve apostles did not reach out to the nations. Jews from the dispersion spoke to the proselytes. When Peter did this in the case of Cornelius, it was considered a grave breach by the majority in Jerusalem. Not till Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey did the word go out to the idolaters. Before this the door was shut. The only way of access was through Judaism. Now it is open, and consists of *faith*, altogether apart from Jewish rites and ceremonies.

<sup>1</sup> No sooner was the door of faith opened to the nations than the emissaries of Jerusalem tried to slam it shut. Paul had been reporting that salvation had been brought directly to the gentiles without the necessity of their becoming proselytes. Now the Judaisers come and insist that it is not sufficient to be a "proselyte of the gate," but they must become a "proselyte of righteousness" and take upon themselves all the obligations of Judaism. The conflict was between faith and law, grace and works. The circumcisionists were perversely using in the interests of self-righteousness that which God had given for its cure.

From Paul's account, given in his epistle to the Galatians, we find that these "false brethren" crept into the ecclesia at Antioch unawares, spying out their freedom in Christ Jesus, and determined to bring them into the bondage of the law of Moses. Besides being sent by the brethren at Antioch, Paul had a revelation which directed him to go to Jerusalem and communicate his evangel, which differed materially from that of the twelve and the Judaisers, to those in authority in Jerusalem. He also took Titus along as a test case, because he was not circumcised (Ga.2:1-5).

<sup>6</sup> Before this convention Paul took up the question privately with the more influential members of the Jerusalem ecclesia, especially with James, the brother of the Lord, and with the apostles Peter and John. Having convinced them that he had a special revelation for the Uncircumcision they were able to influence the assembly, and thus he was able to check the growing opposition to his ministry in Jerusalem.

In Judea the ecclesia of Christ was rapidly degenerating into a Jewish sect. It was called "the sect of the Nazarenes" by its enemies. They clung to the Mosaic law and ritual as fiercely as ever, and could not bear to consider anything which seemed derogatory to their ancient religion. Besides, they gave the traditions concerning social intercourse with the alien nations all the force of a divine command. Peter's course with Cornelius was not a direct violation of the law, though it may have involved the eating of that which was forbidden by Moses.

<sup>7</sup> Peter here refers to Cornelius, and his words must be taken, not in the light of Paul's subsequent course, but as the Jews present would understand them. Peter's preaching to the nations was confined to proselytes in the land. Without that experience Paul would never have been able to convince Peter that God could deal with the nations in a way different from His dealings with the Circumcision. The case of Cornelius was specially designed to bridge the gap between the two ministries of Peter and Paul.

<sup>11</sup> These are bold and noble words to be spoken by the chief apostle of the Circumcision in such an assemblage of Judaisers. These are Peter's last words in the book of Acts. Instead of conceding that the gentiles must be saved by means of the law and the ritual, through Judaism, Peter insists on the very opposite. The aliens are not to be saved like the Jews, but the Circumcision themselves are not saved by the law and circumcision, but by *grace, even as the nations*. We can hardly realize how astounding such a declaration would be in this assembly. It was not understood or heeded. Peter himself denied it by his acts soon afterward (Ga.2:11-21).

James, the brother of our Lord, though not an apostle, had by far the most influence in Jerusalem, especially with the Judaisers. Peter, who should have had the leadership, was afraid of him. If his wise and weighty words had been heeded all would have been well. But the legalists were too strong, and listened to James, their leader, the brother of the Lord according to the flesh, rather than to one who was not only one of His brethren in spirit, but had been trained and commissioned to lead His people. Peter's decision was in accord with the spirit and should have been obeyed. James' compromise was a concession to the flesh. Later, when the full truth for the present was revealed these decrees were abolished (Eph.2<sup>15</sup>).

<sup>18</sup> James does not refer to the report of Barnabas and Paul, when he quotes Amos 9<sup>11-12</sup>, but to Peter's address. The prophet, speaking of the time when the kingdom will be set up, refers to those among the nations, who, like Cornelius, invoked the name of the Lord, and are blessed with His people Israel. It has no reference to the present economy of God's grace.

<sup>19</sup> Notice the emphatic *I*. This was James' own solution. The object of the decrees seems to have been to make it possible for the Jews to have social intercourse with the believers among the nations without offending Jewish prejudices. A Jew, even if a believer, could not eat at the same table with a gentile if he should serve an idol sacrifice, or strangled meat, or blood. Had Peter's advice been followed, they would have cast off the yoke of the law, which they never were able to bear, and so could have had free and joyful fellowship with the Uncircumcision. James' plan keeps the Jews under the divine law and puts the nations under a human law. Instead of loosing all from bondage, he binds both.

<sup>24</sup> The great object of the conference was definitely settled, and never again do we hear that circumcision and law keeping are essential to salvation. The Judaisers now change to the teaching that, though these may not be necessary for salvation, they are essential to progress and perfection. Paul refutes this in Galatians.

<sup>29</sup> Strictly speaking, these decrees were binding only on the believers in Syria and Cilicia, though they must have influenced all the saints among the nations. Paul practically repeals them when he makes the eating of meats offered to idols a matter of individual conscience (1 Co. 8) The revelation of the new humanity (Eph.2<sup>15</sup>) in which all physical distinctions disappear, so that there is no Jew or Greek, nullifies this "law of precepts in decrees." They were based on a distinction which no longer exists for those who are in Christ Jesus. Speaking of this to the Colossians, the apostle boldly cancels them by "erasing the handwriting of the decrees against us, which was hostile to us, and has taken it away out of the midst . . ." How far has Jerusalem fallen! Instead of bringing blessing to the nations, they use this opportunity of burdening them with a law of their own devising. No wonder, when Paul comes again, he finds James in full charge, and all the tens of thousands of believing Jews zealous of the law and hostile to him and his ministry.

<sup>35</sup> It was during this period that Peter came to Antioch and lived at first in unrestrained intercourse with the gentiles, eating with them in consistency with his speech at the conference and with the decrees, also with his own conduct in the case of Cornelius. In the presence of "certain from James" Peter began to vacillate and complied with their prejudices. If Peter, through consideration for the weak conscience, had been yielding a non-essential point, Paul would approve. But his motive was the fear of man. His example not only sanctioned the heresies of the Judaisers but also carried away such believers as Barnabas, and well merited Paul's rebuke.

<sup>37</sup> Barnabas had already provoked Paul's indignation by weakly yielding to the influence of Peter and the Judaisers. Possibly he was still smarting under Paul's public rebuke. Paul, on the other hand, always revolted against anything that looked like compromise and weakness. Though it was impossible for them to longer work together, they evidently make amicable arrangement to divide between them the territory of their former journey.

<sup>40</sup> Silas was almost necessary as a companion for Paul. The decrees provided that they should be delivered by both Barnabas and Paul, while Judas and Silas were to confirm them by word of mouth. Now that Barnabas is gone, Paul could hardly deliver the decrees without a second witness, and Silas was the very one for the purpose, for he had the recommendation of Jerusalem.

<sup>40</sup> Paul seems to have had the sympathy of the brethren in Antioch. Nothing is said of their interest in Barnabas and Mark. But when Paul and Silas go, the brethren commend them to God's grace.

<sup>1</sup> Paul did not retrace the steps of his first missionary journey. He did not go to Cyprus at all. He went by land through Syria and Cilicia, and crossed the Taurus mountains more to the east, coming out upon the high inland plain near Lystra and Derbe.

<sup>1</sup> Timothy was Paul's son in the faith, being one of those who believed when Paul was there before. He was a witness of his sufferings and now becomes a companion of his trials. Hitherto Paul's associates have been a Levite, Barnabas, and Silas, a Jew, but now he takes one whose father was a Greek. Thus there is a gradual tendency away from the physical to spiritual relations.

<sup>3</sup> The circumcision of Timothy, at first sight, seems strange and inconsistent. Had Paul not refused to circumcise Titus? Had not the council at Jerusalem decided that circumcision was not essential to salvation? But Timothy's case is an entirely different matter. Paul is still going among the synagogues proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah of the Jews. To have an associate who was uncircumcised would be a great hindrance and give the Jews the occasion which they sought to denounce and persecute him. He still maintains that circumcision is nothing. Yet he has no hesitancy in using it if it will mollify the prejudice of those whom he desires to reach with the evangel.

<sup>6</sup> Paul's sickness in Galatia and the evangelization of that region is almost completely passed over because his course there was not in line with the testimony of Acts.

<sup>9</sup> Paul's commission is as broad as humanity, yet the guidance of God decides matters of time and place for testimony.

<sup>9</sup> Up to this time Paul was guided by hindrances. Trying to go through Galatia to the regions beyond, he is taken sick. He then seeks to enter the populous province of Asia, but the time had not yet come. Finally, at Troas, he receives the first intimation that his work lay in Europe. Without stopping to preach in Troas he immediately sets sail for Macedonia, which he reached in two days—a remarkably swift journey. It took five days on a later occasion (20<sup>a</sup>).

<sup>10</sup> Luke seems to have joined the party of Paul at Troas, for now the narrative is continued in the first person. "*They . . . descended into Troas,*" but "*we . . . seek to come away to Macedonia.*"

<sup>11</sup> Neapolis is the harbor of Philippi. It was about ten miles from the city.

<sup>12</sup> Philippi was a Roman *colony* in the special sense that it enjoyed many of the privileges of Rome itself. It was free from the control of the governor of the province. It regulated its own internal affairs by its own magistrates.

<sup>13</sup> There seem to have been few Jews in the city. There was no synagogue. As it was the custom of the Jews to retire to the sea shore or some stream, which they esteemed a pure place, for prayer, Paul and his company resorted to such a spot and spoke to the women who came. Here it was that the Lord, who had led them from afar, manifested His presence and power by opening the heart of Lydia, the first fruit of the evangel in Europe. Strangely enough, however, she was from Asia, and from the very regions which they were forbidden to evangelize.

<sup>16</sup> Python is the name of Apollo in his character as an oracle. Those who were ventriloquists, speaking with their mouths closed, were called Pythons. It was a kind of demon possession, not at all uncommon in ancient Greece. Their ravings were highly esteemed by the superstitious idolaters. Hence this slave girl was able to earn much money for her masters. It was probably the enemy's plan to discredit Paul's message by a questionable commendation.

<sup>19</sup> This is the first occasion in which the evangel comes into conflict with the religion of the nations and with the spirit powers back of it. Hitherto the Jews and Judaism opposed the evangel. At Lystra it was welcomed by the idolaters, at first, until the Jews turned the people against the apostles.

<sup>19</sup> Note carefully the real reason of the opposition. Their *income* was cut off. To this day this, the first symptom of antagonism, has largely controlled the opposition to the truth. Doubtless, if the evangel had increased their income, they would have accepted it.

<sup>20</sup> There was no law against casting out demons, so the accusation is craftily perverted to arouse the prejudices of the Roman officers. The Jews had been ordered out of Rome and were in bad repute. There was a law, practically obsolete, which forbade the introduction of any religious innovation as dangerous to the peace of the empire. So that, if the law had been allowed to take its normal course, the apostles might have been imprisoned for a long period, and the evangel would have received a permanent check, but the unlawful action of the officers, putting them in the wrong, effectually opened the way for the further proclamation of the evangel in Philippi.

<sup>22</sup> The terrible Roman flogging and vile, filthy jail, with the torture of the stocks, was intended to put a stop to the evangel. But God turned it to its furtherance. Paul and Silas, rejoicing in their sufferings for Christ, get an audience even in the prison.

<sup>26</sup> Contrast the deliverance of Paul and Silas with that of Peter (12<sup>5-19</sup>). Peter had not been ill-treated as they were, and slept. They prayed and sang songs of praise. No angel came to deliver Paul and Silas, but they brought a much greater deliverance to the warden and his household, and doubtless to some of the prisoners as well. Peter's escape, on the contrary, cost the lives of his keepers. Paul and Silas come out in broad daylight, escorted by the officers of the city and leave openly after they have met their brethren and taken leave of them. Peter comes out at night and flees to another place to escape Herod's wrath.

<sup>30</sup> The earthquake, the open doors, the knowledge that he would forfeit his own life if a prisoner escaped, and the voice out of the darkness of the dungeon that read his inmost thoughts when he is about to take his own life, all conspired to convince the warden that these men and their message were from God. He doubtless had heard what the spirit of Python had declared about them, hence his cry, "What must I be doing that I may be saved?"

<sup>32</sup> They did not stop with the bare exhortation to believe, but went on to open up the truth of the evangel. Faith does not come by the mere entreaty to believe, but through the setting forth of the truths which are to be believed. The death of Christ for our sins, His burial and resurrection are essential to salvation and should be the subject of every effort to preach the evangel. This gospel of God's grace was immediately effective, producing great joy.

<sup>33</sup> What a transformation in the warden! The day before he had treated them with unnecessary severity; now he stoops to bathe their backs and attends to their comforts, taking them into his own home.

<sup>35</sup> Philippi was a military colony, hence the officials were army officers rather than magistrates. This may explain their illegal course of taking a hand in punishing those who had never been tried. Later reflection doubtless convinced them of this error, so they sent to have Paul and Silas released. The warden was doubtless very happy at this turn of affairs, and exhorts them to go. But Paul, seeing the hand of God in the changed attitude of the officers, and solicitous for the furtherance of the evangel in Philippi, determines to press the advantage. The officers did not know that they were Roman citizens, hence did not realize how serious had been their offense. A public acknowledgment of their fault would shield the saints from further persecution. He insists that the officers shall come and lead them out in person, so that all may see that they were no longer opposed to their work. This the officers do, but, lest a rumor of this should get to Rome, they entreat them to leave the city, which, with due deliberation, the apostles did.



<sup>1</sup> Luke seems to have remained behind at Philippi, for the narrative now proceeds in the third person. Timothy also tarried, for no one was more genuinely solicitous of the welfare of the infant ecclesia (Phil.2<sup>20</sup>). Later on he rejoins Paul and Silas and is found at Berea (17<sup>14</sup>). But Luke may have remained there until Paul's next missionary journey, when he returns through Philippi to Troas (20<sup>6</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> Instead of stopping at the smaller towns, Paul and Silas make their way to the most populous city of the province as a base of operations for the whole country. Thessalonica, the present Saloniki, became, in a few months, the center from which the word of the Lord was sounded forth, . . . in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Th. 1<sup>8</sup>). For the first three weeks he seems to have made a special effort to win the Jews in the synagogue, but only some of the Jews were persuaded, though many of the proselytes were won for Christ. Meanwhile many of the Uncircumcision must have been reached, for the apostle writes to them as converts from idolatry, rather than from Judaism. They turned to God from idols (1 Th. 1<sup>9</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> The evangel of the kingdom, as Paul proclaimed it in the synagogues, is concisely set forth here. The suffering and resurrection of Messiah and Jesus as the One foretold by the prophets, are the leading points. Beyond this he gave them much else concerning the kingdom and the events which precede its coming, including the unveiling of the man of lawlessness (2 Th. 2<sup>2</sup>). Paul's evangel was what is sometimes called "a teaching gospel."

<sup>5</sup> The malice of the Jews is apparent from their charge against the apostles. They, too, believed that Messiah would destroy the kingdoms of the nations, yet they bring this charge, hoping to rouse the power of Rome against them. They, themselves, gather a mob and raise a tumult, yet they accuse them of it. Not finding the apostles, they took Jason and some other brethren, but the civil magistrates did not act like the officers at Philippi, but took the legal course. Instead of imprisoning them, they made them give bail, which probably ended the matter when the apostles left the city.

<sup>10</sup> As it was unwise to excite the mob in Thessalonica further, and the apostles did not wish to cease their labors, they slip away to Berea, probably one of the nearest synagogues. Here the Jews give them a hearty reception and eagerly examine the ancient Scriptures to see if Paul's message is in accord with their predictions. Consequently many of them believe and the proselytes also, from among the Greeks, receive the word of the Lord.

<sup>11</sup> Paul's success among the noble Jews of Berea is clearly the result of their examination of the Scriptures. Here, doubtless, as elsewhere, current Jewish tradition, the teaching of the elders, had largely replaced the divine record, just as today the traditions of the church supersede the truths of Scripture. The true nobility lies in ignoring current dogma and accepting only what is in closest accord with holy writ. This is the path that leads to real and substantial blessing.

<sup>14</sup> The Jews seem to have concentrated their hate on Paul, hence it was not necessary for Silas and Timothy to leave.

<sup>15</sup> Paul has now fulfilled the Macedonian call, and leaves that province for Greece, which was then named Achaia. Athens was, in some ways, the principal city, and it had a Jewish meeting place. Hence he went thither and took his usual course, speaking to the Jews in the synagogue, and to the others in the market place. We are not informed of his reception by the Jews, but they do not seem to have persecuted him.

<sup>18</sup> The Epicurean philosophy was virtually Atheism. Like modern scientific theorists it denied creation, teaching that the universe was formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, and continued to function without the intervention of God. There was no moral government, so there was no judgment and no resurrection. Their highest aim was self-gratification.

<sup>18</sup> The Stoics had many gods. They cultivated an austere apathy and held reason to be the only good. Stoicism developed a class of philosophic Pharisees who needed no Saviour, and acknowledged no sin. Zeno, its founder, died by his own hand.

18 "Rook" was popular, picturesque Athenian slang based upon the habits of birds who pick up seed and scraps, and applied to men who pick up scraps of learning and who lack a thorough knowledge of their subjects.

18 "Demons" was used of good as well as evil divinities in profane Greek.

19 The hill called the Areopagus (Latin, Mars' Hill), just a few steps above the Market Place, was a most fitting forum for the folly of God to defeat the wisdom of the world. At Rome Paul's weakness overcame the power of the world; at Ephesus he overthrew its religion; at Athens his foolish talk about the resurrection confounded the philosophies that made Greece famous.

21 While the Epicureans derided him, both they and the Stoics, as well as the many Athenians who had returned from foreign travel, all were eager to hear anything that was novel, even if they could not agree with it. The resurrection was unheard of amongst them, so they wish to know more of it.

23 Paul is too wise to begin offensively by telling his hearers that they were *too superstitious*. His words are rather complimentary, at least so they would understand them. To dread demons was a virtue, the essence of their religion.

23 By this happy introduction the apostle manages to conciliate the pretense to knowledge which the philosophers affected. Instead of charging them directly with ignorance of God he introduces the inscription, to AN UNKNOWN god, which they doubtless all had seen. Then he pursues a course of reasoning, which they could follow, showing the illogical basis of their philosophies as to creation, God's continued activity in providence, and His desire that men should use these evidences in groping for Him—as they were. He is careful to make every possible concession to the philosophers, yet boldly attacks their error. In the midst of marvelous temples, and elaborate ritual, he does not hesitate to declare their uselessness to the God Who needed nothing, but was the Giver of all things. He asserts His supremacy in time and space. He acknowledges the partial truth in the Stoic philosophy by proclaiming His presence and immanence.

28 Paul not only appeals to the measure of truth in their philosophies, but strengthens his cause with them by showing that even their own poets have stumbled on the truth he is about to deduce. The exact words "For of that race also are we" occur in a poem by Aratus, of Cilicia, Paul's native province. "The race" refers to the race of the gods, who were merely deified men. Cleanthes of Lystra also, in a hymn to Zeus, says, "for we are of your race."

29 Paul then does away with their idols, leaving nothing of their religion but the unknown God, Who knows their ignorance and bears with it, but now charges them to change their minds in view of future judgment, which is assured by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Paul wisely begins the evangel to them by announcing the resurrection, for it alone could dispel the error of their philosophies and bring them to a realization of the necessity for a Saviour.

32 The resurrection involves the death of Christ, and this the manner and necessity of His death for sin, but Paul was not allowed to proceed, though he doubtless did unfold the evangel to those who followed him when he left the Areopagus.

Here we have a marvelous model for the preaching of the evangel to the wise of this world. No appeal is made to Scripture, for it would be useless. Every concession is made to the dim perceptions of truth which they held, and they are led as far as human reason can bring them up to the greatest fact of the evangel—the resurrection. But alas! Not many wise are called, for God chooses the stupid of the world to disgrace the wise (1Co.1:26). No persecution drove Paul away, yet no flourishing ecclesia followed his labors. Indifference is deadly.

1 Paul's plan, in leaving Athens, was doubtless to found another center for the evangel in Achaia, as Thessalonica was for Macedonia. Corinth was the logical place, a large mercantile city, whence the evangel could spread in all directions.

<sup>3</sup> While in Thessalonica he had been supported partly by gifts from Philippi, but now he engaged in tentmaking as a means of livelihood.

During his early days in Corinth his heart was continually occupied with the saints from whom he had been severed, especially those of Thessalonica. He had sent Timothy to them to establish them. Now when Timothy came to Corinth with Silas and brought good news of their faith and love, he writes an epistle to them. This was, it seems, not only the first of Paul's epistles to be penned, but the first part of the Greek Scriptures to be committed to writing.

<sup>6</sup> As usual, Paul went to the synagogue and spoke on the sabbaths, but he does not seem to have proclaimed Christ until his companions came. Then he boldly preached Jesus as the Messiah. Profiting by his former experiences, he leaves them when they oppose and holds his meetings in a private house. Yet many, including the chief of the synagogue, are won for the Lord. Paul's language and symbolic action in withdrawing from the Jews are a denunciation of woe, and agree with what he wrote about them at this time (1Thess.2<sup>15,16</sup>).

<sup>9</sup> Paul, in writing to the Corinthians concerning these early days, told them that he was with them in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling (1Co.2<sup>3</sup>). Hence he received a vision in the night to encourage him. God had chosen many a sinner in that city who should hear the evangel through Paul and believe. The opposition did not develop for some time and he was allowed to work for a year and a half. Thus he laid the foundation (1Co.3<sup>10</sup>) of one of the most flourishing of the ecclesias, which ever after had a large place in his heart.

<sup>12</sup> The Jews, however, took advantage of a change in the government, when Gallio (Annæus Novatus, a brother of Seneca, the philosopher, but adopted into the family of Junius Gallio, the rhetorician) became proconsul. He seems to have been especially liberal and tolerant, and refused to act as judge in an affair involving the religious law of the Jews. He considered such matters entirely outside his jurisdiction as a Roman judge.

<sup>16</sup> The Greeks thoroughly disliked the Jews, and, taking advantage of the discomfiture of the Jews, gave Sosthenes a beating in front of the very dais. This, of course, was contrary to law, but Gallio chose to overlook it. Sosthenes seems to have replaced Crispus as chief of the synagogue when the latter believed the evangel. It is possible that he, also, believed later, for a brother of this name is mentioned in Paul's first epistle (1Co.1<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>17</sup> At Philippi, the apostle had turned all blame upon the officers. So here the Lord brings upon the Jews the violence and disgrace they hoped to heap on the apostle. His promise that Paul should not be harmed is faithfully kept. The opposition has helped rather than hindered the evangel.

<sup>18</sup> The taking of a vow was not a part of the law, but was strictly voluntary on the part of those who took it on themselves. Such a person was separated to God, and must not touch the dead, no matter how close the physical relationship. So Paul, at this time, became separated from the dying nation of Israel (Nu.6).

Perhaps Paul's deliverance from the Jews in Corinth was the occasion of this vow. As a further indication of his separation from the apostate nation it corresponds to his action at the beginning of his ministry in Corinth in severing from the unbelieving Jews and going to the nations with the evangel. We have no record of his release from the vow, for he only *sheared* his hair in Cenchrea. To end it he would need to go to Jerusalem and *shave* his head. Hence, in spirit, his ministry henceforth is that of a Nazarite, without the joy which will characterize the coming of the kingdom and with the weakness and shame suggested by the long hair.

<sup>22</sup> It is evident that Antioch has displaced Jerusalem as the center of the evangel. From this point he commences his third missionary journey. He first retraces the steps of his former journey but is now permitted to enter the province of Asia.

<sup>24</sup> Apollos' knowledge seems to have been limited to the Hebrew scriptures which had been translated into Greek in his native city, Alexandria, in Egypt, and to the ministry of John the baptist.

<sup>26</sup> Apollos' ignorance of the ministry of the Lord and His twelve apostles made it easy for him to receive the truth proclaimed through Paul, so that he became a great help to the saints in Corinth as well as an ardent and powerful exponent of the ancient Scriptures concerning the Messiah. What Paul had planted Apollos watered. He built on Paul's foundation (1Co.3<sup>8,10</sup>). The Corinthians made him the head of one of their schisms (1Co.1<sup>12</sup>). He continued in fellowship with the apostle to the end (Titus 3<sup>13</sup>). It is not likely that he was an eloquent man, for the word used denotes *scholarship*, rather than eloquence, and the combination is rare. Superiority of speech is not needed in the proclamation of the evangel. It is not in word but in power (1Co.2<sup>1,4</sup>).

1 Paul came by an upper road to Ephesus, passing by those of Colosse and Laodicea (Col.2<sup>1</sup>), who never saw his face in the flesh.

2 These disciples, like Apollos, seemed to know nothing of the ministry of the Lord and the twelve apostles, and of the gifts of the holy Spirit which were not given until after our Lord's ascension. They possessed none of these gifts and had not so much as heard of them. John's baptism was for the repentant, to prepare a people for the Messiah Who should come after him, Who would baptize in holy Spirit.

5 This verse is usually taken to indicate the act of the twelve disciples, rather than Paul's statement concerning those who heard John the Baptist. But the change in the tense of the verb is against such a rendering. Paul uses the indefinite "*baptizee*" (4), "*hearing*" (5) *are baptized*, of the acts of John and those he baptized, but it is changed to the present, *at placing*, when speaking of Paul's acts, and to the past when speaking of its effects. This is not so apparent in the English version as in the Greek, but suggests that the apostle followed his usual course, for Christ had not sent him to baptize but to preach the evangel (1Co. 1<sup>17</sup>). The gifts followed the imposition of his hands, not their baptism.

8 Once more Paul pursues his usual plan of proclaiming Christ in the synagogue of the principal city of a province.

9 In Ephesus the previous visit of the apostle and the testimony of Apollos, as well as his own bold proclamation in the synagogue, won many adherents among the Jews, so that in this case, it was not *some* who *believed*, but *some* who *opposed*. After three months matters came to a crisis and Paul leaves the synagogue and brings the believing disciples with him, making his headquarters in the school of Tyrannus, where he discourses daily. Besides this, as he reminds the elders in his affecting farewell at Miletus, he supported himself by his own hands (20<sup>34</sup>), possibly working at his trade with Aquila and Priscilla, going about the homes as well as teaching publicly (20<sup>20</sup>), and healing many of diseases, and casting out wicked spirits.

13 The Jews had fallen so low that many of them became sorcerers and magicians who used incantations in their attempts to overcome evil spirits. Finding that Paul's formula was so effective they do not hesitate to profane the name of the Lord, by using it in their exorcisms. But the evil spirits were not deceived by this means, as the sons of Sceva found to their sorrow.

15 The spiritual tendency of Paul's ministry and his authority over the spirit world is here impressed upon us by one of the spirits themselves. The special word used of Paul is a very strong term denoting that they were very well acquainted with him. But they refused to recognize those who would not have the Messiah for their Saviour and Master, yet thought to make capital out of His name and power. Throughout Paul's course he drew nearer and nearer to the spiritual powers until, in his final ministry, he recognized them alone as the real object of attack (Eph.6<sup>12</sup>).

17 This incident had a marked effect on those who practised such arts. The demons whom they feared had acknowledged both the Lord and His servant as worthy of their obedience. No wonder that they were filled with fear and magnified the Lord Jesus.

<sup>18</sup> Many believers still clung to their old practises, but when they found that the Lord was greater than the demons whom they feared, they abandoned their false arts. They gave up the scrolls which taught them, and burned up nearly ten thousand dollars' worth.

<sup>21</sup> The words "*as these things were fulfilled*" mark the central crisis in Paul's ministry. We have long passed Jerusalem, Antioch has held its place as the base for his missionary journeys, and his correspondence was connected with Corinth, but now we look forward to Rome. In epistles written at this juncture Paul declares that he has fully preached the gospel of Christ in these parts (Ro.15<sup>19</sup>), that there is to be a change in his ministry, especially in the evangel he was proclaiming. He had gone about proclaiming Christ as Israel's Messiah, "after the flesh," yet henceforth he would do so no longer. He would recognize no man after the flesh. He would proclaim the conciliation, which does away with the distinction between the Circumcision and Uncircumcision (2Co.5<sup>14-21</sup>, Ro.5<sup>12-21</sup>). His gospel to the nations had been based on the promise to Abraham that all the nations of the earth should be blessed through His Seed. Now he preaches to all mankind because of a common descent from Adam. As this ministry is not in line with the kingdom to Israel, which is the subject of Acts, it is not recognized in this scroll.

The apostle's ministry in the synagogues is at an end, for the Jews among the nations have rejected their Messiah even as those in the land had done. All that now remains is his testimony before kings and in Rome.

Ephesus was the religious as Rome was the political center of the world. Paul gave a larger part of his ministry to the church there than to any other.

<sup>23</sup> The disturbance in Ephesus was no doubt caused by the opposition of the evil spirits, or demons, who are the real objects of worship in idolatry. It served God's purpose as well, for the apostle's ministry had come to a crisis which required him to leave Ephesus.

<sup>24</sup> The impelling motive of Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen was the loss of trade, just as in the case of the Pythoness at Philippi. Money moves the nations.

It was an ancient custom to use portable images or shrines, which were modeled after celebrated temples or other objects of worship. They were used for various purposes, either as household gods or for religious processions, or even on journeys or military expeditions. Some were of wood, others of gold or silver. It can easily be seen how a profitable trade in such images could spring up in Ephesus, for the temple of Diana was world-renowned. Worshipers from afar would want a shrine to take with them to their homes.

The reason why shrines or temples of Diana were made, rather than images of the goddess may lie in the fact that the temple was most magnificent, while the image it contained was rude indeed. It was not an image of Diana the Huntress, which is the usual character in which she is now represented, but a many-breasted female figure above and a shapeless block below, carved out of wood. Nevertheless, she was the object of the most fanatical veneration.

<sup>33</sup> This Alexander may be that copper-smith who had done much evil to the apostle (2Tim.4<sup>14</sup>). If so, it shows the shameless lengths to which the Jews went in their hatred of Paul. They would not wish to be implicated in this matter, though it was well known that they also were opposed to idolatry. If this was the coppersmith he might have some influence with craftsmen of a like occupation, and he would clear his fellow countrymen of any association with Paul. But the mob knew he was a Jew and the mob was in no humor to tolerate any one who was not a worshiper of their goddess.

<sup>35</sup> To be the janitor or sexton of the temple of some great divinity was considered a high honor by the cities of the ancient world.

<sup>35</sup> The "scribe" is called by the same name as the well-known class among the Jews. He was a high city official, and, in this case, a man of tact and judgment. He appeals to them at their weakest point, and calms them before showing the groundlessness and danger of their mad uproar.

<sup>38</sup> After showing them that the men they had led to the theater were not guilty of any overt act against the temple or goddess he reminds them that there are legal means of redress for any wrong which they may have committed.

<sup>39</sup> We have purposely retained the uniform rendering *ecclesia* here, for it gives us a true idea of its meaning in ordinary Greek. It was a town council before which any matter such as this might be brought for settlement. A select portion of the population convened for public business was so called.

<sup>40</sup> The Romans would not tolerate any disorderly assemblage, and would soon recall any liberties and privileges accorded to a city if disorders were not promptly suppressed.

Thus God overrules to deliver Paul from "so great a death" even though the spiritual powers of evil, the avaricious mob, and the Jews were all combined against him. As in Corinth, He uses the power of Rome to protect him from false brethren and fanatical idolaters led on by his unseen spirit enemies.

<sup>1</sup> During Paul's stay in Ephesus he penned the two epistles to the Corinthians. In these we find a full account of much which is outside the scope of Acts. They trace the gradual change which is coming over his teaching, for his ministry went "from glory to glory" (2Co.3<sup>18</sup>). As associated with the proclamation of the kingdom, his ministry seems to fail, as did that of the twelve. This is what is recorded in Acts. But as associated with the secret which was not made publicly known until after his final appeal to the Jews in Rome, his ministry ascended to the heights of Ephesian truth by gradual degrees.

<sup>2</sup> While in Corinth he wrote the epistle to the Galatians and that to the Romans. Thus, within a few months he writes all the Preparatory Epistles, in the central crisis of his ministry, after his determination to give the flesh no further place.

<sup>6</sup> Luke seems to have rejoined the apostle at this point, as he now uses the pronoun *we*.

<sup>7</sup> At Paul's first visit to Troas, the vision of the man of Macedonia caused him to pass through without delay. The door was shut (16<sup>8,9</sup>). At his second visit a door was opened, in the Lord, but as he had no rest in his spirit because of the absence of Titus, he again left for Macedonia (2Co.2<sup>12-13</sup>). Nevertheless a considerable number seem to have believed. Conscious that he would probably never see them again, Paul lingers and prolongs his farewell exhortation.

<sup>9</sup> There is a contrast as well as a similarity between the miracles wrought by Peter and Paul. Peter raised Dorcas to life as Paul raised Eutychus. Much stress is laid on the good works and almsdeeds that she did. Nothing of the kind is recorded of Eutychus. Indeed, he was not sufficiently watchful to keep awake when the apostle was preaching. Are not these types of the resurrection of Israel and of the *ecclesia* which is Christ's body? Those in the former resurrection (Un.20<sup>4-5</sup>) have worked as well as believed, and their resurrection is, in measure, *deserved*. But the saints of the present economy of grace are like Eutychus. Paul's preaching fails to keep them awake. They are drowsy and undeserving. Nevertheless, such is the superabundance of *grace*, that, in the secret resurrection (1Co. 15<sup>51</sup>) revealed about this time by the apostle Paul, merit has no place, for we shall live together with Him whether we are watchful or drowsy (1Thes.5<sup>10</sup>).

<sup>13</sup> We may see something of the tense solicitude of the apostle's heart in his actions. For the sake of a few more hours at Troas he walked twenty miles after having preached most of the night. He would not trust himself in Ephesus, lest he should linger and defeat his purpose to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost. Yet he could not sail past without at least a parting word to the elders of the *ecclesia* he had come to love so well. It becomes more and more evident that the new departure in his ministry included the cessation of his own physical presence with the *ecclesias*. It was to be communicated in true spiritual style by means of epistles.

It must be remembered that Paul's ministry was continually changing. As the apostasy of the Jews progressed, the evangel of the kingdom became less pronounced and he was entrusted with a secret, which, depending on Israel's failure, could not be made known publicly until Israel was set aside. Hence there is a great gulf between this address and the Ephesian epistle, which he wrote to them from Rome some years later. His career at this time was still imperfect. Writing to the Corinthians a short time before, he says that the saints are still in the period of minority and that maturity, or perfection, had not yet been attained (1Co.13<sup>9-12</sup>).

<sup>21</sup> Repentance had its place in Paul's preaching while he was proclaiming the kingdom. It was associated with pardon. Henceforth he no longer preaches these, but justification and conciliation by faith alone, as is set forth in his epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians, which were written not long before this last meeting with the Ephesian elders. The call to repentance is most frequently made to the covenant people, and usually for the purpose of averting impending judgment.

<sup>22</sup> Paul had a profound conviction that it was God's will that he should go to Jerusalem and then to Rome. The further intimation of the spirit that bonds and afflictions awaited him did not make him flinch. The distinct character of his ministry is seen by comparing him with Peter, who *left* Jerusalem after he had been delivered from bonds. Paul *goes* to Jerusalem well aware that his physical frame would be put under restraint. This corresponds closely with the change which his ministry was undergoing. The kingdom and physical blessings were fast receding and spiritual gratuities were taking their place. Henceforth Paul's physical environment is expressive of the truth which he ministers.

<sup>27</sup> The *counsel* of God concerning the kingdom, as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, must not be confused with the still secret *purpose* of God, which the apostle did not make known to the Ephesians until after his arrival at Rome. See Ephesians 1<sup>9,31-9</sup>, and Colossians 1<sup>25,27</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> The oversight in Ephesus seems to have been in the hands of a number of supervisors who cared for them as a shepherd tends his flock. Not one of the ecclesiastical arrangements of later days was present.

<sup>29</sup> The apostle draws a dark picture of apostasy. Wolves from without were to come in. These are spoken of as "burdensome" and probably refers to those who came in to get rather than to give. But even worse was the apostasy within. In Corinth we see the readiness with which the disciples followed a leader even when the leader refused a following. In Ephesus began the destructive work of those who set themselves up as heads of parties or divisions. Had they acted like Paul with the Corinthians the schism would have been healed. But, as they courted a personal following, it has led to the multiplied divisions of today.

<sup>31</sup> Paul's tears were occasioned by the fear that they would turn away from his gospel, as they subsequently did (2 Ti.1<sup>15</sup>).

<sup>32</sup> "God and the word of His grace" means much more to us than it possibly could have meant to the Ephesian elders at Miletus.

The richest storehouse of His grace had not yet been opened. The epistle to the Ephesians had not yet been penned. Yet Paul doubtless referred to these later unfoldings and committed them to that further revelation which it was not yet lawful for him to utter (2Co.12<sup>4</sup>). God and the word of His grace are our only, yet sufficient, recourse in the present apostasy.

<sup>33</sup> As Priscilla and Aquila were in Ephesus, it is probable that Paul worked with them for his living as he had done at Corinth. What a marvelous example of self-sacrifice he has left! Vast as was the spiritual wealth he brought to Ephesus, he did not even take the meager dole needed for his sustenance.

<sup>37</sup> The occasion of their most poignant sorrow was the sign of their greatest benefit. They were about to exchange a subordinate place at Israel's board, for "every *spiritual* blessing among the celestials" (Eph.1<sup>3</sup>). Paul's face may fade from view on *earth*, yet it was but a symptom of a higher and greater fellowship in *heaven*.

<sup>1</sup> The party made a quick journey. The various terms, "running straight," "looming up, and leaving," suggest that they sailed before the wind, which blows from the northwest at that time of the year.

<sup>4</sup> We cannot take this statement "who said to Paul, through the spirit, not to be stepping on board to Jerusalem" as a prohibition by the Spirit of God, for Paul was acting in closest accord with the directions of the spirit. Rather, they knew, through the spirit, what was awaiting Paul in Jerusalem, and they, like all the disciples, were anxious to spare him the trials and sufferings which would surely be his lot if he persisted in his purpose to go on to Jerusalem. But Paul was emulating the Spirit and conduct of his Master, Who set His face as a flint to go to Jerusalem, when He was well aware of all the shame and suffering which should befall Him in the city. Instead of blaming Paul for his persistence we may rather marvel at the steadfastness of his purpose and unflinching courage, not only in view of the trials ahead, but the importunities of his fond friends, who were compelled to recognize that his steadfast purpose grew out of clearer discernment of the Master's will, and so acquiesced (<sup>14</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> What demonstrations of affection were witnessed wherever the apostle paused to say farewell! Following the party with the wives and children as far as the beach, after prayer they "pull away" from one another. Surely Paul had won many hearts who could not but dread the dangers which were ahead of him!

<sup>8</sup> More than twenty years have passed since Philip, the evangelist, after his meeting with the Ethiopian eunuch, was left at Cæsarea (<sup>840</sup>). Whether he has remained there ever since, or had his headquarters there, does not seem clear, though he now seems to be a permanent resident. His duties as one of the seven do not seem to have detained him in Jerusalem.

<sup>9</sup> We are not informed whether the daughters of Philip added their warnings to the rest, but there seems to be no reason for mentioning their gift here unless they, too, confirmed the word of the others.

<sup>11</sup> This is probably that same Agabus who came down to Antioch and prophesied the famine under Claudius Cæsar (<sup>1128</sup>). He now reappears under similar circumstances. There is to be a great *spiritual* famine in Israel. The indications of it are found in their treatment of Paul, which was set forth in the style of the ancient prophets. This was the last intimation he had, and it so impressed all his friends that they once more sought to dissuade him from entering the city of Jerusalem. We may see how thoroughly he was convinced that he was in the Lord's will by his reply to their entreaties. He was no fanatic, bent on carrying out his own will, unmindful of the feelings of his friends. His presence in Jerusalem was necessary, not only that he might fulfill his promise to contribute to the support of the poor of the Circumcision (Ga. <sup>210</sup>), but that the apostasy of the nation, including former believers, might be manifested, and thus his last and crowning ministry, which was to follow their failure, might be made known to the nations.

<sup>18</sup> The absence of the apostles from the leadership of the saints in the holy city and the elevation of James, the brother of the Lord, to the place of authority show how the apostasy had progressed amongst them. The Lord's commission to the twelve was practically ignored, while the physical relationship of James made him their chief. Even at Paul's first visit, though he saw none of the apostles except Cephas, he saw James, who already seemed to have a high place (Ga. <sup>119</sup>). At the conference concerning circumcision Peter was quite overshadowed by James, who proposes the decrees and carries his point (<sup>1513-21</sup>). Paul gives him a higher place than John or Peter, when he says that James, Cephas and John seemed to be the pillars at Jerusalem (Ga. <sup>29</sup>). Soon afterward this becomes evident in Cephas' conduct at Antioch. He acted in accord with the decrees until some came from James: then he was afraid of the circumcisionists (Ga. <sup>212</sup>). James was at the head of those believers who led the Galatians astray and were the source of much of the trouble in Corinth. James means *HEEL*, or Circumventer.



<sup>24</sup> The belief of the circumcisionists, based on tangible evidence, such as signs and wonders, was of a very different quality from that of Paul's epistles. In our Lord's day "many believe in [into] His name, beholding His signs which He did. Yet Jesus Himself did not entrust Himself to them... for He knew what was in mankind" (Jn. 2:23-25). So the myriad believers in Jerusalem were still zealous for the law and circumcision and the traditional observances. Their belief did not hinder them from hating the apostle and sending emissaries to undo his work among the nations. That Paul's real danger lay in the circumcisionists is evident not only from the warning of the elders and the precautionary measures they proposed, but from his own prayer to be rescued from the *stubborn* (not the unbelievers) in Judea (Ro. 15:31). Those who submitted to James' leadership could not tolerate Paul.

<sup>24</sup> It was considered an act of piety to defray the expense of the sacrifices offered by the Nazarites at the completion of their vow, especially if the men were too poor to provide them (Nu. 6). Paul himself was not rich, but it was probably agreed that some of the contribution he had brought for the poor could be used for this purpose. By thus publicly associating himself with this ceremonial it was hoped he would be able to disarm the prejudice against him. Paul's course in this matter cannot be condemned. Up to this time he became a Jew to the Jews. He could circumcise Timothy, because of the prejudice of the Jews, at the same time making it evident that circumcision was nothing. Ceremonial observances were nothing, only as they might be used to conciliate those who clung to them. It is the motive rather than the act which determines what is right and what is wrong.

<sup>27</sup> As it was the season of Pentecost, Jews from all parts of the world were in Jerusalem to keep the festival. Much stress has been laid upon the first Pentecost, when the gospel of the kingdom was first proclaimed by the apostles. What a contrast is this Pentecost, when the chief herald of the kingdom is hated by the believers and nearly put to death through their opposition!

<sup>28</sup> While all the charges against Paul were false literally, they had some foundation in spirit, just as the accusation that our Lord had threatened to destroy the temple and raise it again in three days was false, yet true in the deepest sense. In his epistle to the Romans he had shown that maintaining and discharging law is what matters, not resting in law. He had led some Jewish and many gentile believers, in spirit, into the very holy of holies. Yet in fact he had not led Trophimus beyond the central wall of the barrier (Eph. 2:14) called the "soreg," which forbade the nearer approach of any except those of Jewish blood. He insisted that the law was holy and just and good (Ro. 7:12) and maintained the special privileges of the people of the covenant (Ro. 9:4-5). The plan to conciliate the Christian Jews ends in a disaster which shows that Paul and the legalists are incompatible.

<sup>30</sup> Since the *whole city* was stirred and the people ran together, it is evident that the myriads of Jews who believed sided with their unbelieving countrymen against Paul. This is not so strange as it appears, for even to this day the bitterness of religious controversy leads those with far less between them than there was between Paul and the Judaizers to act in much the same manner. A supposed heretic is not given the consideration which is granted an unbeliever. Religion, especially that which lays stress upon ritual, has radically vitiated the standard of human morals. Paul came to them with much alms and immense spiritual wealth, all of which they spurned as their fathers had spurned his Lord.

<sup>31</sup> The fortress of Antonia was at the northwestern corner of the temple area, with turrets which overlooked all the temple courts, so that any disturbance could be immediately reported to the captain. Hence the mob did not have time to kill Paul before the soldiers rushed down and took him out of their hands.

<sup>33</sup> As the captain could not find out who Paul was he came to the conclusion that he was the Egyptian impostor who had recently led an insurrection, and concerning whom both the soldiers and the populace were still somewhat excited.

<sup>40</sup> God acts in marvelous ways. Human opposition works out his purposes quite as effectively as human help. What better means could be devised to get all Jerusalem as well as representatives from the dispersion together to hear this final testimony to the Messiah and His kingdom? Such an assemblage could not be called and there was probably no building large enough to hold them. It seems almost incredible that Paul should be granted an opportunity to speak to them, as Roman law and Roman soldiers were usually excessively strict and severe. Thus, in a few minutes, the whole situation is changed. We would naturally expect him to speak Greek, for all would have understood him, but, with fine tact, he speaks to them in the language the people of the covenant would best understand, which was associated in their minds with all that was sacred in the Judaism they fought for. It was the nearest approach to the language of their sacred Scriptures. It was the language of Jew with Jew, just as Yiddish is with one class today.

<sup>3</sup> We cannot help admiring the opening words of the apostle. His gesture had stopped the tumult. His language had quieted them. Now his words are calculated to draw them into sympathy with him, as he shows them that he understands perfectly why they are persecuting him, for he himself had outdone them in his desire to stamp out the heresy which he now defends. Indeed he had witnesses among their leaders who could testify that he had received authority from them to carry his persecution to outside cities.

<sup>4</sup> "The way" on the lips of the apostle meant the true faith and the correct life. Apparently it was a phrase of the disciples' own choosing. "The Path" of Buddhism is an interesting parallel.

<sup>6</sup> Never before had the apostle such an opportunity to tell of his meeting with the Messiah to his own people. We may gather much from his address concerning the status of the believers in Judea at this crisis. The offense of the cross had ceased. They were regarded simply as another Jewish sect. The crowd made no demonstration against the mention of Jesus as Messiah. Myriads of them believed that and the rest tolerated it.

<sup>9</sup> The apparent discrepancy between this and the first account of his call (9<sup>7</sup>) is readily explained. The men with him heard a sound but did not recognize it as the voice "of Him Who is speaking to me." The Greek word means both *voice* and *sound*. They gazed at the *light*, but not at the One from Whom it radiated.

<sup>10</sup> With admirable tact Paul presses such points as were calculated to win his audience, but omits whatever would rouse their ire. The Lord Himself had told him that he was to be sent to the nations (26<sup>17</sup>) and this was confirmed by Ananias (9<sup>15</sup>). Yet he carefully refrains from any mention of the nations at this time. The wisdom of this is confirmed when they refused to hear him further, once he had mentioned the nations (2<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>12</sup> In the same spirit he introduces Ananias as "a pious man according to the law," omitting all mention of his belief in the Messiah. He speaks of "the God of our fathers," and baptism, and the familiar prophetic formula of "invoking His name."

<sup>17</sup> Nothing is said here of Paul's sojourn in Arabia (Ga.1<sup>17-18</sup>), and the fact that he did not return to Jerusalem for three years after his call. What most concerned his hearers was that he *did* return and with the fullest confidence that those who knew so well of his malignant zeal against the followers of Jesus would not fail to believe his testimony concerning Him. He even argues the point with the Lord Himself. How could they refuse to listen when they knew perfectly how madly he had carried on his persecution and had even taken part in the murder of Stephen?

<sup>18</sup> That this is a solemn witness against the Jews is evident from the statement of the Lord that they would not receive Paul's testimony no matter how anxious he was to win them. Paul is here being used in the land as he afterward was in Rome to the dispersion to give the apostate nation a solemn intimation that God was through with them for a time and was now about to take up the nations.

<sup>21</sup> Here we have the cause of Israel's apostasy laid bare. They were to be a channel of blessing to the other nations, but, instead, they kept all Jehovah's gifts to themselves and refused to share them with the less favored nations. They were like the slave who owed ten thousand talents, but, having nothing to pay with, is forgiven the debt. But when he found a fellow slave who owed him much less, he refused to be merciful and had him cast into prison. Consequently his Lord was indignant and gave him up to the tormentors (Mt.18<sup>23</sup>). Israel is the ten thousand talent debtor. The nations were their fellow-slaves. Israel was pardoned, but, since they refuse to pass on the blessing to the nations, the pardon is withdrawn and the nation has been in the hands of the tormentors ever since. Only a few years after this Jerusalem was destroyed, the nation scattered and driven from the land to wander up and down the earth, despised by the nations whom they had wronged.

<sup>25</sup> On several previous occasions Paul had been protected from the fury of his own countrymen by the intervention of the Roman power. Gallio had turned the tables against them (18<sup>12-17</sup>), and the scribe of Ephesus had cleared him (19<sup>37</sup>), but never before had he appealed to his Roman citizenship as a defense against his own kin. In Philippi he had used it, not to shield himself, but for the sake of the evangel. Now, however, that the nation in the land is finally given over to judgment, he has no hesitancy in claiming his rights as a Roman citizen. He had already been beaten five times by the Jews (2Co.11<sup>24</sup>) and it was needless to bear any more.

<sup>25</sup> As he was a Roman citizen, the captain had no right to bind Paul, much less to scourge him before trial. But the fact that he had bound him illegally put Paul in an advantageous position, to which was added the respect due to one who had received such a citizenship by birth, while the captain had obtained it by purchase. "I am a Jew" availed nothing with the Jews. But on his declaration that he is a Roman, his word is instantly accepted. It was a capital offense to claim unlawfully the possession of the citizenship.

<sup>1</sup> Paul now stands before the Sanhedrin, in which body he seems to have had a vote after the death of Stephen. Doubtless many who were there were old associates of his and most of them were acquainted with his life and doctrines, so that the inquiry was a mere form and bound to arrive at no conclusion. Paul, contrary to his usual custom of speaking first in a winning way of his auditors, commences immediately with his own defense, and seems to apologize for the fact that his Roman citizenship had entitled him to this hearing before them. This so enraged the chief priest, who probably took it as a hint that he was beyond his jurisdiction, that he has him slapped on the mouth. There were constant changes in the high priestly office in those days, which accounts for the ignorance of the apostle as to the personality of the high priest. Josephus tells us that Paul's prediction was fulfilled in the Jewish war, when this hypocritical president of the Sanhedrin was murdered by assassins.

Paul had the privileges of a Greek (21<sup>37</sup>), a Hebrew (22<sup>3</sup>), and a Roman (22<sup>27</sup>). The man that Christ found had been separated and trained and circumstanced by God.

<sup>6</sup> The Pharisees had this in common with the faith of Christ, that they believed in a resurrection of the dead, which was, however, denied by the Sadducees. This question was the cause of perpetual strife between them. Paul, seeing how useless any further appeal to the council would be, determined to shift the contention to the subject of resurrection, in which he would have the Pharisees on his side and thus they would be diverted into strife amongst themselves. The result justified his plan, for the Pharisees immediately become violent partisans of his and some are even willing to allow that a spirit—which the Sadducees did not believe in—had spoken to him. They thought to use his testimony as an argument against their enemies the Sadducees. Thus it has ever been with the Jews. Their own internal strife was seldom laid aside even in face of the gravest crisis, and became the cause of many of their miseries.

<sup>10</sup> The captain was more concerned that a Roman citizen should not be injured than to get their report, and so sends his soldiers to rescue him a second time from their clutches. It was well that he was again taken into the custody of the Romans, for the Jews would soon have torn him to pieces.

<sup>11</sup> After such experiences we may well imagine that the future looked black to the persecuted saint. Now, if ever, he might yield to discouraging forebodings. At just such periods in the apostle's ministry he received divine help in the form of a vision to comfort and encourage him. In Corinth, when Jewish opposition threatened to wreck his testimony, the Lord spoke to him "Fear not!" And the reason was that God had a purpose to fulfil which demanded his continuance (18<sup>9</sup>). Again, in the midst of the storm on his journey to Rome, he is again assured, "Fear not, Paul!" (27<sup>24</sup>). So now, he receives the definite and cheering assurance that it is the purpose of God that he should fulfill his wish to see Rome. Besides, the Lord commends his testimony in Jerusalem, which was such a failure seemingly. This word of approval should deter us from criticising any of the apostle's acts, for they undoubtedly were in line with God's purpose, and that, rather than our own provincial standard of right and wrong, is the true test of conduct. Results are not the test of a true ministry. Paul at Jerusalem was as great a failure as Noah, Elijah and Jeremiah. But for this commendation, Paul would seem to be out of the will of God.

<sup>12</sup> In contrast with this serene assurance is the malignant activity of the Jews, who seem to have recovered from their temporary occupation with their own differences. The apostle now becomes the object of a plot to assassinate him. Thus the Roman citadel becomes his fortress rather than his prison. If the conspirators had been true to their oath, more than forty of them would have died of self-inflicted famine, but the Talmud assures us that they could be absolved. What a conscienceless load of crime was cloaked under the religious zeal of these pious Jews!

<sup>16</sup> Paul's family was influential in the Hebrew world. His nephew was in a position to learn the secret plans of the Jewish leaders.

<sup>18</sup> Roman citizens, while awaiting trial, were kept in custody in several ways, according to circumstances and the rank of the prisoner. Public custody consisted in being thrust into the common jails and confined in dungeons of the worst kind. They were kept in chains or kept in stocks as in the case of Paul and Silas at Philippi. Free custody was simply a guarantee on the part of some person of high rank that the person would appear for trial. Military custody consisted in putting the person in charge of a soldier who was responsible for the prisoner with his own life. It was usual to chain the prisoner's right hand to the soldier's left. Sometimes, however, the military custody was relaxed to the extent of merely putting the prisoner under the observation of a soldier, without chains. The soldiers, of course, relieved one another in military custody. There seems to be no doubt that Paul's imprisonment was a mild form of military custody, with liberty of access for his friends and relatives.

<sup>23</sup> The Roman provinces were divided into armed and unarmed, the former being under the authority of the emperor, the latter under the senate. Roughly speaking, the garrisoned provinces were on the frontiers, or where the country had not been fully subjugated. Tacitus and Josephus tell us that the fifth, tenth, and fifteenth legions were stationed in Cæsarea, Ptolemais, or Jerusalem a few years after this. They were largely recruited in the province where they were located. The Jews were, however, exempt from military duty, so that the soldiers in Judea were drawn from the Syrian and Greek population. A legion consisted of more than six thousand infantry, perhaps as many auxiliaries, besides a regiment of cavalry. Such was the force at the captain's command from which he drew the detachment which conveyed Paul to Cæsarea, the seat of the governor of the province.

<sup>26</sup> Claudius Lysias was a diplomat and did not stop at a simple lie to gain credit for himself for having protected a Roman citizen from the Jews.

<sup>28</sup> As in the case of our Lord, witness after witness testified that Paul had done nothing deserving the bonds he endured or the death with which he was threatened. All who heard his case concurred in the opinion that the accusations against him were unfounded and false. Yet it was in this way that he fulfilled that part of his ministry foretold by Ananias which he hitherto had no opportunity of carrying out. He had witnessed to the Jewish people and to the nations. Now he was to testify before kings (<sup>915</sup>) and thus close the kingdom testimony. His undoubted innocence, coupled with his Roman citizenship, greatly mitigated the terrors of a long imprisonment. The divine reason for this seems to be that the testimony to the Jews in the land was fulfilled, and Paul was, as a consequence, put beyond their power. All that they are allowed to do aids him in fulfilling his final kingdom testimony to the kings of the land, and provides for his journey to Rome, the greatest center of earthly power at the time, there solemnly to close up the kingdom proclamation altogether. Paul's imprisonment was a sign that the earthly kingdom was being withdrawn, otherwise its herald would be delivered from the earthly rulers. And this is emphasized by the fact that the nation who rejected it is the cause of his imprisonment.

<sup>34</sup> It was a nice point with the Roman authorities not to interfere with one another's jurisdiction. Thus Pilate, when our Lord was brought before him, learning that he was of Galilee, which was in Herod's jurisdiction, sent Him to Herod (Lu.23<sup>7</sup>). Felix does not seem to have heeded Paul's Cilician origin, probably because the complaints against him were not sustained, and the alleged crimes were committed mainly in Jerusalem.

<sup>1</sup> Ananias, the chief priest, lost no time in following the man who had called him a whitewashed wall. He hires a professional pleader against Paul, probably an Italian, acquainted more accurately with the Roman law, and the flattery to which governors were accustomed. As at the trial of the Master it was really Pilate before Christ, so now the judges are being judged, though judgment is not denounced here as in the Sanhedrin.

<sup>3</sup> The smooth eulogy of Felix was most undeserved. He was a freedman of Claudius and brother of that Pallas who was a favorite of the emperor. Having been a slave and now owing his elevation to influence at Rome, it is no wonder Tacitus tells us that "in the practice of all kinds of lust and cruelty he exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave." He had Jonathan, one of the high priests, assassinated because he protested against some of his practises. It must be acknowledged, however, that he did rid parts of Judea from robbers, and especially, at about this time, drove out the Egyptian for whom Paul was mistaken by Claudius Lysias. His acts stirred the Jews against the Roman rule so that, when he retired from the province and went to Rome, he was tried for maladministration, but acquitted by Nero through the influence of his brother Pallas.

<sup>5</sup> Tertullus makes three charges against Paul. The first was against Roman law, stirring up treason against the government. The second was against the law of Moses, as they supposed, a ring-leader of the Nazarenes. The third was against both Roman and Jewish law, profaning the sanctuary, for the Roman law protected the Jews in the exercise of their worship.

<sup>6-8</sup> The omission of "and want to judge by a law of ours, yet captain Lysias, coming with much force, leading him away out of our hands, orders his accusers to come to you" is based on the evidence of almost all the ancient manuscripts and has the consent of almost all of the editors of the text. It is most unlikely that an orator like Tertullus would so damage his own influence as to accuse captain Lysias of a wrong, or suggest that Felix had no right to judge the case.

<sup>10</sup> Paul quickly disposed of the two charges involving the Roman law. Since coming to Jerusalem only a few days before he had done nothing upon which they could base their charge of sedition. Neither had he profaned the temple. The other charge he admits, and makes it the occasion of his testimony. His dignified and truthful introduction is in marked contrast to that of his accuser.

<sup>17</sup> To a man like Felix the accusation that Paul belonged to the sect of the Nazarenes would have little in it to incriminate him. And Paul, with marvelous wisdom, answers all that might be said against the sect by pointing out his mission to Jerusalem. He came bringing a vast sum of money for the poor, contributed by this same despised sect. Whatever their differences in doctrine they had as much right to their belief as the Jews. Viewed from the practical standpoint of a governor, their charitable act called for commendation. Paul came to Jerusalem with a gift for his nation. He engaged in the religious rites of their religion. The Jews of Asia, who started the riot against him should be present to say what he had done. Their absence was proof that he had done nothing.

<sup>20</sup> Having thus defended himself of all but the theological charge against him, Paul dismisses that by showing that the fundamental doctrinal difference was the same as that which kept the Pharisees and Sadducees in continual strife with one another. If it was criminal to differ they should be indicted and one party punished. When they had settled their differences it would be in order to try the sect of the Nazarenes.

<sup>22</sup> The "justice" of Rome, like all human justice, was based on expedience, rather than equity. Felix would have set Paul free, only he knew it would displease the Jews. He invents an excuse for deferring matters, for he evidently had no thought of consulting captain Lysias, who, on his own confession, could make nothing out of the case. One point seems to have impressed Felix. Paul had come to Jerusalem with much money. Could he or his friends be persuaded to part with some of it? This seems to have controlled his course until he was relieved of his place. On this account he not only lets Paul have much freedom but desires that he shall be able to get into communication with his friends. This is why he gives him audience and hints that, *given occasion*, he would call for him. It is not that he would hear him when he had a "convenient season," but that he would make any season convenient if

given the proper encouragement. He was after a bribe. Yet the Lord used this mercenary motive to protect Paul from the Jews and to lead him before kings and to bring him to Rome.

<sup>24</sup> The great moral courage of the apostle is manifest in his intercourse with Felix and his wife Drusilla, whom the king had enticed from her own husband by the help of a magician. To speak to such a notorious man, who slew the high priest for presuming to expostulate with him concerning his unlawful acts, while he was his prisoner and fully at his mercy, about righteousness, self-control and future judgment, so that the governor was affrighted, was to anticipate the powers of the coming kingdom, where righteousness shall reign.

<sup>1</sup> Festus seems to have been a just man, though he tried to favor the Jews, as one in his position naturally would. The Jews had found that they could do nothing with Felix in Paul's case, and seem to have dropped the matter. But the accession of the new procurator gave them another opportunity to have him put to death and they are not slow to take advantage of it. Festus is more respectable than Felix. His name means "festive," and consistently with it he prefers the pleasurable to the right. He summarily disposed of the fact of Christ and His resurrection as a religious vagary because he was essentially worldly. The world holds festival while the saints suffer.

<sup>7</sup> From Paul's reply we may imagine that the charges against him were much the same as those which had been preferred before. But they produced no evidence and the governor seems to have been convinced of his innocence. He should have freed Paul, but such a course would have brought his administration into disrepute at its very inception. Consequently he proposes a course which the Jews would approve, but he leaves it open to Paul to reject or accept. He proposes to bring the case back to Jerusalem. But Paul is through with Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. God has made it plain that his next testimony is in Rome.

<sup>10</sup> Paul's reply is a marvelous compendium of his defense and his rights as a Roman citizen. Festus had supreme criminal jurisdiction in Judea over all except Roman citizens. Even these, should they be caught in some gross crime, such as banditry or piracy, could be condemned and executed by the provincial governors, with no recourse to any higher tribunal. Festus' consultation with the council was to determine this point. But it was all too evident that Paul was not guilty of such open violations of the law. Hence his appeal must stand. Festus had no right to try his case.

<sup>11-12</sup> One of the legal advantages of a Roman citizen was his right to appeal to Cæsar. But this right was not permitted to burden the supreme court of the empire with trifling cases, and the governor of a province was empowered to investigate such claims and to decide whether or not the appeal should be granted.

<sup>13</sup> The Roman law required that the person of a prisoner who had appealed to the emperor should be sent to Rome for trial at the earliest moment, but he must be accompanied by an official report of the case up to the time of the appeal. All of the acts and documents, the depositions of the witnesses on both sides, and a record of the judgment of the lower tribunal had to be sent to aid the emperor in his consideration of the case. Here is where Festus was in a quandary. The evidence, if such it could be called, was quite unintelligible to him. He did not wish to make his government ridiculous at its very commencement by sending a prisoner against whom he could not even formulate a definite indictment.

<sup>22</sup> Herod Agrippa II, king of Chalcis, was familiar with the Jewish law and customs from his youth and had the power of appointing the high priest. Together with his sister, Bernice, he had come to pay a complimentary visit to the newly appointed procurator. Here was an opportunity for Festus to get the information he required concerning Paul's case, for the king was the most likely one to help him formulate an indictment, as he was an ex-

pert in all questions relating to the Jews, besides having spent much of his youth in Rome. To him, then, Festus details Paul's case.

<sup>23</sup> Cæsarea was the capital of Judea and thus provided Paul with an audience composed of the principal political personages of the province. To this was added Agrippa and his retinue, altogether such a company as few heralds of the kingdom could hope to find. Besides, Agrippa had doubtless heard concerning the Lord and His disciples, and especially of Paul, whom he was hoping to hear. All the notables of the city as well as the military leaders assembled with them on the morrow to hear Paul's last proclamation of Messiah in the land.

What thoughts must have surged in the breast of the apostle as he is led forth to face this display of worldly power! Could anything be more expressive of the fact that, through Israel's apostasy, the longed-for kingdom, which he had proclaimed in the land and among the dispersion, was now withdrawn? Hence his defense contains no allusion to the theocratic rule to be established by Messiah. To have spoken before kings and governors before this crisis and declared the destruction of human governments by the advent of Messiah would have been suicidal. Now that the kingdom recedes, he is less and less occupied with it.

<sup>24</sup> The well chosen words of Festus show that, though he could not understand the feeling of the Jews against Paul, he was convinced of his innocence. The examination which followed was in no sense a trial, for there were no accusations. The apostle is given liberty to speak concerning himself, yet he skilfully brings in his meeting with the Lord and his commission, so that all the elements of the evangel are put before his hearers. It is but one more example of God's inimitable ways of turning evil into good, of making human opposition work out His purpose. Paul, in his chain, and persecuted by his own people, was performing a ministry which could be accomplished in no other way.

1 King Agrippa was a notable figure throughout the closing period of Jewish national life. He was the last prince of the Herodian line. Unlike the Roman governors, who were frequently replaced and most of whom knew little of the people they sought to govern, Agrippa had all his life been in a position to acquire a most intimate acquaintance with the Jews and their religious customs.

4-5 The morality of Saul of Tarsus was as unimpeachable as that of Paul the apostle. He had a good conscience (23<sup>1</sup>) and his life was blameless (Phil. 3<sup>6</sup>). But he was the chief of sinners (1Ti. 1<sup>15</sup>) because his self-righteousness and religion made him a hater of Christ. Mere religion degrades men.

6 Paul's plight has often been repeated in the subsequent history of Christendom. His offense—consists in believing the Scriptures—which his opponents claimed to believe. Strange to say, the most bitter persecution, to those who believe God, comes, not from the irreligious world, but from those who claim that they, too, believe the Scriptures, but who do not seem to have received the spirit of love which pervades them.

7 The Jews were expecting the Messiah and the kingdom, and should have rejoiced in the fulfillment of their expectation. Instead, they fly in the face of their fondest hopes, when they reject the proclamation of Messiah.

8 The Hebrew Scriptures contain several instances of resurrection besides that predicted concerning the awakening of those who sleep in the soil of the ground at the setting up of the kingdom (Dan. 12<sup>2</sup>). The only entrance into the kingdom, for those who have fallen asleep, is resurrection, or awakening. Even Israel, now that they die as a nation, will have a national resurrection, as depicted by the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision (Eze. 37<sup>1-14</sup>). Doubtless the stress which Paul lays on the doctrine of the resurrection in these final discourses, from the time he spoke in the Sanhedrin, arose from the fact that he now looked upon the nation as dead, and nothing but a spiritual resurrection would suffice to revive them when the kingdom should come.

12 This is the fullest account of Saul's call, and the only one which gives his commission to the nations. He forbore to mention this in speaking to his enraged kinsmen (22<sup>7</sup>) as he here omits all reference to Ananias. He uses only such parts as suit the place and purpose.

13 Only those acquainted with the glare of the Syrian sun at midday, can grasp the full significance of this. Nature's brightest light is eclipsed by the glorious grace into which Saul is ushered by his call.

14 All fell to the earth at first, but later stood up (9<sup>7</sup>) as Saul himself was told to do. The fact that the Lord spoke in Hebrew is shown in the other accounts by the form of the name Saul. It is spelled differently and is not declined, as is the Greek in other places.

15 In the Orient a sharp, pointed rod is used in place of a whip to urge animals to their task. To kick the sharp goad hurts no one but themselves. This is a graphic picture of Saul's service up to this time. The Lord was using him to carry out His purpose, but hitherto Saul did not acknowledge his Master. He had been goaded into persecuting the saints. Henceforth he was to render willing, intelligent service. Henceforth he acknowledges Christ as his Lord.

16 The twelve were to witness to the Lord's life from John's baptism to His ascension (12<sup>1</sup>). Paul was to be a witness of Him *after* His ascension and glorification. It was to be progressive. Further visions were to be given to supplement this first commission.

16 Saul neither sought the Lord nor His service, neither had he a sense of need. He was arrested and saved by despotic grace.

17 As this is a continuation of Luke's account, most of the commissions are based on the commission for mankind (Lu. 24<sup>47</sup>) proclaiming a pardon for all men. The twelve combined it with the kingdom commissions and limited it to Israelites and proselytes (23<sup>8</sup>, 53<sup>1</sup>, 10<sup>43</sup>). Saul first preached a pardon of sins to gentiles in Pisidian Antioch (13<sup>38</sup>), combining it with the first intimation of justification. It is always coupled with repentance, though nothing is said in Saul's commission concerning this.



<sup>22</sup> It is evident that the apostle did disclose secrets which cannot be found in Moses and the prophets. One of these was the secret of the resurrection, made known to the Corinthians (1Co.15<sup>15</sup>). Another was the secret of the evangel, which occupies much of the epistle to the Romans (Ro.16<sup>25</sup>). We must either take the statement that he had said nothing but what Moses and the prophets said of future occurrences in a general way of all his past course, or take it strictly of his conduct since his apprehension by the Jews. If the latter is the case, it becomes clear why, at this time of comparative leisure, no epistles proceed from his pen and there is a gap of several years between the Preparatory and the Perfection epistles. For the time being he seems to have confined himself to the closing drama of the kingdom. This aspect of his ministry is the only one, of course, which finds any place in the present account. Until the kingdom was fully set aside, he could disclose no more secrets.

<sup>24</sup> The idea that light was to come to the nations through such a channel was too much for Festus. He did not deride *learning*. He might acknowledge that light could come through study. The word here used is the same which is elsewhere rendered *scripture* or *writing*. He objected, not to human attainments, but to divine revelation. This is shown in Paul's appeal to Agrippa, who had believed the prophets without becoming mad.

<sup>26</sup> This holds good of all the facts of the gospel. The evangel has no esoteric doctrines. Even its "mysteries" are for the enlightenment of all (Eph. 3<sup>9</sup>).

<sup>28</sup> Agrippa was not "almost persuaded." His remark is sarcastic to a degree. Christian was not the honorable term it is today, but a name of reproach and scorn. He suggested that Paul is too hasty in supposing that, as he believed the prophets, he would believe the evangel. But Paul ignores his sarcasm and turns it into a sober wish. He could wish that all that noble company had the true treasures of nobility and wealth which were his in Christ! Thus ends Paul's testimony in Judea. This part of his course is finished.

<sup>1</sup> The writer of Acts, probably Luke, seems to have become the apostle's constant companion from this time. In his latest epistle from Rome Paul speaks of him as his fellow laborer (Philem.<sup>24</sup>) and later laments that he alone remained with him (2Tim.4<sup>11</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> This Julius has been identified with Julius Priscus who afterwards became prefect of the Prætorian guards when Vitellius was emperor.

<sup>1</sup> There seems to have been no regular service either for passengers or freight on the Mediterranean in ancient times. Travelers were entirely dependent on passing merchant vessels and often sailed in a number of ships before reaching their destination. Paul took three different vessels in his last voyage to Jerusalem from Macedonia. Even emperors used this casual means of transportation. Hence the centurion took a ship to Asia, with the idea of transferring to another vessel as soon as he found one which would carry them toward Rome. Such a ship proved to be in Myra, one of the ports at which they called. And in this they pursued their journey to Italy.

<sup>2</sup> Aristarchus is probably that same Aristarchus who was seized by the Ephesian mob when they could not find Paul (19<sup>29</sup>) who returned to Asia with him on his last voyage to Jerusalem (20<sup>4</sup>). He was his fellow laborer in Rome (Philem.<sup>24</sup>) and seems to have been imprisoned with him (Col.4<sup>10</sup>).

<sup>4</sup> The direct course to the coasts of Asia would be south and west of Cyprus. This was the course on his second and third missionary journeys. They worked their way to windward by taking advantage of a current between Cyprus and Cilicia.

<sup>6</sup> The Alexandrian ship was somewhat out of her course in this harbor unless it had business there also, but the prevailing west wind would account for this. Egyptian vessels were amongst the largest of that day, and as this one was engaged in the trans-Mediterranean traffic it must have been of considerable size.

<sup>7</sup> Cnidus had an excellent and sheltered harbor, to which, doubtless, they would have gone for the winter if the wind had allowed it.

<sup>11</sup> Anciently the steersman, or helmsman, or pilot, was captain of the ship, but his duties in larger vessels corresponds to our navigator. The man who chartered the ship traveled as his own supercargo, and was as much interested in the safety of his lading as the navigator was in his ship. Hence his counsel was sought. One lost his ship and the other his cargo for rejecting Paul's advice. The souls on board (including these two men) were given to Paul, and he lost none of them, even though their action endangered all.

<sup>12</sup> Ideal Harbors, was not, as its name implies, a sheltered enclosure, but rather an open roadstead. Hence the majority of those on board thought best to reject the Jewish prisoner's advice and seek better winter quarters.

<sup>12</sup> "Looking" must be taken from the sailor's standpoint, which is usually the opposite of a landsman's. *Phoenix* faced east rather than west.

<sup>13</sup> As the south wind came up they probably lost all confidence in the pessimistic Jew who had warned them of danger ahead.

<sup>14</sup> This typhoon or hurricane was so violent that the vessel could not keep its course, but was carried off in another direction. Had it not been so strong they could have luffed to the wind and used it to carry them to *Phoenix*.

<sup>16</sup> *Cauda* is usually called *Clauda*, but as this reading is corrected in *Sinaiticus*, and the modern name omits the "l," we have made it *Cauda*.

<sup>16</sup> It was customary, in ancient times, to drag a small boat in the water behind the ship. So long as the vessel was being driven by the gale this was safe, but when its speed was temporarily reduced there was great danger of the boat pounding the vessel to pieces or being itself broken up. Hence they held it off, and then hoisted it on board.

<sup>17</sup> "Lowering the gear" in order to keep from running into the *Syrtis*, on the north African coast, must have consisted in *lying-to*, or setting a small canvas to bring the vessel up as near the wind as possible. This would stop her progress and change her course.

<sup>23</sup> That Paul, a mere prisoner, should have presumed to give advice at all shows how quickly he obtained recognition. Now that all wished that he had been heeded, he easily assumes the leadership. They deserve to be lost, and the vessel and its cargo are lost, through rejecting Paul's words. Yet, notwithstanding their disobedience, he is graciously granted the souls of all who are sailing with him. We cannot believe that this shipwreck is merely an interesting adventure in Paul's career without any bearing on the subject of the book of Acts. We have seen how this account gives us only what concerns the kingdom testimony, leaving out important incidents in his life which have no bearing on it. This shipwreck is not mentioned in his later epistles. Hence it must have a close connection with the fortunes of the kingdom. We take it as a parable of Paul's closing kingdom ministry and the fortunes of those who are associated with him in it. They are in the ship and sustained by it just as the nations, under Paul's early ministries are in the kingdom and find their sustenance at Israel's board. But the kingdom is fast going to pieces, Israel as a nation is nearing its end, and now the question is, what is to become of the believers among the nations to whom Paul had preached? Will they be swallowed up in Israel's downfall? The answer is pictured in the salvation of all who sail with Paul and the loss of the ship with its cargo. The nations lose everything connected with the kingdom but are safely carried through the catastrophe. They lose all earthly hopes, but gain the higher heavenly place accorded them in Paul's epistles from Rome.

<sup>27</sup> Those on board ship have the sensation that land is nearing them when the ship approaches a shore and sailors speak of it in this way. Experienced sailors know when they are near land, even if it is invisible, by the distant roar of the breakers and other indications. The danger now lay in striking something in the dark so that they should not be able to reach the shore and save themselves.

<sup>34</sup> It is practically impossible to prepare meals in such a storm as they had encountered and the constant toil and apprehension would take away all desire for food. But now that land was near they doubtless remembered Paul's predictions and were more than willing to listen to him as he cheered and encouraged them. We hear no more of the navigator and the owner of the cargo, and even the centurion obeys Paul, who acknowledges his thankfulness to God before all and gives them an example of faith by taking his fill of food.

<sup>38</sup> The lighter they could make the ship the better chance they had of beaching her near the shore. To do this it was necessary also to control her course, so they hoisted a sail to the wind and unlashed the rudders, which had probably been securely fastened, as steering was impossible. Unlike modern vessels, the ships of that day had *two* rudders, which they would now use to steer the ship for the beach.

<sup>41</sup> It would seem that some current carried them into a channel, or the place "where two seas met," and hindered them from reaching the beach they were headed for. They ran aground in the channel itself.

<sup>41</sup> Every detail of this description fits perfectly with the environs of what is now called St. Paul's bay on the northern coast of Malta. The depth of the sea, a channel made by the island of Salomonetta, and the evidences of a beach at the mouth of the Westara creek, all identify this as the probable location.

<sup>42</sup> As a Roman guard was ordinarily responsible for his prisoners with his own life, we can better understand the inhuman suggestion of the centurion's soldiers. Once again Paul becomes the saviour of the prisoners even as he had been used but a few hours before to prevent the sailors' desertion and thus saved the lives of the very soldiers who now wished to despatch him. The centurion was too just to kill the one to whom he and the rest owed their very lives.

<sup>1</sup> There was an island in the Adriatic called Melida or Melita, which some suppose was the scene of the shipwreck. It is in the gulf of Venice. The ancient Adria, however, included more than the present Adriatic, and was applied to all of the Mediterranean between Sicily and Greece. The modern condition of Malta is no index of what it was in those days. "Barbarians" (for which we have no English equivalent) was applied by the Greeks to any who did not speak Greek, and their conduct makes it clear that they were far from being *barbarous* or savage. There are no vipers in Malta today, but venomous reptiles always disappear with the increase of population. The Venetian Melita could not possibly be reached with the wind blowing so as to drive them toward the Syrtis quicksand and there is no reason to think that it changed. They would pass innumerable islands on the way as if by a miracle. And their subsequent journey would have been overland or by a different route from Melita.

<sup>1</sup> Just as Matthew, who gives us the rejection of the kingdom as proclaimed by our Lord Himself, closes with a millennial foreview when He told them, in anticipation of that day, "all authority in heaven and on earth is given unto Me," so here, where we have the rejection of the kingdom as proclaimed by His apostles, we are regaled with a millennial scene to remind us that the kingdom is merely delayed, and will come in its proper time. First the serpent is destroyed, corresponding to the binding of Satan at the beginning of the thousand years, then blessing flows out to the nations. Paul, as a herald of that day, is able to pick up serpents without any harm coming to him, but lays hands on those who are ailing, and they have ideal health (Mk. 16<sup>18</sup>).

<sup>7</sup> By healing the father of the chief man in the island, his fame and message would be immediately spread. Thus the very place of the shipwreck was chosen to suit his purpose.

<sup>9</sup> Three months busy with blessing thus came out of the catastrophe. Had the ship wintered in Cnidus, as they had wished, or at Ideal Harbors, as Paul proposed, the ship and cargo might indeed have been saved, but a much greater loss would have been sustained by the islanders. Thus God always gets a greater good out of a lesser evil.

<sup>11</sup> The Latin equivalent of Dioscuri would be "Castor and Pollux." But this gives the impression that it was a Roman vessel, whereas most of the commerce with Rome was carried in foreign bottoms, and this was probably a Greek ship, having a Greek name.

<sup>12</sup> There is a local tradition that Paul himself founded the first ecclesia in Syracuse. The account reads as though the centurion allowed him the utmost liberty.

<sup>15</sup> As Paul had written an epistle to Rome there must have been a considerable company of believers there. They showed something of their regard for him by coming out to welcome him on the way. One company came as far as Appii Forum. Another delegation met him at Three Taverns, about ten miles nearer the city. No wonder Paul thanked God and took courage. He was now near the goal that he had set before him several years before, and though a prisoner of Rome, he had almost all the freedom he could wish. Indeed, from this time he preferred to call himself a "prisoner of the Lord," as he recognized that it was the Lord's will.

<sup>17</sup> It is eminently fitting that the final and decisive rejection of the kingdom should follow its proclamation in Rome, the seat of the world's greatest empire at the time. It had been proclaimed in Jerusalem and rejected by the rulers of the Jews in the land, now it has been fully heralded among the Jews of the dispersion, and they, too, have rejected it wherever Paul has gone. The most signal sign of their apostasy is his imprisonment. It reveals the height of their obstinacy. Rome would free him. But his own nation loads with chains the one who would free them from the Roman yoke.

<sup>23</sup> Paul must have had many precious meetings with his believing brethren. He must have made known to them those transcendent truths which he teaches in his Perfection Epistles. If the Acts were giving an account of his career or of his evangel, it stops short at the most important point. As a "history of the commencement of the Christian church" it is the most disappointing of all books, for the truths which distinguish the present economy, found in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, were not made known until its close and are never referred to, much less taught. Those events in Paul's career which are of the utmost importance for present truth, from his sojourn in Arabia to the dispatch of Tychicus with the Perfection Epistles, are quite overlooked in this account. Paul's sojourn in Rome marks the beginning of that vast work of the Spirit of God which has continued down to the present time. Yet all we are told here is the disappointing meeting with the Jews! Instead of closing with a song of victory and sending the church on its triumphant way, he quotes Isaiah's doleful prophecy concerning the apostate nation, showing the failure of the kingdom proclamation and the reason why it should no longer be heralded. What stronger evidence is needed to show that the Acts is not concerned with the so-called "church"? It is no mere history of the apostolic times. It is concerned only with those events which chronicle the fortunes of the earthly kingdom. It deals with a transitional period when the church was still dependent on the favored nation and had a subordinate place in the reign of Messiah over the earth, as promised by the Hebrew prophets.

<sup>26</sup> This marvelous prophecy has had a threefold fulfillment in Israel: when they rejected Jehovah (Isa. 69-10), when they rejected the Lord (Mt. 13<sup>14,15</sup>), and, in this present instance, when they reject the testimony of the spirit, through His apostles. Israel, in part, has become calloused, until the fullness of the nations may be entering (Ro. 11<sup>25</sup>).

<sup>29</sup> Verse 29 is not in the three manuscripts on which this version is based.

<sup>31</sup> This proclamation of the kingdom would include its present abeyance and future manifestation. "That which concerns our Lord Jesus Christ" is pur-

posely vague, and is the only hint in the whole book of the greatest of all Paul's ministries, those mysteries or secrets which could not be revealed until the kingdom had been finally rejected. Paul's prison epistles were written during this period.

## PAUL'S EPISTLES

# PAUL'S EPISTLES

PAUL'S EPISTLES are for the present. All the rest of Scripture finds its interpretation and application either before or after the present secret administration. Paul alone gives the truth for the ecclesia which is the body of Christ. This is found nowhere outside of his writings. Israel and the nations occupy all other parts of divine revelation. What is true of them in other eras and eons must not be mixed with the present truth or it will lead to confusion and error. All Scripture is profitable, as a revelation of God's ways, but it must not be applied outside its proper place.

The main subject of the Greek Scriptures is the kingdom of Israel. It is refused in the four accounts of our Lord's ministry, it is again rejected in the treatise called Acts, it is reaffirmed in Hebrews, James, Peter, John, and Jude, and it is realized in the Unveiling. In Paul's epistles it is in abeyance.

It is God's purpose to bless the nations *through* Israel. But when Israel, the channel of blessing, fails, this becomes impossible. In Paul's epistles the nations are blessed during Israel's *defection*. The sphere of blessing is changed from earth to heaven. Repentance and pardon are replaced by justification and reconciliation. Grace replaces mercy.

The scope of Paul's epistles, both in time and in space, far transcends all the rest of revelation. He is not confined to the earth, but includes the whole universe in God's grand climax of reconciliation (Col.1<sup>20</sup>). He is not confined to the eons, or ages, but reveals a purpose formed before they began, and not concluded until after their consummation. His range reaches from a time long anterior to the first of Genesis to a period long past the final vision of the Unveiling.

Paul's writings naturally fall into two divisions, his epistles to the ecclesias, and his personal letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

Paul wrote nine epistles to seven ecclesias. They arrange themselves into three groups. The epistles in each group are very closely related, the

first epistle in each, Romans, Ephesians and 1 Thessalonians, setting forth the truth didactically, while the other epistles of the same group are explanatory and corrective. The best commentaries on Romans are Corinthians and Galatians; on Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians; and Second Thessalonians supplements the first epistle.

The Thessalonian group we have called the *Promise Epistles*, because they deal with the expectation of our Lord's return. The Romans group we have named the *Preparatory Epistles* because they deal with the transitional era which prepared the saints for the final revelation found in the *Ephesian group*, which we therefore style the *Perfection Epistles*.

Each group is characterized by one of the abiding trinity of graces, faith, expectation and love (1Co.13<sup>13</sup>). The following outline will serve to show the groups and the relation each epistle sustains to the others in its group.

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## PAUL'S EPISTLES

### THE PREPARATORY EPISTLES

#### FAITH

ROMANS

*Justification*  
*Conciliation*  
*Deportment*

I CORINTHIANS

*Deportment*

II CORINTHIANS

*Conciliation*

GALATIANS

*Justification*

### THE PERFECTION EPISTLES

#### LOVE

EPHESIANS

*Doctrine*  
*Deportment*  
*Deportment*

PHILIPPIANS

*Doctrine*

COLOSSIANS

### THE PROMISSORY EPISTLES

#### EXPECTATION

I THESSALONIANS

II THESSALONIANS

### THE PERSONAL LETTERS

I TIMOTHY

II TIMOTHY

TITUS

PHILEMON

# ROMANS

SINNER, would you know how to be just before God? *Read Romans!*

Saint, would you be at perfect peace with God? *Ponder Romans!*

The writer of these words became acquainted with God through a study of this epistle. It is emphatically *the* portion of God's word which is adapted to show all men God's present grace, preparatory to the higher unfoldings of Ephesians.

All revelation previous to Paul's severance to the ministries which are expounded in Romans, as given through the Lord and His apostles, was limited to the Circumcision, concerned with the kingdom promised by the prophets to Israel, and falls far short of the grace revealed through Paul in this epistle. They promised a probationary pardon on repentance, but here we have a complete vindication or justification or acquittal founded entirely on faith.

As is shown by the literary framework, Romans is dominated by three great doctrines: Justification, Conciliation and Sovereignty. God's own righteousness, which He shares with the sinner, His own peace, which He

imparts to the believer, and His own indomitable will, which forms the immovable basis of all blessing, are the bulk and burden of this epistle. As justification is commonly degraded to a mere pardon, or forgiveness, and conciliation is unknown, and God's sovereignty is denied, there is need to urge God's beloved saints to give the great truths of this epistle the place in their hearts and lives which they deserve.

Every doctrine in this epistle is discussed twice: first from the viewpoint of the individual, and again from the larger, national standpoint. The latter half of the third and the fourth chapters show clearly and exhaustively how anyone may be vindicated in the sight of God. The latter half of the ninth and the tenth chapter shows how this favor finds its way to the nations while Israel fails to effect it through the law. So, too, God's present attitude of peace toward all mankind and toward those who are justified is fully set forth in the fifth, sixth, seventh and part of the eighth chapters. The bearing of this on Israel and the nations is fully unfolded in the eleventh chapter. That God is for His people is shown in the end of the eighth chapter. His sovereign will with regard to Israel and the nations is shown in the succeeding chapter.

It is exceedingly important to recognize the *national* scope of the ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters. Much confusion has resulted from applying parts of these chapters to individuals rather than to nations. Nothing in these chapters which is said of Israel nationally, in apostasy, was true of Paul himself and the few faithful ones in the nation. These are not hardened, though the nation, as such, is. Israel, nationally, has not attained to righteousness, yet many in the nation cannot be included in this sweeping assertion. The nation, as such, not the faithful remnant, has stumbled. It is Israel as God's national witness in the earth which is figured by the olive tree. Some of the branches (the unbelieving majority) are broken off. The nations as a whole (the wild olive tree) are grafted into the cultivated olive tree. Now that the nations, as such, are apostatizing, they are about to be cut out. Individual believers in the nations will not be cut out, for their faith would keep them in.

## LITERARY FRAMEWORK

*Reversal with Doctrinal Alternation*

Gospel, *made known*, Justification 1<sup>1</sup>-1<sup>6</sup>

Greetings, *brief* 1<sup>7</sup>

Prayer 1<sup>8</sup>-1<sup>9</sup>

Intended Journey 1<sup>10</sup>, 1<sup>13</sup>

Previous Ministry 1<sup>14</sup>-1<sup>17</sup>

The Conduct of Mankind 1<sup>18</sup>-3<sup>20</sup>

INDIVIDUAL

DOCTRINE

Justification 3<sup>21</sup>-4<sup>25</sup>

Conciliation 5<sup>1</sup>-8<sup>30</sup>

God's Sovereignty 8<sup>31</sup>-8<sup>39</sup>

God's Sovereignty 9<sup>1</sup>-9<sup>29</sup>

NATIONAL

DOCTRINE

Justification 9<sup>30</sup>-10<sup>21</sup>

Conciliation 11<sup>1</sup>-11<sup>36</sup>

The Conduct of the Saints 12<sup>1</sup>-15<sup>7</sup>

Previous Ministry 15<sup>8</sup>-15<sup>21</sup>

Intended Journey 15<sup>22</sup>-15<sup>29</sup>

Prayer 15<sup>30</sup>-15<sup>33</sup>

Greetings, *extended* 16<sup>1</sup>-16<sup>23</sup>

Gospel, *hushed up*, Conciliation 16<sup>26</sup>-16<sup>27</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Paul dates his apostleship from the commission he received at Antioch (Ac. 13<sup>2</sup>) when he was severed from the rest to preach the evangel of God to the nations. Hitherto only Jews and proselytes like Cornelius heard the evangel. Now Paul is called to preach justification to the other nations. This evangel was promised before. It is in contrast to that secret evangel (16:25-27) which was never before revealed, but which is first set forth in the fifth to the eighth chapters, called "the conciliation."

<sup>3</sup> The evangel is not concerning the sinner but concerning God's Son. Like all men, He was a union of two elements, flesh and spirit. As to His flesh He was a descendant of David, but as to His Spirit, He was from God. This is powerfully evidenced by the fact that His Father had given Him life in Himself (Jn. 5<sup>26</sup>) so that He never entered the presence of death without vanquishing it. The fact that He raised Jairus' daughter (Mk. 5<sup>35-42</sup>), the widow of Nain's son (Lu. 7<sup>11-16</sup>), and Lazarus (Jn. 11<sup>44</sup>) proves conclusively that He is the Son of God.

<sup>5</sup> Paul had obtained this unparalleled grace from the risen Son of God when he met Him on the road to Damascus and, later, was given a distinct commission, in accord with this grace, to evangelize all the nations, to whom the twelve apostles were not sent (Gal. 2<sup>9</sup>). James and Peter wrote to their Jewish brethren *among* the nations, but none of the Circumcision, not even Christ Himself, ever went to any nation but Israel. Paul alone, of those whose writings we have, was the minister of Christ Jesus to the nations (15<sup>16</sup>).

<sup>8</sup> The emphasis on *faith* is characteristic of this and its companion epistles. The Circumcision mixed faith and works, but Paul insists on sheer, unassisted faith, on which alone can be founded the pure, unadulterated grace which he is dispensing.

<sup>9</sup> Cut off, in large measure, from the ceremonial worship of his nation at Jerusalem, Paul carries it on wherever he is, in spirit, by the proclamation of this evangel, for the exaltation of Christ's sacrifice in the evangel is a far sweeter fragrance to God than the literal offerings of the law.

<sup>14</sup> The "Greek" must not be founded with the so-called "gentile", or man of the nations. The Greek is the cultured, refined person, sometimes in contrast with the Jew, the religious man, but here in contrast with the uncultured or "barbarian".

<sup>14</sup> "Barbarian" seems to be the only available term in English for this Greek word. It denoted especially one who did not speak Greek, the language which nearly all the world spoke at that time.

<sup>16</sup> The *evangel* is God's power for salvation—*nothing else can take its place*. There is no other power in the universe which can turn men to God. All the modern substitutes and expedients, sanitary or social, impassioned oratory or emotional excitement, cannot save or make men right before God. The evangel alone, without any additions or apologies, is able to justify anyone who believes.

<sup>17</sup> This evangel imparts God's own righteousness to those who accept it. This is unspeakably more than the pardon or forgiveness proclaimed at Pentecost by the twelve apostles.

<sup>17</sup> When the law failed utterly, and Israel was far gone in apostasy, the prophet fell back upon God's unconditional promises, and made the memorable statement "The just by faith shall live" (Hab. 2<sup>4</sup>). Now that Israel is again apostate, this rule once more supersedes the law.

#### THE CONDUCT OF MANKIND

<sup>18</sup> The apostle now takes up the conduct of those of mankind who had no written revelation. Nature alone ought to teach them much about the Deity. His attributes are in some degree revealed in His works in creation.

<sup>21</sup> Such a knowledge of God called for worship and thanksgiving. Instead, they degraded His glory by making images of Him like themselves or even the lower orders of creation. Idols may be nothing in themselves, but, as they are supposed to represent the Deity, it is of the utmost importance that they do not suggest false ideas about Him. Hence He abhors all images and would not allow His people to harbor them. Christ is the One Image that truly represents Him.

<sup>24</sup> There is no surer road to degradation than to degrade the object of our worship.

*The Conduct of Mankind*

<sup>25</sup> There may be an allusion here to the prevalent custom of worshipping the Roman emperor. It has often occurred that, when men have attained to great eminence, they have demanded and received divine honors. Alexander the Great claimed such homage.

<sup>26</sup> The prevailing immorality in ancient times was largely attributable to the character of the gods they worshiped. The younger race of gods who held sway on Olympus were usurpers who had murdered the older gods, and were guilty of innumerable deeds of violence and full of sensuality and injustice. If their gods behaved so, it was not difficult for men to emulate their example and endorse such actions in others as well.

The failure of Christendom is largely due to the fact that God is unknown, and His place filled by a fierce, vindictive caricature, who is restrained from his thirst for vengeance by the intervention of an effeminate mediator who takes the place of the Christ of God.

<sup>1</sup> The argument here is inexorable. The man who judges others must be prepared to submit to the same judgment himself. There is no surer way of condemning himself than by sitting in judgment on those who commit the sins of which he is guilty.

In the day of judgment there will be little need to call witnesses against mankind, for their own reasonings among themselves and the standards of justice, however low, which they apply to their neighbors, are sufficient to condemn all.

The constant effort to uplift humanity ignores the true cause of human depravity. These things are the result of refusing to recognize God. One of the most alarming signs of modern times is the increasing desire to eliminate all reference to God in every sphere of life. Education must be strictly Godless, business has no place for the Deity, society shuns all mention of Him, and even many of the so-called churches have little more than a formal recognition of an unknown God. We must be prepared for more and more of the crime waves which periodically surge over the earth, as well as the complete break-down of the moral fibre of so-called civilization.

*The Conduct of Mankind*

<sup>3</sup> Is it not most unreasonable for the sinner to suppose that God's judgment of him will be less searching than his condemnation of the sins of his fellow men? The fact that His judgment is delayed and that He continues to give the blessings of creation with a bountiful hand should lead to reconsideration and amendment.

<sup>6</sup> It is well to consider the basis on which the judgment of mankind will proceed. It is not all one-sided. God will not only sentence the evil, but reward the good—if *such there be*. That there are none to claim His rewards does not alter the great fact which is here laid down as the just basis of God's dealings with mankind. *He will be paying each one according to his acts*. No one can say this is not just and right. He is just as ready to reward the good as to punish the bad. All that is needed is someone to live up to the standard, and He will give such a one life for the eons—the same life which those who believe get through Christ as a gratuitous gift. To say that it is idle to speak thus, since no one can possibly claim such an award, betrays a misapprehension of the underlying purpose of judgment. This is not, as commonly supposed, the condemnation of wrongdoers, but rather the payment of what is due, good as well as bad, that so the justice of God's character may be revealed. Judgment, as a revelation of God, would be most misleading if it made no provision for reward as well as punishment. If no one is able to claim the reward it will not change the essential fact that such a righteous foundation underlies God's throne.

<sup>11</sup> Law does not exempt from judgment: it only fixes the standard of judgment. Knowledge of the law only incriminates more deeply those who break it.

<sup>14</sup> Human nature, or instinct, is not corrupt. It is in line with God's law and conscience (2<sup>27</sup>). It is against sin (1<sup>26</sup>). The *heart* of humanity is corrupt. By following their nature it was quite possible for men to do by instinct what was later inscribed in the written code. Men's acts are *unnatural*.

*The Conduct of Mankind*

<sup>16</sup> Much of the judgment which obtains among men is unjust and oppressive because of their inability to uncover the real truth: But in the divine judgment the *hidden* things will be revealed and a just sentence will be based on all the facts. Doubtless the motives will be laid bare as well as the acts themselves and thus the quality of each action will receive due recognition.

<sup>17</sup> Now the apostle is about to devote particular attention to the Circumcision. Hitherto he has appealed to nature, or instinct, and to conscience. All these combine to condemn those who had no access to the revealed will of God. The Jew, who had the law, considered himself in an entirely different class, so the apostle devotes a considerable section to prove to him that the possession of the law did not make him immune from judgment, but rather invited a severer sentence.

<sup>23</sup> The responsibility of being the repository of the form of knowledge and truth was very lightly felt by the Jew. He did not realize the gravity of his position. His conduct was now no longer a matter of private concern; it involved the name and honor of God. If he kept the law it would mark him as a just and holy man, and God and His law would receive praise. As it was, however, his actions did not comport with the light in which he boasted, and as a result God's name was brought into dishonor among the nations.

<sup>25</sup> God's *judgment*, let us remember, is based on *acts*; His *gifts* are granted to *faith*. We have not yet come to the bestowal of gifts. The rite of circumcision was the outward sign, in the first place, of an inward faith, but it degenerated into a mere mark of privilege. But misused privilege is of no avail at the bar of God.

<sup>28</sup> In the judgment the outward visible tokens will count for nothing. Only that which is vital, in spirit, which will meet the scrutiny of God, will receive recognition. Men may applaud many an action which God detests, and may condemn that which God approves. Human standards and outward appearances will weigh little in the judgment.

*The Conduct of Mankind*

<sup>1</sup> It would almost seem, from the preceding argument, that the advantages enjoyed by the Jews brought them no real benefit. But this seems to be true only of those who disbelieved and abused the advantages accorded them. Those of faith among them received untold benefit, like their father Abraham.

<sup>2</sup> The greatest treasure in all the world was once the exclusive possession of the Jews. To them were confided the oracles of God. Today we, who in that day had no revelation from God, are entrusted with the same treasure, yet with jewels infinitely more precious than were ever in their care. This epistle is one of them. Have we anything like a true sense of our responsibility? Have we explored and enjoyed these treasures in any measure as they deserve? May God grant that the present attempt to open this treasure house to all His saints from the highest to the humblest, may lead to a greater appreciation of the infinite value of this sacred deposit.

<sup>5</sup> The painful contrast between the fearful failures of His people and His holy law had one good effect. It magnified His righteousness. The question arises whether, since their unrighteousness commends His righteousness, He has the right to be indignant at it. Indeed (we might add) since all sin is a foil for His glory, how can He condemn it? But, how then can there be any judgment at all? That God is able to bring good out of evil is no excuse for the commission of evil, far less an incentive to do evil.

<sup>9</sup> In the judgment there will be no privileged class. Religious Jews as well as cultured Greeks are all under sin. The proof of this for the Jews is found in the very oracles in which they boast.

<sup>10</sup> These passages are all quoted in support of the charge that the Jew, equally with those of other nations, is subject to the judgment of God.

<sup>10-18</sup> The whole quotation is taken from the Septuagint of Ps. 142:3 except that it begins "The Lord out of heaven stoops over the sons of mankind, to perceive if they are understanding or seeking out God".

*The Conduct of Mankind*

<sup>19</sup> The passages from the Psalms might be turned by the Jews to apply to the nations. But the apostle rightly insists that what is written in the law is binding upon those under the law. Having previously silenced the non-Jew and now effectually included the Jew in the same condition, Paul arrives at the grand conclusion of this section of the epistle, that the whole world is subject to the just verdict of God.

## JUSTIFICATION

## INDIVIDUAL

<sup>21</sup> The previous section found no one just but God Himself. No one has been able to attain God's standard by doing good or keeping the law. How then may we become just before God? Only by becoming partakers of His righteousness.

<sup>22</sup> The channel through which we may obtain this righteousness is the *faith* of Jesus Christ. He alone of all mankind, not only did good and kept the law, but He believed God even when He smote Him for our sins. It is out of His faith for our faith (<sup>117</sup>).

<sup>24</sup> They hated Him *without a cause*—gratuitously. Such is the meaning of this precious word. Justification on any other ground than the free and unforced favor of God is impossible, for none deserve it. But now Christ Jesus has effected a deliverance from all judgment, which is absolutely free to all who believe.

<sup>25</sup> The important point in this passage, however, is not *our* justification, but *God's*, for it is *His* righteousness which we receive. In Israel He had made provision for atonement, or a *shelter* from sins. This was not strictly just, for the penalty of these sins was still due. The answer to this, as well as the answer to His present work is found in the blood of Christ. *That* settles for sins, past, present and future. *That* vindicates God's justice and makes it possible for Him to be the Justifier of all who are of the faith of Jesus.

<sup>27</sup> Such a deliverance, entirely on the ground of grace, bars all boasting, unless it be in Christ and in His God, Who has become our Justifier.

*Justification—Individual*

<sup>30</sup> The Circumcision who have believed before and have received a pardon, receive this greater boon because of the faith they have. The Uncircumcision use faith as the channel in receiving it.

<sup>1</sup> The kingdom proclamation reverts to David, for it is founded on the covenant made with him. The evangel of God, dispensing justification, takes us back to Abraham, with whom the covenant to bless all the families of the earth was made. The far greater grace of conciliation goes back still further, and engages us with Adam and his offense.

As this gift of justification was first given to Abraham and he is its great example, the apostle takes up his case at length to show its absolutely gracious character.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to remember that, while God's future judgment is based on acts, His present gifts are absolutely spoiled the moment we connect them with any suspicion of merit or work. Justification is as free, or freer, than sunlight. In judgment He will *pay* everyone who is entitled to wages. He will not be in debt to anyone. But when He gives He *gives*, and refuses to allow His gifts to be paid for, even if anyone could pay the price. Justification is for him who is *not* working, but who is *believing*. This distinguishes the gospel from all religion, divine or pagan.

<sup>7</sup> Pardon is the exercise of executive clemency, and is connected with the kingdom. The covering of sin is an act of the priest who made atonement by the blood of the sacrifices, under the law. But justification is the judicial act of the Judge, and far surpasses both pardon and atonement. Only the guilty can be pardoned. Atonement only covers sin from God's sight. Justification, or vindication, is a complete acquittal from all guilt, the pronouncing of the verdict "not guilty".

<sup>8</sup> The fact that Abraham was justified while still uncircumcised opens the door of justification to the Uncircumcision. They, too, may claim him as their father, for they have the reality of which circumcision was but the outward sign.

*Justification—Individual*

<sup>13</sup> As further developed in Galatians, the law was not given till hundreds of years after Abraham was counted righteous. The promises he received in connection with it were unconditional, dependent only on God's faithfulness. They were given without any reference to the law and do not depend on any legal observance for fulfillment. When the law did come it did not confirm these promises. It was brought in to show how impotent their own efforts were when they sought to attain to Abraham's divinely given righteousness by the keeping of the law. The law hindered rather than helped. Instead of making them just, it drew down God's indignation for their failure to live up to it.

<sup>16</sup> Faith has not the least merit. We do not deem it meritorious to believe an honest man. It is no effort. It is not work. It is the simplest, easiest, freest channel God could choose to convey His righteousness to us. Let us exult in His explanation that *it is of faith that it may accord with grace*. In Ephesians we have the further truth that such a salvation—*through faith*—calls for further favor in the future (Eph.2<sup>8</sup>).

<sup>17</sup> Abraham believed God when all the evidence was against Him. He was, for all practical purposes, as good as dead himself, and Sarah, his wife, was worse, if that could be. He faced the facts. He considered his own condition as well as that of his wife, yet never doubted that God could and would do as He had said. He believed in a God Who was superior to death, and thus made it possible for God to vindicate him. Apart from death we can see how God could *pardon* his sins, or *cover* them by means of atonement, but it is only as having died to sin, and being alive in resurrection, that we can realize that Abraham is *justified*.

<sup>23</sup> Thus, we, too, are justified, by the simple process of believing God. We do not believe concerning our seed, as Abraham did, but concerning his Seed, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who actually died for our sins and was roused because the sin He bore was all gone, and we were vindicated.

## CONCILIATION

## INDIVIDUAL

<sup>1</sup> Justification is the ground of peace. Sin no longer bars us from the presence of God. Yet peace is a favor infinitely beyond justification. God's affections are not satisfied with clearing us from all guilt. He craves our love and our adoration. Righteousness alone does not give us a passport into His presence, but this further grace of reconciliation urges us into full and affectionate fellowship with Him. And we are aware that He will not rest in having us clothed in forensic righteousness only, but will make us all that He desires, to satisfy His own love.

<sup>5</sup> His way of winning our response is to pour His own love into us first, as exemplified in the death of Christ for us while we were most undeserving of His favor. The grace of it lies in the entire lack of anything in us to draw out His affections toward us.

<sup>9</sup> The blood of Christ is a memorial of the abiding efficacy of His death. It fends us from all future indignation. If Christ died for us as sinners, surely we have no need to fear aught now that we are justified!

<sup>10</sup> We now take up the new subject of conciliation. We leave the atmosphere of the court for the closer ties of the family circle. Now it is not *Christ* dying for *sinners*, but God's *Son* dying for His *enemies*. The effect is not justification, but conciliation, peace. Furthermore, we are not only unafraid of future wrath, because of the abiding value of His death, as figured by the blood, but we have the living Son of God Himself as the surety of our salvation. We shall be saved by His *life*.

<sup>11</sup> Christ did not obtain "atonement". That was a mere temporary covering for sin made by the blood of bulls and goats, and utterly failed to take away sin. Let us not degrade Christ's work by calling it an "atonement". But let us glory in conciliation, the ripened fruit of God's great effort to win the fealty and affection of His creatures. Few things indicate more clearly the necessity for using sound words than the constant reference to the work of Christ as "the atonement."

## Conciliation—Individual

<sup>12</sup> Death entered through sin at first, but now sin is transmitted through death. All sin because they are mortal. Christ brings life, which disposes of both death and sin.

<sup>14</sup> The type covers the period of time up to the giving of the law, from Adam to Moses. During this period there was no transgression, for there was no law. So it is today. The law was not given to the nations, hence they do not transgress it. Nevertheless death reigns, even as it did before the law was given. The type, however, is in the nature of a shadow, whose dark outlines do not clearly depict the present grace. The reign of Sin corresponds to the reign of Grace, Adam's single offense to Christ's one just act on Calvary, bringing life where Adam brought death. But the type fails utterly in a number of particulars.

<sup>15</sup> A simple reversal of the offense would put us where Adam was before he transgressed. But the gratuity through Christ is infinitely more than a mere recovery from the effects of Adam's offense.

<sup>16</sup> One sin brought condemnation to all mankind. Grace recovers, not from *one sin* only, but from *many offenses*.

<sup>17</sup> Adam enthroned death, but Christ gives believers not only a full vindication from all guilt, but life and the right to reign with Him.

<sup>18</sup> The parallel here is perfect. Adam's *one* offense is counteracted by Christ's *one* just award. The act of Adam actually affects *all mankind*. So Christ's work, eventually, must also actually justify *all mankind*. This cannot be during the eons, hence will not be fully accomplished until after the eons are past, when all are made alive in Christ (1 Cor. 15:22). If Adam's offense only gave each one an opportunity to sin, so that some become sinners and others not, then we might say that Christ's work brings justification to all subject to their acceptance. But we must acknowledge that man has no choice in becoming a sinner, *thus also* will it be through the work of Christ. Both are actual and universal.

<sup>19</sup> The contrast here is between *one* and *many*, not between the *many* and the *all* of the previous statement. The *many* here are the *all* of verse eighteen.

## Conciliation—Individual

<sup>20</sup> Here we have the true character and function of the law. It *crept in*. It was not a normal necessity, nor did it make any vital change. Its effect was to alter the character of sin so that it became an offense. Just as Adam's sin was against God's expressed command, and thus was a personal affront to God as well as a misdeed bringing harm on his own head, so those under the law, by sinning against light, greatly increased the sinfulness of sin. Obedience to the law would have banished sin and death. Disobedience enhanced their power. But grace not only exceeds the effects of sin, but superexceeds the offenses of those under law, so that now, *Grace has dethroned Sin*.

<sup>1</sup> The absolute despotism of Grace is set forth in the startling suggestion that if we should be persisting in sin, *grace would increase*. While the following argument is against persistence in sin, it confirms the sovereignty of grace. Let us not deny this marvelous doctrine. It will give us rich, exultant liberty, ridding us of the thralldom of Sin, and giving us power to avoid the very sins which unnatural logic supposes we would eagerly follow, now that there is no condemnation even if we should sin.

<sup>2</sup> This and the following chapter are a digression, discussing the effects of the reign of grace, first without, and then with, law.

<sup>2</sup> Deliverance from sin comes, not through victory *over* it, but through death *to* it. It is useless to struggle against sin, or to fight with its practices. Rather we should acknowledge its force and reckon ourselves as dead through it and to it, yet alive in resurrection, where sin has no place.

<sup>3</sup> The spiritual values of baptism into the death (Lu. 12:50) and entombment with Christ, as shown in this chapter, indicate that spirit baptism is in view here (*cf* 1 Cor. 12:13). "For in one spirit also *we* all are baptized into one body."

<sup>8</sup> As we did not die, but Christ was crucified for us, we may reckon His death as ours, fully finishing our connection with sin, and His resurrection as ours also, for in Him we enjoy an unclouded life in the presence of God.

*Conciliation—Individual*

<sup>12</sup> A realization of our death to sin and life in Christ will give us power to cope with sin, always remembering that sin cannot bring us into disfavor because of the superexceeding grace.

<sup>14</sup> Law, as we shall see in the next chapter, not only cannot deliver from Sin, but actually forges the fetters of Sin, and makes Sin's bondage more cruel and galling.

<sup>15</sup> The law said, "Accursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things written in the Scroll of the Law, to do them." Grace says, Blessed are you, whatever you may do, for Christ has justified you and not one dare bring anything against you. *The fallacious logic of the old humanity immediately imagines that this gives license and encouragement to sin. But its actual effect is quite the opposite.* Grace, not law, has power to deter us from sinning. No one who has an actual experience of grace, reasons that, because there is immunity, therefore he will sin. The offender against law flies in the face of law. Its austere threats do not hinder him. But the offender against grace feels the heinousness of his offense and flies from it.

<sup>16</sup> All of us are slaves, however much we may vaunt our liberty. We are controlled either by Sin or by Obedience. It is a cause of thankfulness that we all have had service under Sin, for only so could we realize the nature of such slavery. But we have not been taken from Sin's service to become idle. We have been transferred to the service of Righteousness.

<sup>20</sup> Slaves of Sin can produce only the fruits of sin and know that the only possible outcome is death. But slaves of Righteousness have a brighter outlook. Even though ashamed of their lawless deeds, they look for life eonian.

<sup>23</sup> Sin, like slave holders, does not pay wages, but only supplies rations. This consists, at present, in an attitude toward God which is the equivalent of death, for all Sin's slaves avoid God's presence. Hence their deeds will result in destruction. Neither do we, as slaves, look for wages. God not only gives, but gives graciously, or gratuitously, the very reward which is only for those whose endurance in good acts merits it—eonian life, or life for the eons (27).

*Conciliation—Individual*

<sup>1</sup> The apostle now addresses particularly those who have been under law, that is, who were of the Circumcision. His appeal, however, is not to the law itself, but to the nature of all law, that it has jurisdiction only over those who are alive.

<sup>2</sup> The law of wedlock is given as a well-known example. A woman's subjection to her husband lasts only for his life. During his life she may have no relations with other men. After his death the ties which bind her to a new husband are just as sacred as those which united her to the former one.

<sup>4</sup> A wife and her husband are one flesh (Gen. 2:24), hence the wife dies with the husband, but the woman remains. Those united to Christ under law died with Him to the law. Union with Christ in resurrection is a new relationship beyond the sphere of the law.

<sup>6</sup> Exemption from the law applies only to those who were under the law. As the law is not unjust, like Sin, but just and holy, they continue to serve, no longer in letter, but in spirit.

<sup>7</sup> The mistaken deduction from the foregoing is that the law itself is sin. Else why cease to serve its letter? Or else how does it make sin more sinful and transform it into an offense? Sin is not known in its true character except through law. Instead of sin being ignorant inability, it becomes the opposite. It is active hostility. The law which seemed to be given to regulate, only roused it. Sin is dormant or dead until law comes and gives it life. The law which should have given the sinner life, gave life to sin. It should have been the death blow of sin, but it became the death of the sinner. All this shows how futile it is to try to reform or regulate or conquer sin. It not only acts in darkness and ignorance but transforms the very light into an agent of death. The law offered life to those under it, on terms which, apart from sin, were all that could be desired. But sin not only disabled them so that they could not take advantage of its provisions, but involved them in its condemnation by stirring their passions against its just decrees.

*Conciliation—Individual*

<sup>13</sup> From the supposition that the law, being holy and just and good, involved him in death, it seems that what is good may become the cause of death. But such is not the case. It was not the law which produced death, but sin, misusing law. The real law and apparent functions of the law are very different. And, in order to effect its real object, it was necessary that it should not appear on the surface. The apparent object of the law was to give life to all who consistently and constantly kept it. As it never gave life to anyone, for no one was able to fulfill its demands, it appears as if the law has failed of its primary object. And, further, as it revived the passions of sin which were dormant, it seems to have defeated its own aim. But the real object of the law was to reveal the inordinate sinfulness of sin, and in this it was most successful.

<sup>15</sup> This is the experience of one who does not realize his death to sin and the law, but who is endeavoring to keep the letter of the law. He finds that the law of sin in his members is far more potent than the law of God which appeals to his mind. He *wants* to do good, but cannot. He does things which he hates to do, hence charges his misery to the indwelling sin which has taken possession of his body. He is a wretched captive. This will be the experience of all who make an earnest effort to please God by obeying the letter of that law which was broken even before it reached the people (Ex. 32<sup>19</sup>).

<sup>24</sup> What is the answer to this wretched man's cry? It is *grace*. There is no other deliverance possible. This brings us back to where this digression began, the reign of Grace at the end of the fifth chapter. It is only as we recognize the imperial sway of Grace, putting us beyond all possibility of condemnation, whether we sin or not, that we have real liberty and power sufficient to effect not only what was demanded by the law, but those higher duties which far transcend the righteous requirements of Sinai. Then we will not be wretched and self-occupied, but happy and exulting in God, in Whose favor we are basking, and Whose delight we are, in Christ.

*Conciliation—Individual*

<sup>1</sup> Condemnation is utterly out of the question for all in Christ Jesus. This is infinitely more than the atonement or shelter provided for sin by the sacrifices offered under the law. It is far beyond the pardon, or forgiveness, contained in the proclamation of the kingdom. The atonement needed to be renewed year by year, the pardon might be recalled, but the justification we have in Christ Jesus is nothing less than God's righteousness, which is absolutely inviolable. It was not secured by any act of ours and cannot be marred by aught that we can do. Sin only enhances the graciousness of it, but cannot sully or impair it.

<sup>2</sup> The spirit's law of life, in Christ Jesus, is the opposite of the law of Sinai. That said: Obey, and live; disobey, and die. The spirit's law imparts life for the eons as God's gracious gift, apart from obedience or disobedience.

<sup>4</sup> We do not fulfill the law in its letter. Grace leads us to act far beyond its spirit. Its just requirements, love to God and man, are fulfilled only by those who walk in spirit.

<sup>5</sup> The flesh is not able to be subject to God's law. It is useless to try to train it to please Him. We are not justified in flesh. It is only in spirit that we can count ourselves as beyond all condemnation. The flesh is after the things of flesh and leads to death. But the spirit is concerned with spiritual things and makes for life and peace.

<sup>9</sup> All who believe Him are indwelt by God's Spirit. Christ, by His Spirit, is in us. Consequently, our spirit is life, yet our body, being absolutely unresponsive to their presence, is death. Thus, while we have but one body, it is the home of three spirits—God's Spirit, Christ's Spirit, and our spirit. As a result the spiritual force at our disposal is far greater than the flesh. Our own spirit is the seat of our new life, because of righteousness. Christ's Spirit gives us communion with Him. God's Spirit gives us power over our dead bodies, just as, in the case of Christ, He roused His body from among the dead. He is able to vivify these death-doomed bodies, so that they respond to the dictates of the spirit.



*Conciliation—Individual*

<sup>11</sup> *Mortal* bodies are such as are *dying*, in a physical sense. Their vivification cannot refer to the future resurrection, but to the present power of God's Spirit to use an utterly unresponsive, hostile instrument, as our bodies, and constrain its members to do the bidding of our spirits.

<sup>12</sup> We owe the flesh nothing, and it promises us nothing but death. But we do owe it to the spirit to put the practices of the body to death and thus enjoy the life which the spirit makes ours in Christ Jesus.

<sup>14</sup> To be a son of God implies more than belonging to Him. As the Son of God manifests Him so we are sons only inasmuch as we display His character in our words and ways.

<sup>15</sup> The law led to slavery, not sonship. Fear is not for us. Justification and reconciliation lead us unafraid into the Father's presence. Just as the little Hebrew child would lisp its "Abba" in the familiar Aramaic household speech, or, as our children say trustingly, "Papa," so we are without constraint in the august presence of the Divine Majesty.

<sup>16</sup> God's Spirit says we are His children. Our spirits claim Him as our Father. If this be the case, then, even as our children have the enjoyment of all that is ours, so all that is God's is for us. Indeed, even the great glories in store for Christ are ours if we, too, tread the path of suffering which led Him to them.

<sup>18</sup> The creation has been involved in the treadmill of corruption through the sin of man. We are associated with the creation on the physical side. When our bodies are delivered from their present slavery and death at our Lord's descent from heaven, He will transfigure them to conform them to His body glorious (Phil. 3<sup>21</sup>). Later, when we are unveiled, the creation will be set at liberty from the bondage which now entralls it. How it ought to comfort us to know that the patient, suffering creatures, who had no hand in their own degradation, will yet find a real release from the pain and sorrow from which they have no escape now! Its physical aspect waits until our Lord's return.

*Conciliation—Individual*

<sup>26</sup> Here is the true "form" for acceptable prayer in this economy. It is not definite persistence, like the importunate widow. It is acknowledged weakness and ignorance casting itself on God, urged on by His Spirit, knowing only the need and the One Who can meet it in His own way.

<sup>28</sup> Though we know *not* what to pray for, this is not at all necessary, for we *do* know that God is making everything cooperate for our welfare. No matter how things *appear*, they can work no ill to us who love God, for He first loved us, and has included us in His vast purpose, of which we form a vital part.

<sup>29</sup> Our destiny was fixed by God from the beginning, long before we could have any part in it. It is higher than our highest dreams, for it is nothing less than conformity to the image of His Son. And, better still, our exaltation is the means of putting Him in the place supreme. He cannot be Firstborn without brethren. Thus we are essential to His glory!

## GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

## INDIVIDUAL

<sup>30</sup> Here we have the golden chain of God's sovereignty forged for our blessing. Its four links cannot be separated. He *has* designated us and called us and justified us. Three links are forged. The next is glory!

<sup>31</sup> Nothing can compare with the sublime consciousness of a place in God's heart. If *He* is for us, even those who *would* be against us work our weal. No one *can* be against us.

<sup>32</sup> God has given His best gift when He spared not His Son. Nothing else can compare with Him. He will withhold no good thing from those who have received His Beloved.

<sup>33</sup> We can challenge the universe to find a single thing against us! Whatever *we* may be in ourselves, in Christ God has justified us. And not only that, but all judgment has been committed to the Son, the very Christ Who died for us and lives to plead for us at God's right hand! God, the Judge of all, Who alone can acquit, has become our Vindicator! Christ, Who alone has the right to condemn, is our Saviour!

*God's Sovereignty—Individual*

<sup>37</sup> God's love never lets us go. The trials and tribulations we endure are not tokens of His displeasure. They are all tempered by His loving heart. A sense of His love hovering over us in the midst of our distresses is the most blessed of all balms and will enable us not only to endure them but to enjoy them.

<sup>38</sup> Here all the great forces of the universe are arrayed, and none of them, no, nor all of them together, can come between us and the unconquerable love of our God as displayed in Christ Jesus. Death will be swallowed up by life. Life may lead us far from Him, but not beyond the reach of His love. The present perplexes us, the future fills us with fear, but only when we lose the sense of His love. Powers, celestial or terrestrial, are subject to His sway. Nothing above or beneath, nothing at all has the power to break the bond that binds the humblest and most unworthy saint to the throbbing breast of our great and glorious God. This is more than salvation from sin! *This is reconciliation!*

## GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

## NATIONAL

<sup>1</sup> Paul was in acute sympathy with his brethren according to the flesh, for he himself had been the most rabid of all in opposing the Christ he now adored. This is a most apt confession, as he is about to introduce the great doctrine of the divine Sovereignty, for he is the star example of God's sovereign grace.

<sup>4</sup> *Physically*, Israel has the monopoly of the eight blessings here recorded. In flesh, Christ belongs exclusively to them; no other nation can lay claim to the fathers. The covenants, the law, the priestly worship, and the promises *do not belong to the church*, but to Israel according to the flesh. The sonship and the glory are ours only in spirit, not in flesh.

<sup>5</sup> Christ, in flesh, is the God of the eons. All eonian blessing is through Him and for Him.

<sup>6</sup> Ishmael was Abraham's son as well as Isaac, but he was born of the flesh, not of the promise. This shows that mere physical descent is not enough to give a title to the blessing of Abraham (Gen. 17:18-20; 21:12).

*God's Sovereignty—National*

<sup>11</sup> The futility of fleshly precedence is next shown in the case of Jacob and Esau. This is full of comfort for those of us today who feel like classing ourselves with crooked Jacob, who did all he could to buy God's blessing, and stupidly hindered it. Yet, being the object of God's elective purpose and love, all his perverse ways could not set aside God's predetermined outcome. Esau was Jacob's senior and superior, yet he became his slave. This ought to appeal powerfully to the sons of Israel (for whom this section is especially intended), for they are his descendants.

<sup>14</sup> The usual deduction from this is that God is not just. In a *man* this would not be right, but it is *God's sovereign privilege to display Himself through any of His creatures*, in any way best suited to the purpose. Love needed a Jacob for its display. Power needed a Pharaoh for its foil. Man cannot turn the tide of God's affections in his favor nor can he stem the torrent of His wrath. In God's great purpose to eventually bless all mankind it is His prerogative to form and use suitable vessels to convey His mercy. Of such was Jacob. Esau was needed to emphasize Jacob's unworthiness. Pharaoh was elevated by God, not that his name might be great, but that God's name might be made known through all the earth. A great man was needed for this or God could not have made His power known.

<sup>19</sup> The questioner persists in looking at God's sovereignty from the human standpoint of the individual, when it should be viewed from the divine, national vantage. God has a large purpose which will eventuate in the blessing of all. But in the process of its fulfillment it demands the temporary use of some as foils to set forth His indignation and power, *that He may make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy*. This chapter does not deal with the *destiny* of the individual. That has been settled. All mankind will be justified eventually (5:18). It is not difficult to see how God can justify Pharaoh, whom He hardened, lest his heart should soften and he should fail to oppose Him further.

*God's Sovereignty—National*

<sup>25</sup> A comparison of Hos. 2<sup>23</sup> with Hos. 19-11 shows that this is not an *interpretation* but an *illustration*. God, in His sovereign mercy, will reverse the sentence which He pronounced against Israel. In the very same place in which they were named "Lo-ammi," there they shall be called sons of the living God. He deals with the nations *as* this.

<sup>27</sup> Isaiah's testimony is to the same effect. A remnant in Israel shall be saved in the coming time of reckoning. These are seen in the Unveiling as the hundred and forty-four thousand and the vast throng (Un. 74, 9).

## JUSTIFICATION

## NATIONAL

<sup>30</sup> God's sovereignty is further illustrated in the dispensation of justification. Normally, Israel, seeking to keep a just law, should have attained righteousness. Yet the nations, who made no effort to attain righteousness, grasp it because they find it on the principle of faith. The pursuit of righteousness by means of the law led Israel to refuse the grace of Christ apart from the keeping of the law.

It is evident that this is true only in a national way, for not *all* of Israel stumbled, neither did *all* among the nations find the righteousness of faith. This must be constantly borne in mind in studying this entire division of Romans. It deals, not with individuals, but nations. Israel, as a whole, is apostate, yet some among them are brilliant examples of faith. The nations, who never before had any part in God's blessings, except as they became proselytes and identified themselves with Israel, now believe God in considerable numbers. Paul becomes the apostle of the nations and thus inaugurates the present secret economy (Eph. 3<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> Intense zeal, religious fervor, coupled with self-righteousness, does not lead to salvation. God demands subjection to His righteousness in Christ. The law should establish their *un*righteousness and thus reveal God's righteousness, which is manifested in Christ. Israel, as a nation, will be saved when they see Him Whom they stabbed, and recognize Him as their Righteousness.

*Justification—National*

<sup>6</sup> The law demanded obedience first and promised life to those only who continued to keep it. But even in the law there was provision for faith. It taught that Jehovah Himself, *He* was their life (Deut. 30<sup>20</sup>). In the day when He gathers them out of the peoples and brings them back into the land He will bring the word of faith very near to them (Deut. 30<sup>1-14</sup>). In place of their own efforts He will put the humiliation and resurrection of Christ before them. Salvation will depend on the avowal of His lordship and resurrection.

<sup>13</sup> There is here an allusion to the ancient custom, still in vogue in eastern lands, of the right of sanctuary. One who is in danger of death by the hands of the blood avenger, if he cannot reach a safe place in time, may invoke the name of some great and powerful person, and thus find salvation through his name. If the avengers of blood refuse to listen to his appeal, and take his life, it devolves upon the person on whose name he has called to take swift and summary vengeance. He gathers together all his friends and allies to assist him in punishing the outrage and in defending the honor of his name. For three and one third days he executes vengeance on all who were concerned in killing the one who had invoked his name. "Whoever should be invoking the name of the Lord shall be saved." When vengeance visits the earth, the only shelter will be the name of Jehovah. Therefore it will require not only heart belief, but the avowal of the mouth. Thus it is that Israel will be saved and all others who, in that day, will seek refuge in His name.

<sup>14</sup> The refugee does not need to know his protector personally, yet would hardly call on one in whom he had no faith. He could not invoke one of whom he had not even heard. Hence it will be necessary to proclaim Christ, and even before that God will need to commission His heralds.

<sup>17</sup> For Israel in that day the declarations of Christ, the great Protector, will be presented to them for their belief. Thus their salvation will be a simple matter of faith in His great name.

## Justification—National

<sup>18</sup> The proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom, beginning in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, spread to the limits of the land (Ac. 1<sup>8</sup>), and reached beyond it to the Dispersion. Israel was not disobedient through lack of tidings.

## CONCILIATION

## NATIONAL

<sup>1</sup> It would seem from the foregoing that God was through with His ancient and beloved people and was thrusting them away. But the apostle hastens to deny this assumption. God is *not* thrusting away His people whom He foreknew. Their apostasy is only in *part*, and the term of it is *temporary*. That not all of Israel are thrust away is evident from his own case. He, of all Israelites, most deserved to be thrust from God's presence and blessing. Yet he is not included in the national defection. And he is not alone. Elijah thought that he was the only one in all Israel who did not bow the knee to Baal. But God, in His sovereign dealings, restrains seven thousand from worshipping the idol. Neither was Paul alone, for there was then, as always, a remnant reserved by God. These, however, are not those who are more faithful than the rest, or more deserving than the mass of the nation. If it had not been for God's choice *in grace*, there never would have been a remnant.

<sup>6</sup> Grace and works will not mix. The moment works are merged with grace it becomes mere mercy and loses its essential nature. You cannot earn or deserve grace any more than you can do anyone a favor by paying him for services rendered. The sinner or saint who seeks to buy or deserve the favor of God will find that it cannot be purchased. Grace is only for those who merit the opposite. Paul's is the pattern case. As he excelled all in persecuting God's saints, he deserved the direst doom. Yet he received the greatest grace!

<sup>7</sup> Israel sought blessing through law keeping, but did not get it. Those chosen in grace alone found it.

## Conciliation—National

<sup>9</sup> The blessing they coveted on the ground of law keeping blinded their eyes to grace, and loaded their backs with legal burdens.

<sup>11</sup> The temporary nature of Israel's defection is strikingly illustrated by the figure of a man who trips yet recovers himself before he falls prostrate. *Israel has not fallen*. The book of Acts is full of the jealousy of Jews whenever they see the nations receiving God's gifts.

<sup>12</sup> Israel is God's appointed channel of blessing to the nations. If, then, their failure brings the storehouse of God's grace to the world, what will occur when they take their true place? Then the world will be blessed far beyond what is possible now. Now only *spiritual* blessing comes to the nations. Then, through Israel, *physical* blessing will flow out to them, as well.

<sup>15</sup> With Israel aside, God no longer puts barriers between Himself and the nations, but is conciliated to the whole world. When men *receive* this conciliation, then there is mutual reconciliation.

<sup>17</sup> It is a remarkable fact, generally unknown, that a very old olive tree, no longer capable of bearing, may be rejuvenated by a wild graft. This has been done only in those Mediterranean countries where the olive has been cultivated for many centuries. Israel is the old olive tree which becomes almost incapable of bearing the olives from which the light-giving oil was obtained. Some of the branches were broken out and the nations were grafted in, and, through living contact with its root, become God's testimony in the earth. The light of God is now no longer with Israel, but with the nations. But all the light is derived from the Scriptures which came through Israel. Apart from the sacred scrolls, the nations shed no light.

<sup>19</sup> The apostle is dealing with Israel and the nations—not *individuals*. No individual believer will be broken out of the olive tree. *The nations, however, as such, no longer believe, and are due to be cut out of the olive tree*. Jehovah is already gathering Israel back to their land with a view of once more grafting them into their own olive tree.

## Conciliation—National

<sup>22</sup> Nothing shows the blindness of Christendom more than their severe denunciation of faithless Israel, yet they are following precisely the same course and have not the slightest idea that God will deal with them as He did with Israel.

<sup>24</sup> If a *wild graft* can be introduced into a cultivated tree with good results, how much better will it be to graft back the good branches!

<sup>25</sup> The secret that Israel's present condition is not permanent, but only *until* all who were chosen are called out of the nations, has never been generally believed, hence the haughty attitude of Christendom toward Israel.

<sup>26</sup> Only a few, comparatively, are being saved among the nations, but when Israel again regains its proper place, *all* Israel shall be saved. Then the whole nation, from the least to the greatest, will know God. And they will become the light of the world, as they were always intended to be.

<sup>28</sup> Let us always remember that Israel is still beloved, whatever its present attitude toward God.

<sup>29</sup> God never regrets any favor He has shown. No individual or nation whom He calls ever disappoints Him, for He knows full well what they are and what they will do. This alone proves that Israel will yet fulfill the part He has prepared for it.

<sup>30</sup> Mercy can be shown only to those who are in need of it. So God plays Israel and the nations against one another that each in turn may taste of His mercy.

<sup>32</sup> God's purpose includes all nations. No matter what their present attitude toward Him, it is all a part of His plan and a preparation for the display of His mercy. Here we have the real reason why all, in turn, become stubborn. God Himself locks them up to it, not that He may condemn them, but that He may have occasion to manifest His mercy.

<sup>33</sup> God's judgments and ways are too deep for human perception, but we *can* grasp His purpose. We do not know how fruit is made, but we can plant a tree and enjoy its product. We can grasp God's goal, but the process by which He attains it is too complex for our feeble minds.

## Conciliation—National

<sup>36</sup> This is the most comprehensive statement which can be uttered. God is the *source* of all, the *channel* of all, and the *object* of all. The universe sprang out of Him, it has its course in Him and He will be its ultimate. This settles all speculation as to the origin of all things. Creation is out of God, not out of nothing. This explains universal history. God is the One back of all the movements of mankind. This reveals the goal of all things. God is so guiding all His creatures that, eventually, He will become their All. To Him, indeed, be glory for the eons!

## THE CONDUCT OF THE SAINTS

<sup>1</sup> This section is in marked contrast with the conduct of mankind (11:3-20), as shown in the literary framework. The exhortation is based on the previous teaching concerning our bodies in the sixth, seventh and eighth chapters. Our mortal bodies are vivified by the indwelling spirit (8:11). God is no longer pleased with dead substitutes, but asks for living offerings. He longs for worship in spirit and in truth. Hence we have no altar and ritual, with bleeding victims which did not satisfy God, but we offer our bodies, dead indeed to Him, yet energized by His Spirit, so that they are employed in good deeds, which ascend as a sweet savor to Him. This is *real* religious service. It displaces the forms of divine service connected with the law. It is the only divine service which He recognizes in this economy. This is the Godward side.

<sup>2</sup> On the manward side our conduct is not to look like that of the world. There is to be a transformation wrought by means of our minds, through the influence of God's revelation. We can never be like the world at heart, so we are not to appear to be like it. We are to become more and more unlike it by contact with the mind of God.

<sup>4</sup> Our behavior toward one another is based on the marvelous figure of the human body. We all have distinct functions, designed not merely for our own use, but for the edification of all. This is the key to conduct among our fellow-saints. As the body is a vital unity, so the saints are one in Christ.

*The Conduct of the Saints*

14 The conduct of the saints in any given economy is based on God's dispensation. If He dispenses law, He requires conduct in accord with law. Mercy calls for a higher standard, while grace appeals for the highest type of loving deportment under even the most trying circumstances. The law allowed men to hate their enemies, to exact an equivalent, as an eye for an eye, and, indeed, to act toward one another as God dealt with them. God's grace, then, is the model after which we may pattern our conduct. As He never curses now, we may not curse, but bless even those who are persecuting us.

18 If God should avenge Himself on His enemies where would we be? We were His enemies and as such we were conciliated by the death of His Son. Hence we should never avenge ourselves.

20 An enemy in distress, instead of calling for hate and vengeance, is a special opportunity for the display of God's grace. The "morsel," a special portion of food with which a host favored an honored guest, was a token of esteem and consideration. Mercy might provide an enemy with food, but grace accompanies the gift with every mark of love and honor. This is the way in which God vanquished our enmity, hence we should do likewise.

1 Unlike Israel, we do not come into conflict with the rulers of the world. The setting up of the kingdom will involve the subjection of them all to the suzerainty of Christ. But we have no place in that earthly kingdom. While Israel is thrust aside we must recognize the existing authorities. God is not at variance with present governments. It is not a question of obeying God rather than man, as when Peter refused the orders of the Sanhedrin. We must not withstand regularly constituted magistrates, but depend on God to overrule their acts, if they seem to conflict with our duty to God or our convictions of His truth. Our conflict is with the sovereignties, and the authorities and the world-mights, the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials. We are to be sandaled with the evangel of peace (Eph. 6:12-15).

*The Conduct of the Saints*

5 The true believer should make the most exemplary citizen, for he has a deeper motive and a more powerful impulse to obedience than the unbeliever. He recognizes the civil authorities as *God's* servants and has a conscience which should make him most law-abiding. The unbeliever is deterred from evil by fear and respect for a human institution. We recognize existing governments as of divine origin.

6 It may seem a strange paradox, yet it is a sad fact that many who are ministers of God in name, are not so in truth, and many a magistrate, who would not dare consider himself a minister of God, is such in fact, in the execution of his office.

8 The debtor is the servant of the lender. The servant of God should never be under obligation to another. Love alone is the great debt which never can be fully discharged. Law is useless where there is love, for every precept is more than met by the dictates of love. Apart from love law is a broken fragment, incomplete, unsatisfactory. Love is its complement, and rounds it out to a satisfactory, complete whole.

11 Time, in Scripture, is variously characterized. We make an effort to distinguish between the various terms used. The longest divisions of time are the five great eons or ages. The present eon stretches all the way from the flood to the coming advent of Christ. But there are shorter divisions of time, often spoken of under the term *SEASON*. Sometimes this refers to a literal season of the year, as the harvest season (Mt. 13<sup>30</sup>). Usually, however, it denotes some characteristic *period* or *era*, as in this scripture. It is illustrated by the dawning of the day. Deeds of darkness are done at night. But this is not the era of darkness but of light. The full day is approaching when our salvation will be complete at His advent. Just as we rouse ourselves in the morning, preparatory to the duties of the day, so, in this larger sense, our conduct should reflect the coming of the light and not be tainted with the dark doings which seek the shades of night to hide their shame.

*The Conduct of the Saints*

<sup>1</sup> Fellowship among God's saints should not be based on knowledge or ignorance. God receives us even when we are feeble in faith. We should not cut from our fellowship one who does not follow all our deductions from the Scriptures. Neither should we make light of his scruples. No foods are forbidden now. Yet the undoubted wisdom of the food regulations under the law may well help us to determine what is best, without abridging our liberty to eat all things with a good conscience. We may not dictate to one another in these things. They are to be settled by the individual conscience before God.

<sup>5</sup> The observance of days is also a matter of individual preference. It is abundantly evident that no day is above another, so far as the Scriptures are concerned. The seventh day, the sabbath, was never given to the nations. To observe it is to put ourselves under the curse of the law. The first day of the week, called Sunday, is never once referred to in the Scriptures, properly translated. The phrase should always be rendered "one of the sabbaths." In order to get "the first day of the week" it is necessary to alter *one* to *first*, to insert the word *day*, and change the plural *sabbaths* to the singular *week*. It is a desperate attempt to find some scriptural excuse for the prevalent observance of Sunday. There is nothing wrong in the setting aside of a day to the Lord. Custom has made Sunday the most convenient for this purpose. But let us not mar the word of God in order to uphold the practice. Neither should we ride roughshod over the religious scruples of those who look upon Sunday as a day sanctioned by God for divine worship. They have no basis for their belief, nevertheless their conscience demands consideration.

<sup>10</sup> It is not ours to pass judgment in these matters. It is not the place of the church to fix any days and condemn those who do not observe them. Only the observance of days as a matter of law keeping is condemned. Though there may be nothing wrong in working on Sunday, it is wrong to keep it as a means of salvation. The same is true of the seventh day, or sabbath.

*The Conduct of the Saints*

<sup>14</sup> The distinctions instituted by the law between things which are to be reckoned clean and unclean have no place in the economy of grace. God has no hesitancy in associating with us, sinners of the nations. A strict Jew could not eat our food without being contaminated. Yet, before God, *we* are holy and the Jew is unclean! Hence no food is ceremonially unclean. It is only an uninstructed conscience which counts things common.

<sup>15</sup> The liberty to eat anything should not be allowed to infringe on the prejudices of others. Those who have a conscience about partaking of certain foods are easily offended. We should not stand on our rights but seek rather to restrain our liberty to conform to the religious scruples of our fellow believers.

<sup>17</sup> This is not a definition of the kingdom of God, but a statement of its bearing on this subject. The distinctive truth for the present economy was not yet known, and the saints are included in the kingdom of God in its widest aspect as denoting the sphere of God's rule.

<sup>19</sup> These are safe tests to apply to all our intercourse with our fellow saints. Will it provoke strife? If so, let us avoid it. Will it edify? If not, let us forego it. *Peace and the edification of others, rather than our own privileges should be pressed.* Things which we can do with a good conscience before God, may give dire offense if done before some of His saints.

<sup>1</sup> Knowledge puffs up. There is a prideful tendency to make a show of our liberty in Christ. But grace considers the weak rather than the strong. If there is to be peace and unity it must come from the condescension of those who are able. The weak in faith are not asked to consider the strong. Christ is the most brilliant example in this as in all else. What marvelous condescension He displayed in His dealings with His disciples, whose weakness and lack of faith was a constant source of distress to Him! If He could bridge the great gulf between Him and His disciples, surely we can bear with those whose infirmities we all share.

## PAUL'S PREVIOUS MINISTRY

<sup>8</sup> Contrast the two ministries of Christ and Paul (<sup>16</sup>). Christ was the Servant of the *Circumcision*. Paul was a minister for the *nations*. Christ confirms the patriarchal promises. Paul acts as a priest in the evangel of God. Christ never went outside the land of Israel. He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Paul, on the contrary, was not *called* until he had *left* the land of Israel. He was sent to the Uncircumcision. It is of the utmost importance that we recognize these distinctive ministries, for the distinction has been virtually ignored. Christ is taken as the minister to the nations and Paul is forgotten. Yet throughout the Lord's public life He emphasized the fact that His mission was to Israel exclusively. A few proselytes, indeed, received blessing, but they were counted as one with the favored nation. The Syro-Phoenician woman had to take the place of an outcast before she could get a crumb from Israel's board.

Paul is a direct contrast to all this. Later he describes himself as the *apostle of the nations* (2 Tim. 1:11). He made an agreement with Peter and John that they should go to the Circumcision while he went to the nations (Gal. 2:9). He was *severed* from the rest in order to fulfill this ministry. As a result *all the truth for the nations at the present time comes only through the apostle Paul*. Those who wish to be established in present truth should master his epistles, especially Ephesians. After they have learned the mysteries or secrets in his writings and scaled the heights to which he alone can guide them, they never will be tempted to descend to the level which is found in our Lord's earthly ministry and in its continuation by the twelve, as recorded in the book of Acts and in the epistles from their pens.

<sup>9</sup> Mercy for the nations "*with His people*" is not in force now, for His people are not blessed. We are blessed because of their defection. In the millennial age, however, the nations will be abundantly blessed through the restored nation of Israel, with Christ on the throne.

*Paul's Previous Ministry*

<sup>16</sup> While the priests at Jerusalem still offered the sacrifices according to the law, their ministrations were not acceptable to God, for they had rejected the true Lamb of God. God had no pleasure in the blood of slain beasts, for the hearts of the offerers were far from Him. Is it not a marvel how God, in His wisdom, finds true worshippers among the despised aliens, who offer themselves as living sacrifices well pleasing to Him? In spirit, Paul's ministry among the nations takes the place of the divine ritual at Jerusalem. He officiates as a priest. Though not sanctified by the altar at Jerusalem, they were hallowed by the holy Spirit. So it ought to be today. Though the temple worship has ceased, it is our privilege so to walk as to be a sweet savor of Christ.

<sup>17</sup> Paul labored more than all of the other apostles, and, before this crisis in his ministry, performed greater miracles than the rest. In Acts, every sign in the first part, by Peter, is duplicated in the last part, by Paul. This ministry he has now completed.

<sup>19</sup> The completion of the proclamation of the evangel of Christ marks the central crisis in Paul's ministries. The first was his severance from the rest at Antioch. The last was at Rome, and was followed by the writing of his prison epistles. This crisis lies between, after the completion of his Antioch commission, and is marked by the expression of his desire to go to Rome. In Acts his previous ministry is declared to be fulfilled (Ac. 19:21). In Corinthians he would henceforth know no one after the flesh. He had been proclaiming Christ after the flesh—as Israel's Messiah—but he would now do so no longer (2 Cor. 5:16). It is at this crisis also that the conciliation is first revealed (2 Cor. 5:17-20).

His second ministry was concerned with justification (Ac. 13:39). After this crisis, his third ministry is characterized by conciliation, which is first set forth in the fifth to the eighth chapters of this epistle in its individual aspect, and in the eleventh chapter, in its national aspect. His final ministry was carried on at Rome, which he plans to visit at this crisis. It was carried on almost entirely by means of the Perfection Epistles.



*Paul's Intended Journey*

<sup>28</sup> During Paul's first three ministries the nations were dependent on Israel, and received of their spiritual things. Hence they were indebted to them and sought to pay by sending them relief in time of famine. But after this Paul makes known the present secret economy, in which the nations are no longer guests of Israel (Eph. 2:12, 19), but receive their own spiritual blessings direct from God. Their destiny is a celestial one, where Israel has no possessions. At the close of the book of Acts the pre-eminence of the Jew vanished, and since then there is a new humanity in which all physical distinctions are done away.

<sup>29</sup> The blessing of Christ *which fills* doubtless is an intimation of the transcendent truths which were made public by Paul after his arrival at Rome. None of the blessings before bestowed filled, in the sense of completing and perfecting. The full-orbed presentation of truth in the Ephesian epistle, written at Rome, fully meets the anticipation here expressed by the apostle.

<sup>30</sup> Paul's apprehension lest he should not be well received in Judea was well founded, as events proved. Though he came bringing gifts to his people, his later teaching seemed to them to be directed against the people and the law and Jerusalem. Indeed, he did teach that God would be worshiped in any place, and he did lead out from under the bondage of the law (Ac. 21:28). Tens of thousands of Jews believed, yet they were all zealous of the law (Ac. 21:20). They would not hear of blessing to the nations apart from the law. Later, when Paul spoke to them, they did not object to his own call, but could not bear to hear of his commission to the nations (Ac. 22:2).

<sup>3</sup> The best manuscripts read Prisca here as in 2 Tim. 4:19. Elsewhere she is given the fuller form Priscilla. This is common in Roman names. She and her husband (who is usually mentioned last) were banished from Rome a few years before (Ac. 18:2). Paul met them in Corinth and joined them in their business of tentmaking. They traveled with the apostle (Ac. 18:18) and must have returned to Rome before the writing of this epistle.

*Greetings*

<sup>7</sup> The term "relative" is an elastic expression, used sometimes in a broad sense of all Israelites (9<sup>3</sup>) yet more usually in a restricted sense of a closer blood relation (Jn. 18:26). Paul mentions six of his relatives in the course of these greetings (7, 11, 21), besides his mother. Very few of them are ever spoken of again in the Scriptures. Some of them, notably Andronicus and Junius, seem to have been very prominent and faithful. They were in Christ before him and suffered imprisonment with him. Indeed, it is not at all improbable that we are to understand them to be apostles, not indeed of the twelve, but such as Barnabas (Ac. 14:14).

<sup>10</sup> "Of Aristobulus" seems to denote those associated with his establishment. Perhaps this is the grandson of Herod the Great who was later given the government of Lesser Armenia.

<sup>11</sup> Narcissus is probably one of Nero's favorites, for even Nero's household was invaded by the power of the evangel (Phil. 4:22).

<sup>13</sup> Rufus is probably the same one whose father Simon was compelled to bear the cross (Mk. 15:21). If so, he must have been of some prominence among early believers, for Mark is content to identify his father by referring to him and his brother Alexander. It is touching to see the apostle especially single out his mother, the wife of him who had the honor of bearing our Saviour's cross.

<sup>17</sup> How soon dissension and division crept in among the saints! Even before they had received the truth in its fullness, men came with smooth words to draw them from it. Hence the necessity for some authoritative written standard, as this epistle, to which appeal could be made when the truth was in danger.

<sup>21</sup> Lucius of Cyrene (Ac. 13:1) was probably a different person. Jason was prominent in Corinth (Ac. 17:9-10). Sostater is probably the same one who is called Sopater (Ac. 20:4), who, together with Gaius, left Corinth with Paul.

<sup>22</sup> Tertius was probably a professional scribe, such as to this day are employed to write letters in the East. Paul, however, usually penned the concluding words of his epistles.

<sup>25</sup> The importance of this closing benediction is apparent from the fact that it was written by the apostle with his own hand after Tertius had finished the epistle. Paul characterizes the great themes of his epistle, *my gospel* and *the proclamation of Jesus Christ in accord with the revelation of a secret hushed in times eonian* (conciliation), in contrast with the gospel of God (1<sup>1</sup>) which He promised before. The conciliation was *not* made known through the ancient prophets, but through *prophetic writings*, such as this epistle and 2 Corinthians. It is of principal importance that we see the point the apostle makes here, for otherwise we shall not appreciate the

unique, distinctive character of the conciliation, which is first set forth in this epistle. The teaching of the fifth to the eighth chapters and especially the eleventh chapter is absolutely unknown in the prophets. In the latter all blessing comes to the nations through Israel as the channel. The conciliation comes because Israel is thrust aside. The prophets would lead us to infer that Israel's apostasy would bar all possibility of blessing to the nations. The conciliation was a secret they knew nothing of, for it makes Israel's defection the ground of worldwide, unbounded blessing to the nations until Israel is again in God's reckoning.

# I CORINTHIANS

PAUL's first epistle to the Corinthians is a divine commentary on the conduct inculcated in the epistle to the Romans. The secret of a life well pleasing to God lies in the crucifixion of the flesh and resurrection by the power of the spirit (Rom. 6<sup>6-11</sup>). The Corinthians failed in both of these requisites, as will be seen by the framework. The first part of the epistle shows that though the apostle had pressed the preaching of the cross, which puts an end to all physical pretensions, they persisted in making much of men, and thus created divisions among themselves. The close of the epistle shows also that some denied the resurrection, though the resurrection of Christ was fundamental to the evangel and an absolute necessity to acceptable conduct.

As is the case with so many of the epistles, each subject is taken up twice, as shown in the framework, dividing the epistle into two distinct parts, each having the same general subjects, but discussing them from distinct standpoints. In the first half all is personal. In the second all is ecclesiastical. The gifts in the former portion are men, Paul and Apollos. In the latter they are spiritual endowments, which were exercised in the ecclesia. Thus also, the abuse of the physical body is balanced by the abuse of the Lord's body. The private conduct of the marriage relation is replaced by their conduct in the public meetings of the saints. Idol sacrifices are discussed in their relation to the individual and as they affect the ecclesia, especially the Lord's table.

The central subject is the question of Paul's apostolic authority. First he discusses his personal rights, but then waives them all in his desire for the welfare of others.

Thus we see a marvelous symmetry and balance of thought in an epistle which is usually supposed to be without method.

This epistle is a severe rebuke to the present day ecclesiastical systems. If division was a proof of carnality in Corinth, what does the multiplication

## FRAMEWORK OF I. CORINTHIANS

*Reversion*

### INTRODUCTION 1<sup>1-9</sup>

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### CONCLUSION 16

of sects with which we are afflicted prove? There is far more need today of the salutary correctives in this epistle than there was in Corinth. There is need to proclaim, not only the death of Christ, but the *manner* of His death. A crucified Christ is the answer to the worldly wisdom and religious carnality of those who profess the name of God.

This epistle shows why so few are able to apprehend the marvelous mysteries of Paul's later epistles. If the Corinthians were so carnal that the apostle could not reveal these to them, it is no marvel that they are hid from the immature believer of today. Yet the apostle did disclose to them the secret of the resurrection.

In the midst of all the gifts the apostle points them to the transcendent grace which has since become ours by a later revelation. The gifts have ceased. Faith, expectation and love remain. Let us hope that soon faith will be lost in sight and expectation in realization. Then love alone will abide. May we give it the place pre-eminent!

<sup>1</sup> This is not the first time the apostle has written to the Corinthians. He had written a letter to them (5<sup>9</sup>) and they had written one in return (7<sup>1</sup>). This epistle is partly a reply to their letter. So that it is not to be taken as *first* Corinthians in the absolute sense, but in relation to the second epistle.

<sup>2</sup> It is worthy of note that this epistle, like the Thessalonian and Galatian epistles, is written to a corporate ecclesia. Indeed, the whole of the latter half treats of ecclesiastical relations.

<sup>2</sup> The name Sosthenes recalls much of Paul's career in Corinth. Crispus, the chief of the synagogue, believed and probably lost his place immediately, for we next read that Sosthenes was the chief of the synagogue. When Gallio refused to interfere, the crowd took Sosthenes and beat him in front of the dais. It may be that this man was also reached by the evangel, and became Paul's companion in Ephesus, where this epistle was, in all probability, penned. If so, it is a notable triumph of grace.

<sup>4</sup> Corinth was the first place, after Paul's severance from the rest at Antioch, where he was allowed to continue long enough to teach and establish the saints in the truth. He was there a year and a half (Ac.18<sup>11</sup>), and many of the Corinthians not only believed, but were recipients of many spiritual graces looking forward to the day of Christ's unveiling.

<sup>9</sup> What a marvelous privilege and honor is involved in fellowship with the Son of God! Yet this is the portion of everyone who is His.

<sup>10</sup> It should be an occasion of gratitude to God that the correction of the Corinthians, though of temporary and local interest at the time, still provides guidance on many points of practical importance. Thus their very divisions not only exposed their own carnality, but are the sure sign of the prevailing lack of spirituality today. Few, indeed, would rebuke allegiance to themselves, yet Paul, first of all, objects to anyone saying "I am of Paul". No matter what name is used, schism is indefensible and deplorable.

<sup>14</sup> The Crispus here referred to can be none other than the chief of the synagogue who believed on the Lord with all his house when Paul first came to Corinth. Gaius was probably his host on a later visit (Ro.16<sup>23</sup>). The household of Stephanas was probably the first to receive the evangel. It seems that Paul, in his early ministry, like the Lord (Jn.4<sup>2</sup>), did not usually baptize with his own hands. As Stephanas was the first to believe in Corinth, there may have been no one else to do so in his case. Crispus was the most prominent Jew in the city, hence the apostle officiated personally when he was baptized. After this we do not read of his baptizing. He couples baptism with circumcision, as being ours in the burial of Christ (Col.2<sup>12</sup>).

<sup>17</sup> Baptism, like circumcision, was a physical rite, and seemed to give the flesh a place before God. The entire tenor of Paul's commission was against this. He draws a sharp line between baptizing and evangelizing.

#### THE WORD OF THE CROSS

<sup>18</sup> The "word of the cross" has a far deeper significance than the death of Christ for our sins. It brings before us the *manner* of His death. The curse of the law was attached to such a death. It brought down the curse of God. On the human side, however, it showed what human religion and human wisdom can do. When God's Image was present among men they not only failed to appreciate Him, but displayed the innate hatred of their carnal religious hearts by dooming Him to the death of the vilest criminal. He Who spoke as never man spoke should have been welcomed by the wise men of the world, but they showed the essential stupidity of human wisdom by gibbeting the embodiment of all wisdom upon the ignominious cross. Yet God has made that scene of weakness and shame the brightest exhibition of His power and glory. Though it seems to sound the depths of powerless infamy, it eclipses all the power and wisdom of men. The word of the cross is still despised, but its proclamation is salvation to all who believe. The height and summit of man's wisdom cannot reach to the divine folly.

<sup>27</sup> To this day the great, the noble, and the wise are a small minority among the true saints of God. It is a matter of extreme thankfulness that this is so. If high birth or wisdom or any other attainment were necessary to His choice, how few would be able to measure up to His standard, and how little glory would there be for Him! Yet now we see those mentally deficient, chosen by Him, acting more wisely than the philosophers who shut God out of their lives. Here in Corinth we see the trembling apostle, scorned even by those to whom he has been the means of blessing, doing a work which has brought more glory to God and good to man than all the efforts of the might and nobility of all time!

<sup>30</sup> Would that we would cease looking for anything in ourselves! Let us not boast in *our* wisdom, or *our* holiness, but find these *only* in Christ. Then let us boast to our heart's content in that which we have in Him.

<sup>1</sup> Eloquent appeals, logical arguments, or profound philosophy, have no place in the proclamation of the evangel. We are to proclaim the word, testify to the truth. The subject matter is all provided by God. Nothing would have appealed to the Corinthians better than some new philosophy, or some astute line of reasoning. But faith does not rest on reason but on a message backed by the power of the Spirit of God. What is needed today is a return to the simple, unadorned proclamation of the evangel, the death of Christ on the cross for our sins and the resurrection of Christ because of our justification. The power of this good news is as great today as it proved to be in Corinth.

<sup>7</sup> Though God has repudiated the world's wisdom, there is a divine wisdom, of which the world knows nothing, which even the saints do not apprehend until they attain maturity. This wisdom is fully unfolded in Paul's later epistles to the Ephesians, Philipians and Colossians. It cannot be grasped, even today, by carnal saints. It is for the spiritual, who have seen the end of the flesh.

<sup>7</sup> "Before the eons" shows that the eons or ages are not eternal in the past, but had a definite beginning.

<sup>9</sup> We need only consider our own desire to surprise and gratify those who love us to realize a little of what is in God's heart toward us. God gives of His Spirit, that we may apprehend His further gifts. The secret here hinted at by Paul can be none other than the secret economy unfolded in his Ephesian epistle, which is based upon the secret of Christ, or His exaltation as the Head of the whole universe. As such He is the Lord of glory, for no one on earth, or in the heavens, approaches the honor and dignity which will be His in the eons of the eons.

<sup>11</sup> The apostle appeals to our own experience. Human beings can understand one another because they have the same spirit. But animals cannot enter into the recesses of human experience. No more can a man apprehend things divine without the interpretive presence of God's holy Spirit.

<sup>13</sup> The Scriptures often lay stress on the character of the words employed by the Spirit of God. A large measure of the current confusion may be traced to the loose, unscriptural terms which are used. Timothy was urged to hold to the pattern of sound words. If this is true in the original language, how much more should we endeavor to fulfill this charge!

<sup>13</sup> The term "matching" has been rendered "comparing". But the thought of the passage is not the agreement between spiritual things, but the adaptation of spiritual things to mankind. It is useless to teach a soulless man spiritual things, for he has no means of grasping them.

<sup>1</sup> Doubtless the apostle would gladly have instructed the Corinthians in the deep things of God, but they were not able to bear them. And what was the sure sign of their carnality? *Division*. While some were the partisans of Paul, who planted, and some of Apollos, who watered, and strove about God's gifts in the person of His servants, they were effectually frustrating any further outflow of His favor. And so it is today. If any yearn to know the deep secrets of God, let them purge themselves of all party spirit, and thus open their hearts to the great Giver Himself.

<sup>5</sup> Apollos was a Jew of Alexandria, a scholarly man, and able in the Scriptures. He came to Ephesus, full of zeal, but versed only in the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila heard him speak boldly in the synagogue, so they took him to themselves and expounded the way of God more accurately to him. On his way back he passed through Achaia and doubtless spent much time in Corinth. While there he parleyed much with the believers and strenuously and thoroughly confuted the Jews, publicly exhibiting, through the Scriptures, that Jesus is the Christ (Ac.18<sup>24-28</sup>).

<sup>8</sup> There is little doubt but that Apollos taught precisely as Paul did. They were one. Indeed, Apollos received much of his teaching indirectly from Paul, through Priscilla and Aquila.

<sup>9</sup> Paul seeks to draw their hearts from occupation with men, by comparing them with a farm on which he was merely a laborer, or a building on which he was only a craftsman. He did the first work. He planted. Apollos gave the crop water. But they could not make a single seed grow. Growth is due to God alone.

<sup>10</sup> Paul had laid the foundation in Corinth. Apollos and others were building on it. The gold and silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw, represent the character of the doctrines with which these teachers seek to edify the ecclesia. It is not a question of quantity but quality. Wood, hay and grass would easily make an imposing pile, but they will not stand the fire in the day when each one's work will be tested. They doubtless represent the human philosophies and base additions to the truth which today almost cover up the great verities of divine revelation. Gold stands for that which is divine, silver for redemption, precious stones for those gems of grace which adorn them, especially the secrets at which Paul has been hinting.

<sup>14</sup> Let all who teach take this to heart: their work will be tested to see *what kind it is*. It is better to have a little *after* the fire than much *before* it.

<sup>15</sup> The question here is not *salvation*, but *service*. It is not concerned with the conduct of the believer but with the doctrine of those who teach.

<sup>18</sup> The wisdom of the world is a far greater menace today than in the days of the apostle. The nominal church has no hesitancy in following, not only the wisdom of the world, but its folly as well. On every hand we are assured that the church must get on a business basis and use modern methods. The aim of the preacher is popularity, the confidence of the multitude is in men. Proclaim a great truth, freshly found in the word, and who will listen? Set up a great leader and men will flock to hear his eloquence. God is forgotten in the church more grievously than in the world.

<sup>22</sup> The cure for a partisan spirit is the recognition that the men who are given by God to edify His saints are all ours. We should not single out a single one, but include them all. We should not say "I am of Paul", so as to exclude Apollos or Cephas, but realize that they are all ours, and a gift from God, not to quarrel about, but to appreciate and enjoy. The heritage of Huss and Luther and Darby has descended to us, though we may not belong to their party.

<sup>1</sup> Doubtless those who were not of the Pauline party were inclined to be captious and question his motives or his methods. But Paul will not allow this. He did not receive his commission from them and refuses to acknowledge their right to examine him. What if they did? Their standards were not God's, and their surface knowledge was no basis for any decision. This is man's day. The current of the world's affairs is contrary to God and any arraignment of God's servants now will need very much revision indeed when freed from the prejudice and baneful influence of the day of man.

<sup>4</sup> The possession of a good conscience is no justification. Paul knew that he had a good conscience even when he was a bitter opponent of Christ.

<sup>5</sup> When the time for examining the service of God's stewards comes it will be based on truth. Not only the outward act but the inward motive will be brought to light. Many who seem to accomplish little, purposed greatly in their hearts, and will be rewarded according to their intention, rather than their failure to fulfill.

<sup>8</sup> The sharp contrast between the carnal Corinthians and the faithful apostle loses none of its force if we compare him with the church of today. We need not go outside of Protestantism to find churches sated, rich, and avowedly endeavoring to influence the world by political means. Every charge against the Corinthians in this passage is tenfold more applicable today. Those organizations which are not strong and glorious make every effort to become so. We have drifted far from our true place in the world. The world that hated our Lord and put Him to the accursed death, that hounded His apostle until he, too, was ready to be offered up, has not changed. It still persecutes those who want to live godly.

<sup>11</sup> What a contrast between Paul and the dignitaries of the church today! Though loaded with the care of all the churches among the nations, he lacks every sign of such an exalted position. In actual want at times, and toiling for his subsistence at others, without sufficient clothing for comfort, undergoing all sorts of indignities, with no settled habitation, the apostle presents an abject, almost pitiable picture. Nothing could be worse than his own summary: "We became as the off-scourings of the world, the scum of the universe."

<sup>15</sup> It was a custom among the higher classes to employ a slave in escorting the boys to and from school, and some families had learned Greek slaves for tutors. It would seem that the apostle is using this term to characterize those who had followed him in *leading* the Corinthians. They could not take the place of the one who had first brought them to the knowledge of Christ.

<sup>16</sup> We need not stumble at Paul's putting himself forward for imitation, rather than the example of Christ. Since the Lord's ascension and the call of Paul there has been a radical change in the character of God's dealings with the nations. Paul's pattern call, and his later conduct, is the example for us to follow in this day of grace. The Circumcision follow in our Lord's steps. If we followed the example given by our Lord to His disciples we would proclaim the gospel to none but Jews (Ac.11<sup>19</sup>).

<sup>21</sup> It was some time before Paul came to Corinth. This epistle was probably written at Ephesus, whence Paul went to Macedonia. While there he wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians in which he lays aside the rod and manifests that spirit of love and meekness which he longed to show toward them.

<sup>1</sup> Even when we remember the extreme laxity of morals which prevailed in many of the large and luxurious cities of the Roman empire at that time, the corrupting influence of the heathen deities which they had so recently served, and the eagerness with which they sought to right this wrong, we can hardly see how such a state of affairs could exist in Corinth, and, at first sight, it seems even more difficult to see why it should have been incorporated in Holy Writ, to be the butt of infidels and the sport of the ungodly. Yet such is all of God's word. It is a light which does not shun to expose all the shame and dishonor of the very ones who are declared to possess the righteousness of God. And it is full of comfort for those who fall, for if His grace was sufficient in such a case, it will suffice for all.

<sup>5</sup> It will be noticed that the punishment, of being given up to Satan, was with a view to salvation. Thus are all of God's judicial acts. They are not vindictive, without any consideration for the welfare of those involved, but are of such a nature as to correct the evil.

<sup>9</sup> The apostle had already written on this subject to the Corinthians. The state of society may well be imagined when he tells them that, should they refuse to have dealings with all such immoral persons, they would need to leave the world entirely. Now he makes it clear, however, that immorality will not be tolerated among those in the ecclesia. All such should be excluded. They are subject to the judgment of their brethren. Immorality outside the ecclesia is not a matter for the saints. God is judging those who are outsiders.

<sup>13</sup> There is a striking contrast between the methods of dealing with moral evil and doctrinal heresy. There were those in Corinth who held fundamental

error, for they denied the resurrection. The apostle reasons with them and shows them the consequences if their heresy were true, but he never suggests their excision. But when the behaviour of a brother became such that he brought reproach upon the holy brotherhood of believers, he was summarily expelled. This was the surest way of bringing him to repentance. By sending him back into the world, he realized the gravity of his misconduct.

1 It is unfortunate that our word "judge" usually takes on the sense of condemnation. The saints are not to condemn the world but to rule it during the eons. Saints in Israel will possess the kingdom on earth. We shall administer the rest of the universe. This destroys utterly the crude conceptions of "heaven" usually entertained. We shall not be idle, but, as members of Christ's body, will direct and control the angels, including the utmost bounds of the empyrean.

If, then, such a future is for the saints, how incongruous for us to appeal to the unjust to settle our differences!

It is a deplorable state of affairs when brethren in Christ go to law against one another. It shows that one or the other is unjust and so is not a fit subject for the sphere of God's rule. When the kingdom is established there will be no room for those whose conduct is contrary to the strict justice which will be its chief characteristic.

If a believer has a case against another believer he should never have it tried before unbelievers. If they cannot settle it between themselves, they should choose some wise man, a believer in whom there is mutual confidence, and submit their case to him, and abide by his decision.

If this is impracticable, it rests with the aggrieved one to submit to the injury or loss rather than bring disgrace on the name of Christ. All that we do should be done with the single object of glorifying God, even if it entails shielding one who has wronged us, because his reputation cannot but affect the estimate with which the saints are held by the unbelievers in the world. We are not under law, but under grace. Let us use this rule in dealing with our brethren.

11 The city of Corinth was noted for its profligacy and, as the evangel makes its special appeal to *sinners*, some of the Corinthian saints could look back at a past of very doubtful character. But the evangel they received had cleansed and sanctified and acquitted them. In God's sight, at any rate, they no longer bore these characters, and His grace would constrain them to conduct themselves accordingly.

12 This is a necessary consequence of justification and the reign of grace. All is allowed to the one who has been vindicated by God. Nothing can ever touch his position before God in Christ. But this knowledge will not lead us to be lax in our conduct, as some might suppose.

15 The exalted honor of being members of Christ is the most powerful incentive to keep our bodies free from the gross sin which still afflicts humanity as it did in the days when this epistle was penned.

19 Wherever God dwells is the temple of God, and is hallowed by His presence. It was not the stately buildings or the sacred ritual or even the sacrifices which hallowed the sanctuary, but the presence of the glory of God in the holiest of all. The very ground of the desert was holy where Moses met Jehovah (Ex.35). So our body, whatever its physical appearance or condition, has become a temple by virtue of the divine Spirit which indwells us. It is no longer ours, but His, and like the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem, should allow nothing that defiles to enter its precincts. God does not dwell in temples made with hands, but in the bodies of His saints. Holy conduct and loving acts are the ritual.

1 In this chapter Paul distinguishes carefully between his spiritual judgment and a commandment of the Lord. He gives the ideal, yet modifies it to suit the conditions under which the Corinthians lived.

It will be noted that conduct pleasing to God always conforms to the divine activities. When God deals out justice He requires the same in His saints. When He is gracious, as in this economy, He is pleased when we deal with one another according to the



higher dictates of grace. Perhaps we can carry this even further. Redeemed Israel is the bride of the Lambkin. His relation to them is figured by the marriage tie. The present ecclesia, however, is His body, a much closer and more vital union. Hence the *ideal* for the present time is to remain as Paul was. It was doubtless ideal, in this sense, for Peter to have a wife. Paul's celibacy is undoubtedly in accord with the great truths with which he was commissioned, which disregard all physical relationships, being spiritual conditions to be realized among the celestials, where marriage has no place. Perhaps these considerations account for the undecided tone and temporary character of this chapter.

8 It is evident that the preceding concession is only a general rule, not applicable to those not then married. Their relations are to be regulated by mutual consideration, but the unmarried need to consult only their own condition.

10 The law of divorce, in Scripture, varies according to the character of God's ways in each economy. Because of the hardness of their hearts God gave them the provisions in the law. This is no rule for us today. Where both are believers there is no divorce in this economy. The reason for this is evident, even as the reason for divorce in Israel. Israel was married to Jehovah, but He had to divorce her for her sins. But we are the body of Christ, and no one *can* be separated from His own body! Our union with Him is unbreakable. This should be reflected in our earthly relationships.

11 When there has been a separation, a woman may not marry again so long as her husband is living.

12 The rule where one is an unbeliever is modified to suit conditions. The believer is to make no move toward separation, but if the unbeliever obtains a divorce the believer is entirely free.

13 While it is not right for a believer to marry an unbeliever, grace makes ample provision for such, especially as many are called while married to an unbeliever. Just as everything which touched the altar was holy (Ex.29<sup>37</sup>), so the unbeliever is hallowed by association with one of God's saints.

17 It is evident that God plans the time to call each of His saints. Some are in one station in life and some in another; some in one occupation and others in a different one. An important principle is laid down here which it were well for the saints to heed. It is this: The occupation and condition in which we were when God called us indicates, in a general way, what He would have us be. There is to be no radical change except in the case of those called in idleness or questionable occupations. There should, however, be a great change in our conduct, for we are to remain in our vocations *with God*. This it is which transforms the slave into the Lord's freedman, and makes the freeman a slave of Christ. This is the vital principle which replaces the outward rite of circumcision. It is not of great moment what a man may do for a livelihood, if he does it in such a way as to please God and bring no reproach on His name.

23 Slavery has quite gone out of fashion, but those who have been bought with the blood of Christ should not be slow to acknowledge that in their case, it still exists. We are not our own. Let us glory in this. Not only are we His servants, but we are His slaves. We have no right to our own will and way. We are slaves of the Lord Christ, but not of any man, though he be Christ's apostle.

25 The record of Paul's opinion is as much inspired as the injunction of the Lord. It is evident that no set rule can be laid down for the regulation of such matters which would not lead to license or undue restraint. So we have only the apostle's opinion, based on the condition of affairs in Corinth at the time. There was evidently much laxity of morals, due perhaps to the fact that the members of the Corinthian ecclesia had been themselves involved in the loose manners for which the city was noted, and to the low level of conduct prevailing all about them. This opinion does not apply at all times or places, for it would lead to monasticism. Hence the apostle is careful to add that those who do not follow his advice are not guilty of any wrong action.

<sup>31</sup> The transient, fleeting character of all of this world's relationships and experiences should warn us not to let them take an undue hold upon our hearts. We cannot but use the world to a limited extent. Its joys and sorrows affect us, whether we will or no. If it were a permanent system instead of a temporary stage in the process of God's plan, our attitude would be different. In the semi-permanent millennial system, the saints will not be restrained from the full use of the world of that day. But the present system is distinctly hostile to God and occupation with it is calculated to interfere with our fellowship with God and the enjoyment of His permanent purpose.

<sup>32</sup> No doubt both Paul and Peter were representative men whose personal affairs were in accord with the dispensations given them by the Lord. Peter went about with a wife, for the relationship between the Lord and the remnant in Israel, to whom Peter belonged, was figured by the marriage tie. They were the bride of the Lamb. Paul, on the other hand, revealed a nearer and closer union, that of the human body, in which Christ was the head and His saints the members. Paul, consequently, never married, but devoted himself undistractedly to the Lord's service. This is the ideal for this economy, yet the apostle is most careful not to press it as an injunction, for, unless such a course is entered upon whole-heartedly and with faith and fortitude which few possess, it would lead only to failure.

<sup>33</sup> In this economy of grace there is no room for divorce. The marriage tie is binding for life. What Moses gave the hard-hearted sons of Israel is no rule for us. And even the single cause to which our Lord confined divorce was based on the kingdom code, not on the superabundance of grace in which we revel. Death alone can sever the marriage bond today, so far as two saints are concerned. If one, however, is an unbeliever, and deserts the believer, this also leaves the believer free. But, apart from this, it is entirely out of keeping with God's grace for two who have tasted of His favor, to seek to sever the tie.

<sup>1</sup> Except in heathen lands, the question of eating that which has been offered in sacrifice to idols, is no longer a pertinent one, but the principle handed down is quite as important as ever. Those who are advanced in the faith know that there is no difference between food offered to idols and any other. Before God they may freely eat, but not before their brethren whose faith is not established. So we may freely do many things before God which might offend our brethren and cause them to stumble. Let us not flaunt our liberty in their faces, but rather let us refrain from that which may result in harm to a weak brother. Let us walk in love.

<sup>6</sup> We have here a marvelously exact and concise definition of the relationship which we sustain to God and to the Lord, which, in turn, throws much light on their respective relationship to each other. Briefly put, God is the *Source* and *Object* of all; Christ is the *Channel* of all. Thus it is always found. We are never said to come *out* of Christ, but *out of* God. Indeed, Christ asserts that He Himself, came out of God (Jn.8<sup>42</sup>). All is out of God (Rom.11<sup>36</sup>). But God never deals with us except *through* His Anointed. Creation began in the Son of God and was carried out *through* Him. He has the same place in redemption. There is no conflict, for, while the Son, as the Image of the Father, is entitled to be called God and to receive the same honor as the Father, yet He Himself insists that His Father is greater than all (Jn. 10<sup>29</sup>). All that He had was received from His Father. His very life was a gift (Jn.5<sup>26</sup>), and He lived by the Father (Jn.6<sup>57</sup>). He did the Father's will, not His own. He sought the Father's glory, not His own. He was one with the Father, and desired that the disciples might become partakers of that unity (Jn. 17<sup>22</sup>). So that He Himself was in every way, *out of* the Father. On the other hand, He is the only Way to the Father, the only means through Whom we may know God. Hence, while all is sourced in God the Father, all is channeled through the Son. It is only by clinging closely to the exact language of Holy Writ that we may hope to gain a clear conception of the relation of the Father to the Son.

<sup>1</sup> The Corinthians questioned the apostleship of Paul. The phrase, "the twelve apostles" has been used to throw doubt on his commission, for if there were but twelve apostles, Paul could not have been one of them. He did not have the qualifications, and Matthias was duly chosen to fill Judas' place. Only one who had been with the Lord from John's baptism onward to His ascension was qualified to be counted with the twelve (Ac.122). Paul did not meet the Lord until some years later. The kingdom apostles are limited to twelve, for there will be only twelve thrones provided for them when they rule the tribes of Israel in the kingdom (Mt.1928). It is evident that Paul and Barnabas and Timothy and Apollos will have no apostolic reward in that kingdom. Their apostleship is of an entirely different order. The gospel of the Uncircumcision was committed to Paul as that of the Circumcision had been to Peter. James, Cephas and John, chief of the twelve apostles, recognized this and gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that they should go to the nations. The twelve confined themselves to the Circumcision. Thus there are two distinct orders of apostles, the twelve to the Circumcision, connected with the kingdom on earth, and an indefinite number, of whom Paul was chief, sent to the nations and connected with the successive ministries of the apostle Paul. Though the Corinthians denied his apostolic authority, he was not a whit behind Peter, the chief of the Circumcision apostles.

<sup>3</sup> Paul had the undoubted *right* to do as the other apostles, but he chose the higher privilege of doing everything in his power to help the evangel. He worked with his own hands to supply his necessities when he might have demanded support.

<sup>8</sup> It is God's pleasure that His servants who minister spiritual things should be requited with carnal things. In the present low state of spirituality spiritual things are accounted of no value, while material things are held in high repute. To acquire a sum of money without recompense is a crime, but many receive vast spiritual wealth without any sense of obligation.

<sup>13</sup> God has always made due provision for the support of His servants. The priests and Levites were not concerned with their own livelihood, hence had no allotment of land to till, but depended on the labors of their brethren. They were wholly devoted to God's service. The same rule applies to the proclamation of the evangel.

<sup>15</sup> It seems a marvel that the saints who owed so much to the apostle would have allowed him to engage in menial labor, when they could easily have supplied his meager needs. Yet herein was his glory, that, though supporting himself, at least in part, he still found time and strength to do more than any other apostle. The natural course would have been to use his authority to the full so that he could give himself wholly to the work of the ministry. The marks of true greatness are apparent in his anxiety *not* to use his full authority, but to do everything which in any way may be a benefit to the evangel. Such a course as this ought to be all the more effective in these days when the stain of filthy lucre is a prominent mark on many religious enterprises. The world has learned to look upon religion as a means of gain. The history of the church has been one long endeavor on the part of the clergy (with *many* noble exceptions) to enrich themselves at the expense of the laity. Had Paul's spirit prevailed, what a different story there would be to tell!

<sup>19</sup> Many otherwise inexplicable events in Paul's career, as narrated in the book of Acts, are to be explained on the principle of conduct here laid down by the apostle. His course often seems to contradict the truth he had enunciated in the epistles he had penned. However strongly he insisted on freedom from the law, he could, nevertheless, take part in the rites and ceremonies of the temple when among his Jewish brethren. The whole narrative of Acts shows him becoming all things to all with whom he came in contact. On his journeys, in Jerusalem, in jail, on board the foundering ship—wherever he was he adapted himself to the men and means at his disposal to forward the claims of the evangel. The same principle should regulate our efforts that we also may gain some.

<sup>25</sup> Contestants in the Grecian games had to take an oath that they had been ten months in training, and that they would violate none of the regulations. They lived on a prescribed diet and exercised severe self-restraint. The wreath or "crown" was made of the leaves of the pine. Groves of these trees surrounded the stadium near Corinth. Other leaves were used in other cities. For some time parsley was substituted for pine, but it seems that, in the time of the apostle, they used the pine wreaths. To avoid confusing these chaplets with the symbol of regal authority they are never called a "crown" in this version.

<sup>26</sup> The subject before the apostle is not salvation, but service and reward. The apostle is not concerned lest he should be a "castaway", but whether he should win the prize. Two things are necessary, self-control and obedience to the rules of the game. Both are essential in order to win a wreath. In these days, when "success" is measured by human standards, it is of the utmost importance to press the fact that a violation of the rules absolutely bars the contestant from all hope of a prize. Service at the expense of truth or of conscience, to gain a livelihood or win popularity, no matter how strenuous, wins no prize. God looks on the motive and method, not on the apparent results. May we all so strive that He will be able to bestow the amaranthine wreath upon us!

<sup>1</sup> The redemption of Israel out of Egypt was typical of the spiritual deliverance which is ours in Christ. *All*, indeed, were redeemed by the blood of the paschal lamb, but not all by any means pleased God in the wilderness journey. They *all* went through the Red Sea dry shod, *all* were identified with Moses, *all* ate the manna, and *all* drank the water brought forth by Moses' rod in the desert. Yet, notwithstanding these privileges, they failed in self-control, they went back in heart to the flesh pots of Egypt, reverted to idolatry, sinned and murmured. These are the very sins into which some of the Corinthians were ensnared. And these things still have their appeal to us unless we, like the apostle, reduce our bodies to bondage.

<sup>11</sup> The eons are divided into two classes, the first three, which are preparatory, and the last two, called the "eons of the eons", which turn the evil of the first class into good. The last two eons, including the thousand years' reign and the reign of the saints in the new heavens and new earth, are the fruit and consummation of the evil eons. In *spirit*, Paul brought those under his ministry into the new creation, which is the spiritual counterpart of the eon inaugurated by the new heavens and new earth. It is only thus that the consummations of the eons had already reached the Corinthians.

<sup>12</sup> Here again, the apostle is not considering salvation but the endurance of trial on the part of those who are saved. Salvation is entirely of God, through Christ. No one need be concerned about its efficacy or power. But beyond salvation there is the possibility of earning a reward, of winning a prize. This requires us to take due heed to our conduct.

<sup>13</sup> God does not try us to break us down but to build us up. Hence He sends nothing insupportable. He does not however, make "a way of escape", as many of His saints have found by experience. If He did, why or how could *that* enable them to undergo it? They would not need to endure it if He took them out of it. He makes a *sequel*. This word occurs again in Heb. 13: "contemplating the sequel (A. V. *end*) of their behavior." All the great examples of trial were sustained by a contemplation of its sequel. Joseph held the sceptre in the prison. David wore the crown in Adullam. Even Job knew that he would see his Redeemer. We should not try to escape trial, but seek grace to endure it. We should not occupy ourselves with it, but contemplate the blessed outcome which it is designed to produce.

<sup>20</sup> There seems little doubt but that the heathen divinities were not mere myths, but actual demons. These are rampant today in Spiritism and often deceive the saints into believing that they are the holy Spirit of God by mimicking the gifts which were bestowed during the proclamation of the kingdom.

<sup>52</sup> It has been customary, in the study of "dispensational" truth, to divide the human race into "the Jew, the Gentile, and the church of God", and base the division on this passage. It is well, however, to note that the classification here is not *Israel* and the *nations*, but the *Jew* and the *Greek*. The Jew stands for the religious man, the Greek for the rationalist. One required signs, the other sought for wisdom. These, especially the Jew, would have a sensitive conscience on matters of small moment, and would be easily offended. Their modern representatives observe days, and abstain from foods, and have things sacred and profane. A tender solicitude for their conscience will keep us from becoming a stumbling block to them.

<sup>1</sup> Is it presumption on the part of Paul to set himself up for our imitation? Not at all, for he adds, *as I also am of Christ*. He knew *how* to follow Christ. He did not make the mistake of following "Jesus" in His earthly walk, before His death and resurrection, for he never knew Him then. He followed the Christ Who was in the glory, Whom He had met on the Damascus road. It is noteworthy that the Christ Whom Paul knew never appeared to the Circumcision after His ascension as He did to Paul. They were associated with His earthly career and its resumption when He reappears on the mount of Olives at His advent. Paul imitates Him in His gracious dealings with himself and the nations from His heavenly throne. This calls for conduct in many respects radically different from the example He left the twelve apostles. A single point will suffice to show this. The Lord Jesus never preached to any but Jews and proselytes. He warned His disciples not to go to the other nations. How could we imitate Him in this?

<sup>5</sup> The man should honor his head because it represents Christ. The woman should cover her head because it represents the man. It is a notable fact that, as men fail to subordinate themselves to Christ, women, in turn, refuse to be subordinate to them. And this is reflected, unconsciously, no doubt, in the matter of head dress. The lifting of the hat is a sign of man's headship over the woman.

<sup>7</sup> The modern disregard and ridicule of these wise customs is but a symptom of the prevalent apostasy and insubordination to the truth of God, as well as of the ignorance which does not appreciate the profound wisdom which underlies them. It would seem that the messengers, or angels, realize these various headships and the signs which should acknowledge them. Hence, though men have lost all appreciation of their significance, it is still due to these unseen observers to comply with a custom which is in accord with both nature and revelation. The covering of a woman's head is no disrespect to her. It signifies that her head—the man—should be covered when in God's presence. The uncovering of a man's head is no boast of his. It represents his Head—Christ—Who is the Image and Glory of God.

<sup>18</sup> The schisms of that early day did not begin to reach the open rupture we see everywhere about us today. The sects in the Corinthian ecclesia doubtless all came together in one place. No such thing was known as believers in Christ actually divided into independent ecclesias, though living in the same locality. The sin of schism and sectarianism seems to be the most incurable affliction of the church. The later history of the Corinthians shows that, though they were purged of the various heresies and immoralities into which they had fallen, after Paul's death they once more broke up into rival factions, each of which followed some distinguished leader. In recent times, various efforts have been made to restore this outward unity, but, in each case, it has led to another division. The true course for those who wish to please God seems to be indicated by the apostle's charge to keep *the unity of the spirit* in the tie of peace (Eph.4<sup>3</sup>), and to have fellowship with all who invoke the name of the Lord out of a clean heart (2 Tim. 2<sup>22</sup>). The visible, outward unity of believers no longer remains. Let us cultivate fellowship with all, irrespective of the man-made walls which divide us. Soon we shall all be caught up into the presence of Christ and then every barrier will be banished. Let us do our share to realize this unity now.

<sup>21</sup> The phrase "the Lord's supper" is misleading. Supper denotes an *evening* meal, but the word here employed has no such significance, though its first observance was at night. The word denotes the principal meal of the day, just as the word *dinner* does with us, without any reference to the time when it is eaten. The Corinthians brought their own dinners and ate them in the ecclesia. This custom was not approved by the apostle. He would have them eat at home.

<sup>23</sup> The fact that Paul received a special revelation, after his severance from the rest, concerning the Lord's dinner, shows that it is in harmony with, and a part of, the new system of truth with which he was entrusted. It is in contrast with baptism, which he never received from Christ (<sup>117</sup>). He was thankful that he had baptized but few of the Corinthians. The Lord's dinner, however, he had given over to them pursuant to the special revelation which he had received. It was to be observed "till He should be coming". It is often called an "ordinance," (AV Eph. <sup>215</sup>, Col. <sup>214</sup>), but this refers rather to the decrees issued by James (Acts <sup>1520</sup>, <sup>164</sup>) which were hostile to us and were taken away by the cross (Col. <sup>214</sup>). These were given by James, whereas the Lord's dinner was accepted by Paul from the Lord Himself, after his severance from the other circumcision apostles (Acts <sup>132</sup>), to give to the nations to whom he was sent.

<sup>24</sup> The word "remembrance" fails to give the full force of the Greek word here used. It is a strengthened form of the usual term for remembrance, denoting a voluntary and sustained effort, hence we render it *recollection*.

<sup>27</sup> The manner in which the Corinthians partook of the Lord's dinner was not in keeping with the august solemnity befitting such a sacred recollection. The powers of the kingdom were still present among them and led to the judgment of those who had offended. Some suffered from illness and some even died. Even thus, the apostle explains, it is that such should not be condemned with the world. The discipline of the Lord is always salutary, even though it may seem most severe.

<sup>4</sup> The threefold treatment of the subject of "spirituals" (as they are called in the Greek) is indicated in the opening sentence. First the graces are enumerated, as they are apportioned to each one by the spirit, in verses seven to eleven. Then the Lordship of Christ in the apportionment of service is illustrated by the figure of the human body, in verses twelve to twenty-seven. The rest of the chapter considers the operation of the graces under the disposition of God.

<sup>7</sup> The spirit we have received, though one, manifests itself in a variety of ways. This was far more manifest among the Corinthians than it is today, for the signs which characterized that immature economy were closely allied to the miraculous manifestations which accompany the proclamation of the kingdom. As the next chapter explains, now that maturity has arrived, such exhibitions of the spirit's power are not in keeping with the perfection or maturity of this secret administration.

Spiritual endowments were not confined to one member of an ecclesia, or even to a few. Each one was given some special evidence of the spirit's presence, with a view to the blessing of all. None of these endowments, whether wisdom, or healing, or languages, was the outgrowth of natural ability. Neither could any one acquire them. They were apportioned to each one quite apart from human instrumentality. Though these endowments are no longer given, the divine principle still remains, that God chooses His instruments quite apart from their natural qualifications.

<sup>12</sup> The figure of the human body is the most notable of all the illustrations of our relationship to Christ. It is the most marvelous example of unity with diversity in the realm of creation. Spirit baptism unites all who believe God to one another and to Christ, and dissipates all the physical distinctions which divide humanity into diverse and antagonistic classes, making them one in Him. *In Christ* there is no Greek and Jew, bond and free, male and female. *In the Lord*, however, in relation to *service*, these distinctions still remain.

<sup>13</sup> The body of Jesus, or of the Lord, denotes His physical frame. The body of *Christ*, however, is quite a distinct thought. Christ, or the Anointed, is a title rather than a name. It suggests official position. We are not united to Him by physical ties, as Israel was, but by purely *spiritual* relationships. This is forcibly suggested by the two figures used, baptism, or dipping, and drinking. One spirit, within and without, binds us together and unites us to Christ. The true ecclesia, or "church", today is not to be seen in the multitudinous organizations of Christendom with their many heads, but in the one spiritual, invisible unity, composed of all who have God's Spirit, by which they are vitally joined to the living organism of which Christ Himself is Head.

All the members of this spiritual body are mutually dependent on one another. Some perform one function, some another, but none can be dispensed with. No one can choose his own place in the body, for God reserves this entirely within His own power. It is futile to usurp some function for which we are not divinely endowed. It is failure when we do not exercise the function for which the Spirit of God has fitted us. Each one should be deeply exercised to discover his own place in the body, whether high or low, respectable or mean, and seek, by God's grace, to fill it. None can be apostles or prophets now, for their work has been accomplished. Few can be teachers, but the work of a pastor, who shepherds the saints, or an evangelist, who proclaims the evangel, is, in measure, open to all in a private, if not in a public way.

<sup>25</sup> It is the privilege of all who love God to cooperate with Him in avoiding schism in the body of Christ, by cultivating a due sense of their dependence on all other members, and a godly solicitude and sympathetic regard for their welfare; and this, too, even when fellow members despise and oppose them and persecute them. The body *is* one. We need only act accordingly. Christ *is* its Head. We need only accord Him His place.

<sup>28</sup> In the later revelation (Eph.4<sup>11</sup>) "suited to transcendence" (12<sup>31</sup>), we have a revised list of the gifts. There

the lesser graces, such as powers, healing, and languages are omitted. That this would be the case is predicted in the next chapter (13<sup>s</sup>), where we are told of a time when the gift of languages would cease. The revised list given in Ephesians, however, looks backward as well as forward. Apostles and prophets are no longer necessary to the edifying of the body of Christ. We are distinctly told that prophecies will be abrogated (13<sup>s</sup>) when maturity arrives. They were needed only so long as God's written revelation was incomplete. So that, today, the special gifts have narrowed down to three: evangelists, pastors and teachers.

<sup>31</sup> Most of the graces were transient, suited to immaturity, hence the apostle seeks to lead them up to those which will remain in the impending transcendent administration, in which we find ourselves today.

1 The "gift of tongues", even when it was a reality, was nothing but a noise unless impelled by the power of love.

Even those high endowments, such as prophecy and knowledge, amount to nothing unless love regulates their exercise. Yes, and every personal sacrifice, even martyrdom itself is without value apart from the spirit of love.

<sup>8</sup> It would seem that a few were already mature (2<sup>s</sup>), but the secret wisdom into which they were initiated was not made public until Paul wrote his Perfection Epistles, Ephesians (Eph.4<sup>13</sup>), Philippians (Phil.3<sup>12</sup>), and Colossians (Col.1<sup>28</sup>4<sup>12</sup>). The writing of these epistles was the signal for the abrogation of the gift of prophecy, as they completed the word of God (Col. 1<sup>25</sup>), for the cessation of the gift of languages, as it was a sign of earthly powers in the coming eon, and we are blessed among the celestials (Eph.1<sup>3</sup>), and for the abrogation of the gift of knowledge (directly revealed), as there was a final written revelation.

<sup>9</sup> These gifts belonged to the time of transition, when the full orb of truth was not revealed. When it was, there came the necessity of withdrawing much which did not accord with its final form.

<sup>11</sup> The time came when the apostle admonished and taught in order that he should present every man *mature* in Christ (Col.1<sup>28</sup>). Epaphras struggled in prayers that they should stand *mature* and complete in all the will of God (Col.4<sup>12</sup>). It is evident that maturity came with the last ministry of Paul, when he was a prisoner at Rome. Till then the saints, as a whole, were in a state corresponding to a man who has not yet attained his majority. But then, as was the case when a boy assumed the duties of manhood, there was a vast revolution. As a man discards the toys of his childhood, so they discarded the marks of minority. Chief among these were the gifts, especially prophecy and languages. Those who claim these now cannot avoid marking themselves as immature.

<sup>12</sup> At this time the present secret administration (Eph.3<sup>9</sup>) had not been publicly revealed. The destiny of the saints who had received Paul's evangel was clouded in mystery. Only a little was known. Their celestial allotment was still concealed. Israel's fate was still in the balance. It was not till their final rejection at the close of the book of Acts, that the secret was revealed that the ecclesia which is His body, to which Paul ministered, was not to have a place on earth subordinate to Israel, but was to be blessed with transcendent spiritual blessings among the celestials. Now that maturity *has* come, we no longer are in an enigma, but realize something of the unutterable grace which is ours in Christ Jesus.

<sup>13</sup> Faith, expectation, and love are the abiding trinity in this administration of God's grace. Neither faith nor expectation will remain in the glory. Love alone will abide His coming. Let us believe God. Let us glory in expectation. But, above all, let us charge our hearts to love Him and His with a fervency which His love alone can inspire. These graces will *not* abide in heaven, to which they are usually relegated. Hope will then be past, faith unnecessary. This is the time of "perfection" or maturity.

<sup>1</sup> Prophecy prepared them for further unfoldings and maturity. Languages tended to draw them back to the kingdom proclamation and its attendant signs.

<sup>10</sup> Though without any manuscript evidence, it may be that the original reading of "nothing is soundless" was "none of them is *senseless*". This seems to be demanded by the context, which insists on sense as well as sound. A single letter P (which is the equivalent of our R) would change *aphōnon*, soundless, to *aphrōnon*, senseless. As our Version is founded on *facts*, rather than the judgment of its editor, he could not make this alteration, however much it may appeal to him.

<sup>12</sup> The gifts were given for mutual edification, not for entertainment or vain display. The misuse of the gift of languages was a clear indication of the childish immaturity of the Corinthians, for they were eager to display the possession of the gift without any regard for the edification of others. A foreign language is a mere babel of sounds to those who do not understand it. And even if it should be interpreted, of what real gain is it to use such a circuitous method when the same things could be told just as well without the need of interpretation? Such was not the divine intention in giving this gift. On the day of Pentecost this gift was used in a useful and rational way, for it was a sign that Jehovah was speaking to His people. Moreover, this sign is not for believers, or even to reach unbelievers, for it is written "neither thus will they be hearkening to Me" (14<sup>21</sup>, Isa.28<sup>12</sup>). Surely it is far better to speak five instructive words in the vernacular than any number in an unknown language, even if it be the exhibition of a spiritual endowment. The same argument applies with even more force to the use of a foreign language, which no one understands, in a church ritual. It may be imposing and spectacular but it fails utterly in edifying the saints.

<sup>22</sup> Paul's high regard for the gift of prophecy is founded on the fact that *it* was the chief means used to bring the saints to that maturity which he earnestly desired they should attain. The gift of teaching, the exposition of the Scriptures, now takes the place of prophecy, for God has fully revealed His will in His word.



<sup>24</sup> Predicting, or foretelling, is not necessarily involved in the gift of prophecy. The prophet, in Scripture, is the mouthpiece or spokesman of God. He may speak of the past, the present, or the future. Prediction is incidental, not essential, to prophecy. Before the canon was complete it was needful for the saints to have some means of knowing the mind of God. The Scriptures fully meet that need now. What a decided contrast there would be between a meeting at which all declared God's mind in sober succession, so that all are helped, and one in which each seeks an opportunity to display a gift which is of no benefit to his fellow saints! Even unbelievers have discrimination enough to see how foolish it is to talk into the air, and can appreciate the solemn declaration of God's spokesmen.

<sup>27</sup> To curb their childish desire to talk in unknown languages the apostle lays down rules to govern the exercise of this gift. It was not to be exercised unless there was an interpreter, so that the message would not be lost on the meeting. Not more than two or three were to speak in unknown languages in succession, and their speaking was to be in installments, that is, they were to pause at frequent intervals to allow for interpretation. If no one could interpret, they were not to speak in the ecclesia.

<sup>28</sup> Prophecy, also, was to be exercised within bounds. It was not to be like the turbulent, unrestrained ranting of the oracles of the false gods to which they were accustomed, whose spirits were beyond their control, but peaceful, discriminating discourse, two or three in succession, yet ready to yield to another who may receive a revelation. The spirits of the prophets of the Greek gods were not subject to them. They worked themselves into a frenzy, foaming at the mouth. They were controlled by demon spirits rather than the Spirit of God.

<sup>34</sup> "Now if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant!" (14<sup>38</sup>) is the apostle's indignant protest to those who presume to oppose these words. And again "If anyone is presuming to be a prophet or spiritual, let him be recognizing that what I am writing to you is a precept of the Lord."

<sup>1</sup> There is a notable contrast between the methods with which the apostle deals with fundamental doctrinal error and moral evil. The wicked man (<sup>5</sup>) is delivered to Satan, but those who denied the resurrection are not put away. In these days the contrary course is pursued. Doctrinal differences, not nearly so vital as the denial of the resurrection, are made the ground for disfellowshipping godly saints, while moral evil is often condoned and overlooked. Differences in doctrine do not demand a severance of fellowship, or Paul would have so dealt with the Corinthians who denied the one doctrine which, because it involves all others, has the right to be called "fundamental".

<sup>3</sup> The evangel which Paul preached was concerned with *Christ*. Not, however, with His *life*, but with His *death, burial, and resurrection*. These are the fundamental facts of the evangel. Not His death only, for that would be no evangel at all, but His burial and His resurrection.

<sup>5</sup> The evidence for the resurrection of Christ is as conclusive as it is possible for any evidence to be. There were over five hundred witnesses and some of these were especially appointed and given ample opportunity to convince themselves. But the crowning proof was the descent of the glorified Christ to call Saul, upon the Damascus road. Saul was His enemy, and would have done much to prove that He was *not* roused. His testimony is of special weight. The resurrection is of the utmost consequence to Paul, for he did not know the Lord before His death, like the twelve apostles. Consequently he never would have known Him nor would he have seen Him unless He had been raised. In a very special sense Paul is the apostle of the ascended and glorified Christ. He never bases his teaching on the life of Jesus before His death and resurrection.

<sup>9</sup> Paul's persecution of the ecclesia was the necessary prelude to the transcendent grace which called and sustained him so that he became at once the least and the greatest of the apostles. It was necessary that he should be the most undeserving in order that he might become the pattern for God's present dealings in grace.

<sup>12</sup> The resurrection is the very fundamental of fundamentals. The death of Christ is essential to the evangel, yet it is not enough. A dead Christ cannot save. The resurrection is not only essential, but it involves His death, for only one who is dead can be roused from the dead. Without His resurrection we are still in our sins.

<sup>18</sup> The state of the dead, apart from resurrection, is not one of ecstatic bliss, but of destruction.

<sup>20</sup> Christ was not the first one to be roused from the dead. The prophets, and the Lord Himself, recalled some to life before He Himself suffered death. But He is the first One to be made alive beyond the power of death. All the others were roused to die again. He is the Firstfruit of those who are vivified, and die no more.

<sup>21</sup> Death's entrance and exit are both through a man. Adam and Christ are the channels, respectively, through which death and resurrection reach all mankind.

<sup>22</sup> The words "even as" mark a close parallel. The universality of death, through Adam, is beyond question. "Thus also" we are told, "in Christ, shall all be vivified." This will not occur simultaneously but in three distinct classes at widely separated intervals of time. Christ, the Firstfruit, is already alive at God's right hand. We who are Christ's will be made alive at His presence. This includes His coming to the air for the believers of this economy (1Thes.4<sup>16</sup>, 1Cor.15<sup>52</sup>, Phil.3<sup>21</sup>) and His coming to Israel before the thousand years. The rest, who are not included in "those who are Christ's," must wait until the consummation, when death, the last enemy, is abolished. This will not occur until the eons have run their course and Christ hands over the kingdom to the Father. At the great white throne judgment no one is vivified or made alive. Hence it is passed over. Authority and power are still in exercise in the new earth. The *throne* of the Lamb is there. The consummation must be later, for sovereignty is abolished before death, the last enemy. The consummation is at the close of the eonian times, at the close of the last eon which is presented to our view in the final vision of the Unveiling.

<sup>25</sup> The reign of Christ is so beneficent, it brings mankind to such a state of perfection, that all further need of the restraints of government vanishes. Rule implies insubordination, and is unnecessary where there is perfect subjection. Rule is a temporary expedient to cope with evil. When evil is banished rule also retires. The effects of evil for mankind are concentrated in death. When the universe has been purged of all other evil, then death itself becomes inoperative and yields up its victims. Not till then is it true that all are made alive in Christ.

<sup>27</sup> The universality of Christ's subjection of all under His feet is evident from the one exception—God Himself.

<sup>28</sup> God is All in Christ now. He will be All in His saints when we are made alive. He will be All in all when death is abolished, at the consummation. What a marvelous outcome of God's purpose! What a Christ we have, Who can accomplish such a complete reconciliation!

The Corinthians denied the resurrection of any: Paul insists on the vivification of all.

<sup>29</sup> The argument here is founded on the sixth chapter of Romans. Baptism is a symbol of death. Its benefits are confined to those who are united to Christ in His death. But even then it is absolutely valueless except as it also figures the resurrection. Apart from the resurrection of the dead, baptism, instead of introducing to a resurrection experience, will lead to carelessness and indifference.

<sup>35</sup> The human body is not composed of definite, unvarying substance, but is changing its components daily, so that, in a few years, it has completely renewed its elements. Yet it remains the same body. So it is in resurrection. We do not look for the identical elements to be roused in the resurrection, even though we will identify the body as our own.

<sup>37</sup> The miracle of resurrection is wrought each spring in the fields of the farmer. Death sustains our life now and it will be the entrance to eonian life, if we are not caught up to meet Him ere it comes.

<sup>40</sup> There is no direct statement here that our bodies will be changed to celestial bodies, in accord with the later revelation of Ephesians, but such an inference would be in point. Even among the celestials there will be degrees of glory. Our Lord Himself has a body which excelled the noonday in its effulgence. Ours will be transfigured to conform to His (Phil.3<sup>21</sup>).

<sup>42</sup> In death the body disintegrates and returns to the soil whence it came. This loathesome process is reversed in resurrection. Disease and weakness accompany its dissolution, but power and glory will be the portion of all who are Christ's when He comes.

<sup>44</sup> Our present bodies respond to the soul, or senses. They seek for physical comfort and satisfaction and pleasure. They do not respond to spiritual things. The soul is not a distinct entity. It is the effect of the combination of body and spirit. Adam was made of the soil. When the breath of life was breathed into him he became a living soul. He could feel, see, hear, smell. He became conscious. Such is the body which we have now. We are dominated by our senses. In the resurrection our bodies will respond to our spirit. Physical sensations will give place to spiritual perception.

<sup>47</sup> The soil is the upper, oxidized crust of the earth from which Adam was formed and from which mankind derives its sustenance. It is the soil which sustains the plants and animals which provide us with food. Below the soil is the sphere of sulfation, which destroys life. As men are constituted now, they cannot exist apart from the soil of the earth. If we should be raised with bodies such as we now possess, we could not partake of a celestial allotment, for we would die from the lack of such food as our bodies can assimilate.

<sup>50</sup> The *soul* (not the *life*) of the flesh is in the blood (Lev.17<sup>11</sup>). The Lord has no blood in His resurrection body (Lu.24<sup>39</sup>).

<sup>51</sup> This is a *secret*. It had not been told before. It lies in the one word *change*. It leads us one step nearer the celestial destiny revealed in the epistle to the Ephesians. Soilish as our bodies are, they need to be radically changed before they can endure

a life celestial. This change will come in an instant when the Lord descends from heaven with the trumpet of God (1Thes.4<sup>16</sup>). As the last note sounds we who are alive, who are mortal, as well as those who repose, who have gone to corruption, shall be changed. What a glorious prospect! Our bodies shall be like His—not as it was in His weakness before He was roused, not even as it was before His ascension, marvelous as that was, but as it was when Saul met Him and was blinded by the brightness of His presence. He will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to His body glorious (Phil.3<sup>21</sup>).

<sup>55</sup> What a victory that will be! Now death is operating in our bodies at all times, and eventually succeeds in dragging us down to the grave. Then we shall not only be restored to life, but enjoy incorruption and deathlessness, and a body so changed and glorified that it corresponds to the one which befits the Head of the universe. Yet the enjoyment and appreciation of the glory will depend on our previous humiliation.

<sup>55</sup> The Septuagint reads "O Unseen, where is your sting?" (Hos.13<sup>14</sup>), and some manuscripts follow this reading. As the tendency is to conform a quotation to its original, it is probable that *Death* was changed to *Unseen* by a copyist who knew the Septuagint reading but did not see that the apostle had enlarged the scope of the quotation to include the consummation, when there is no unseen (Un.20<sup>14</sup>) and only the second death remains. A quotation is often varied from its original reading to fit it for its new context.

<sup>1</sup> When Paul received the recognition of James, Cephas, and John, they asked him to remember the poor among the Circumcision (Gal.2<sup>10</sup>). At this time the nations were partaking of Israel's spiritual things (Rom.15<sup>27</sup>). It was not till later that they became joint partakers (Eph.3<sup>6</sup>). So they made such return as they could by collecting a contribution. Paul was delivering this money to the saints in Jerusalem when he was imprisoned (Ac.21<sup>18-22</sup>). Now we partake of our *own* spiritual things, for we have all spiritual blessings among the celestials, where Israel has none.

<sup>8</sup> Paul's delay in going to Corinth is fully explained in the second epistle. He wished to give them time for repentance. Besides, he was meeting with much success, for even his enemies acknowledged that "not only in Ephesus, but in almost the entire [province of] Asia this Paul influences a considerable throng . . .".

<sup>10</sup> Timothy had been sent to Macedonia (Ac.19<sup>22</sup>). He was young for such a mission (1 Tim.4<sup>12</sup>) and could not command the respect which age inspires.

<sup>12</sup> It is evident that Paul was not jealous of Apollos, though some in Corinth had made him the head of their faction. Neither was Apollos inclined to take advantage of their schism. He was a scholarly man (rather than eloquent) who had been taught by Paul's friends, Priscilla and Aquila, and had gone to Corinth after Paul had left, being especially successful in confuting the Jews, publicly exhibiting, through the Scriptures, that Jesus is the Christ (Ac.18<sup>24</sup>).

<sup>23</sup> *Maran atha* is usually interpreted as "the (or our) Lord cometh" in accord with the Syriac version. But it seems far fetched to find a foreign expression here, whether it be Chaldee or Syriac, when the Hebrew furnishes a simpler and more agreeable

solution. The Hebrew as in Malachi 3<sup>9</sup>, "Cursed are you!" was probably the common phrase in which the anathema or doom was pronounced. The change of *m* into *n* is of frequent occurrence when Hebrew is turned into Greek. The Syriac version may simply insert the Hebrew without translating, in which case it should not receive a Syriac signification. The Hebrew *ghahram* and the Greek *anathema* are used for one another in the Septuagint and Hebrew Scriptures. Both mean to *devote to destruction, to doom* (Lev.27<sup>21-29</sup>, Josh.7<sup>1-15</sup>, 1Sam.15<sup>1-20</sup>). In these passages it is rendered *destroy, devote, accursed*, etc. The same form of expression, a repetition in a familiar tongue, is found in the phrase "Abba, Father". (Mk.14<sup>36</sup> Ro.8<sup>15</sup> Ga.4<sup>6</sup>). Moreover, the coming of the Lord is never set before us as an act of judgment, but as the culmination of grace. That blessed expectation could never be used as an imprecation. It brings grace, not judgment.

<sup>23</sup> Notwithstanding all their failures and their many shortcomings, Paul invokes the grace of Christ and assures them of his own love, which he poured out on them in lavish measure, as we find in the next epistle. He was a living example of the love which does not lapse.

## II CORINTHIANS

SECOND Corinthians is an epistle for the heart. It engages us with the fond solicitude which stirs the affections of the apostle for his much loved Corinth. It was written because he wished to spare them and dreaded the severity which his presence might demand.

This loving epistle reveals an aspect of the evangel which is well-nigh lost. This is the *conciliation*. God is love. He will not rest satisfied in merely justifying us. He wishes to clasp us to His heart. To restore His creatures to righteousness may indeed erase the stain of sin, but offers no valid reason or excuse for sin's intrusion into the universe. But if the entrance of sin is to bear the precious fruit of reconciliation, if it is to bring us infinitely nearer to God than is possible without it, if it is the means of revealing God's love to us, then may we give thanks even for the sin which is the source of our sorrows. Sin made man not only a sinner, but an enemy of God. It brought in estrangement. The mediation of Christ not only saves and justifies, but removes every barrier for the free outflow of God's love. God now condescends to beseech the sinner to be conciliated to Him. What can be more gracious than this?

Such is the aspect of the truth in this epistle. More than anything else he has written, this reveals the personal experiences and inward emotions of Paul during one of the most fruitful periods of his ministry. Instead of the smiling, complacent, comfortable existence which is usually supposed to be the ideal of Christianity, we find him full of fears within, distracted with fightings without, restless, sick, and despondent. Yet all of this was in perfect accord with his fervent love for the saints and his vehement desire to lead them on into an appreciation of God's love. The consolation and comfort he received in his afflictions fitted him to console and comfort others. It reveals God in the light of His affections.

One short verse in the book of Acts (Ac.20<sup>2</sup>) hurries us over the whole period referred to in this epistle. This alone should suggest the total divergence of their respective themes. Acts deals with Christ after the flesh, as the Messiah of Israel, and always gives the other nations a place subordinate. At the juncture when this epistle was written Paul first made known the truth of the conciliation, that God, in Christ, is beseeching all men to be reconciled to Him. Physical relationship to Christ no longer counted with Paul after this.

<sup>1</sup> Timothy is associated with Paul in this introduction, as Sosthenes is in the former epistle, yet it is evident that Paul himself wrote both epistles, for he continually refers to himself in them, and usually specifies who is meant when he changes the usual "I" to "we".

Corinth was the chief city of Achaia, hence the whole province was interested in and influenced by its internal spiritual condition. The many specific references to the ecclesia in the city make it plain that it was for the saints in the province only in a secondary sense, much as we profit by it today.

<sup>3</sup> The opening words strike the key note of the epistle. God is introduced as the Father of pity and consolation. It engages us with that strong undercurrent of feeling which stirred the heart of the apostle to its very depths. Here we see the precious fruit of the gospel abounding in the apostle's dealing with his erring children. Paul's previous epistle evidently had its desired effect, for he would not think of consoling them in their sins and schisms and departures from the truth.

<sup>5</sup> Paul's afflictions were, in a very real sense, "the sufferings of Christ", for they came, not as the result of his misdeeds, but because he proclaimed Christ's evangel. Not long before he had been in danger of death at the hands of a mob in Ephesus. He was suffering from some physical ailment. He was in much suspense about the Corinthians and their reception of his previous epistle. When he finds that they, too, have suffered, though it be for their own wrong doing, he is swift to console them, and sees in his own afflictions the means used by God to prepare him for this ministry. All this should be an object lesson to us to show how sin and suffering is being used by God to bring our hearts into closer union with Himself and with one another. And affliction is the surest means of ridding us of confidence in ourselves and of placing our reliance in God. Suffering for Christ's sake is the highest honor which can be accorded to mortal man. Just as His sufferings are the basis of the glories that shall follow, so our sufferings for His sake are sure to yield an untold harvest of happiness and exultation when He appears.

<sup>9</sup> It seems probable that Paul was doubly in danger of death in Ephesus. The "rescript" of death may refer to a dangerous illness, while the death of "such proportions" seems best suited to the violence of the Ephesian mob. It is most likely that, had he attempted to speak to them during the excitement, nothing would have prevented the unruly multitude from tearing him to pieces in their frenzy. Now that he had come through these dangers he desired the Corinthians to join him in thanksgiving.

<sup>12</sup> The apostle seems to be meeting the opposition of his enemies here, who accused him of insincerity and dishonesty in dealing with the Corinthians. His reply is that his course may not appeal to fleshly wisdom, but it is in accord with grace—a quality of which they knew little.

<sup>13</sup> Perhaps some suspected him of writing privately, to individuals, what he did not dare to put in his public epistles. This he denies, and registers his assurance that ultimately they would recognize him as one in whom they might well boast in that day when the hidden motives of the heart will be made manifest.

<sup>15</sup> Paul acknowledges that he formerly intended to come to them first, on his way to Macedonia, as well as to return to them on his way to Judea. His enemies probably accused him of being vacillating, and of changing his plans for fear he would not be well received in Corinth. But Paul insists that his plans are always made subject to God's further leading. Men in the flesh may make their plans and strive to carry them through from headstrong pride, but not so the plans of God's servant. Later on he gives the true reason why he did not go direct to Corinth. Not fear for himself, but for them, postponed his visit to a later date.

<sup>20</sup> God's promises are not like those of His servants, but are always confirmed in Christ. He is not only able to carry out His will, but His promises are made with a full knowledge of all conditions such as might arise to change the course of one of His servants. They are fallible, He is infallible.

<sup>21</sup> The operation of God's Spirit is here seen under three distinct figures: the anointing, the seal, and the earnest. Prophets and priests and kings were anointed for their office. They were anointed with oil. We are anointed with the spirit, as Christ, the Anointed, was at His baptism. This qualifies us for service. The seal is the sign of possession. We belong to God. The earnest is that small instalment of the spirit which we have received, which is the pledge of its fullness in the day of deliverance.

<sup>23</sup> In view of the devious motives which have been suggested as the reason why he had avoided Corinth, Paul solemnly calls God to witness, when he discloses the real reason. He wished to give them time to repent. He did not wish to be under the necessity of dealing harshly with them again. He looked forward to the day when those whom he had made sorry would rejoice. He did not wish to force their faith, as might be necessary if he did not wait patiently until his former epistle had borne its full fruition. That time now seems to have come. The present epistle is the fruit of much forbearance.

<sup>5</sup> Paul's sorrow over the incestuous person, concerning which he wrote to them in his former epistle (1Co.5<sup>1</sup>), was much modified because it was not countenanced by the majority. He did not wish to burden them all with this serious sin. Now, indeed, that the majority have administered the needed rebuke, and it has had a salutary effect, he would have them restore him to their fellowship again. He had doubtless been "delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh", yet this was "that the spirit may be saved" (1Co.5<sup>5</sup>). Such is the invariable object of God's judgments. They may seem harsh and vindictive, but they eventuate in salvation. They may seem baneful at first but they are all dictated by the love that uses them to reveal itself. Like the returned prodigal, the Corinthian sinner became the special object of their love. From this it is evident that God is able to use Satan himself, as a destroyer, for the ultimate welfare and blessing of the saints. It proved so in Job's case. May He not be able to undo all his deeds in this manner?

<sup>12</sup> The grave and disquieting concern of the apostle for the Corinthians is most signally evident from his conduct at Troas. Once before he had been there, intending to preach the evangel, but the vision of the man of Macedonia drew him away. Now he finds himself not only in Troas but with a special opportunity for service. While he probably remained a considerable time and saw much to encourage further effort, his love and solicitude for the Corinthians draws him away again. He expected to meet Titus at Troas with news from Corinth. He was so concerned to know how they had received his epistle that he leaves the promising work in Troas and goes to Macedonia, probably meeting Titus at Philippi.

<sup>14</sup> The true servant of Christ is always triumphant. He need not be concerned whether his message be received or rejected, but rather let him be sure that he is preaching *Christ* and Him alone. His course then, as the apostle's, will be like the triumph of a Roman conqueror. Accompanied by his friends, and followed by captives laden with chains, while the whole procession is perfumed with the incense of many censers, the Roman triumph was but a rare occasion in the life of a general. It should be the continual course of the servant of Christ who so preaches His grace that its fragrance is found even on those who reject the message of life.

<sup>17</sup> Too many in these days are like those the apostle condemns. They make the word of God a matter of commerce and a means of gain. May He forgive them for such an infamous offense! Such grace as we have to dispense loses its flavor when coupled with avarice or cupidity.

<sup>1</sup> How the apostle's heart must have ached to think that his beloved Corinthians, who had been called into the grace of Christ through his ministry, should be so unmindful of his claims on their affections! How pathetic his appeal! "*You are our letter, engraved in our hearts.*" They certainly should not ask for his credentials, for they themselves were the very best that could be found. No doubt those who opposed him were of the Circumcision, for he brings in the contrast of the Mosaic law.

<sup>6</sup> The covenant of the letter is the law of Moses which was engraven in stone, to symbolize its unyielding sternness. There is no reference to the letter of Scripture. It is the law that kills, just as it is the spirit (through the letter of Scripture) that gives life. The sayings that Christ spoke are both spirit and life to all who believe them.

<sup>7</sup> The account of Moses' reception, after his forty-day session on Sinai, is found in Ex. 34<sup>28-35</sup>. It is evident that they saw Moses' face even though they could not look intently at it. Moses did not hide the glory from them. He did not put the covering on his face *till* he had done speaking with them, but *when* he had finished (Ex. 34<sup>33</sup>). Later he put it on again "*until* he went in to speak with Him". He hid the *fading* of the glory, which indicated the transient, fading character of the law. As Paul says (verse 13), it was done so that the sons of Israel should not observe the *consummation* of that which is vanishing. Now, instead of a covering on Moses' face, there is one on Jewish hearts, which hides from them the true character of the covenant of Sinai. It had a glory once, but it has long since been eclipsed in Christ. This they will not discover until they turn back to the Lord.

<sup>8</sup> A bright torch, which will illuminate the night, becomes black when held up to the noonday sun. So the law, a bright exhibition of the righteous character of God, turns to blackness before the transcendent effulgence of grace which is now revealed. It had a glory but lost it all by contrast to the glory excelling. Since, then, the law's glory is darkened by a greater glory, how much greater must be the glory of this dispensation of grace!

<sup>12</sup> Moses, finding that the glory of his face was not permanent, hid the fact by covering his face until he went into the Lord's presence again. Not so Paul. He had no need of any covering, for the dispensation of the spirit is not like the law. The law led from glory to gloom. Grace leads from glory to glory. One deals out condemnation and death. The other dispenses righteousness and life.

<sup>18</sup> The ancient mirror was a burnished metal surface which reflected the light as well as the image of the one who used it. Paul did not climb the steep of Sinai and bring back a transient reflection of the Lord's glory, as Moses did. He beheld Him continually, as we behold our faces in a mirror. The glory of the Lord irradiated him. It did not fade, but became brighter and brighter. Contemplation of the Lord led to likeness to Him. This is a beautiful epitome of Paul's ministries. He began with grace on the road to Damascus. He dispenses justification at Pisidian Antioch. He reveals the conciliation to the Corinthians. He teaches the truth transcendent from his Roman prison. Grace upon grace and glory upon glory! His successive ministries led onward to the transcendent glories contained in his Perfection Epistles.

<sup>4</sup> "The evangel of the glory of Christ!" Would that our evangelism reached to this altitude! And why are Christ's glories so lacking in the gospel efforts of today? Because the god of this eon not only blinds the minds of the unbelievers, but he centers the gospel on sin and self and sanitation—anything except Christ and His glories.

<sup>4</sup> Few subjects for meditation will be found so full of blessing as that of the Image of God. John presents Him to us as the Word of God, through Whom we *hear* Him; Paul shows us the One in Whom we can *see* God. God Himself cannot be seen, for He is invisible. Hence it is that He has given us an Image of Himself which we can discern. And just as we give the picture or statue of a person the same place in our minds and in our speech as the person himself, so Christ is seen in the Scriptures, addressed as God as if equal to God. Unlike the inflexible image of a lifeless photograph, He is instinct with the life of God, and changes to accord with the divine assumptions (Heb. 1<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>7</sup> The present pathway of God's saints and slaves is not calculated to glorify us, but God. And this is often best accomplished by contrast, for God will not give His glory to any of His creatures. We must be broken if we would be bearers of His blessing.



<sup>10</sup> The widespread fiction that the life of a Christian must be one of settled calm and contentment, prosperous and in every way advantageous in this life, is proven utterly fallacious by the experience of the apostle Paul. The carnal Corinthians may live and reign, but he is afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and cast down. As in Job's case, little was left him but his life. If we are faithful to God we will find but little in this life, and will look forward to resurrection life in Christ. Apart from resurrection we should be the most pitiable of all mankind. The reason that this conception of the believer's experience has been lost is the widespread apostasy and conformity to the world. Do you see a servant of Christ persecuted and despised? Do not judge him hastily. He may be manifesting the life of Jesus, Who was despised and rejected because the world did not know him.

<sup>17</sup> How shall we characterize *our* trials if Paul's were only momentary and light? At times he even despaired of life. Just before this he had been crying to God to remove the thorn in the flesh. But what is all this to him, in view of the transcendent revelations of the future of which he had become the depository and dispenser? We would speak of our *present* burdens and of the *lightness* of our load in the resurrection, but he reverses this. The glory of that day would be an unbearable burden to our present bodies. Our burdens are light indeed in view of that transcendent outcome.

<sup>18</sup> The usual translation, "temporal" for "temporary" throws a false light on the context. That which we are observing does not endure for the course of time but only for a brief season. The stony ground hearer (Mt.13<sup>21</sup>Mk. 4<sup>17</sup>) and the enjoyment of sin (Heb. 11<sup>25</sup>) are *temporary*, not temporal. These are the only passages in which this word occurs.

<sup>1</sup> Our present soulish body is here compared with the temporary tent of the Bedouins, but our spiritual bodies, which will be our eonian habitations, are compared to a house.

<sup>2</sup> Our present condition is aptly expressed in the two words, *groaning* and *longing*. We groan to be rid of

our temporary tabernacle. We long to enter our eonian habitation. We have, however, no desire for any intermediate condition. Death is always viewed as an unwelcome enemy, in Scripture. Resurrection, vivification, is the true expectation of the believer. Even the apostle, in his infirmity and distress, never chooses death, but always suggests a far better alternative, the coming of Christ, when the mortal shall be swallowed up by life.

<sup>6</sup> The article "the" in Greek, sometimes has almost the force of our "this". "*The* body" is not simply a body, but a particular body, that is, this body in which we are at home now. We have two homes. The tabernacle in which we now live and the eonian house in the resurrection; the soulish body and the spiritual body. We may be away from one home yet present in the other. Now we are away from home, from the Lord. Yet we would much prefer to be away from this home and be at home in our spiritual body, with the Lord. We have no third home, and if we had, the apostle has just made it clear that the naked, unsheltered condition is not at all to be desired. He could hardly reverse that conviction without some further explanation.

<sup>10</sup> The dais, or raised platform from which games were judged and awards given, must not be confused with a judicial bench. The quality of our acts may determine the award to which we are entitled, but the question of condemnation is entirely foreign to such a tribunal. We are absolutely absolved from all condemnation, but we are eligible to an award for meritorious service. These awards will be distributed at the dais of Christ, according to our acts in "the" body, that is, our present soulish bodies.

<sup>14</sup> The apostle looks upon the world as one vast charnel house. Since Christ died for the sake of all, then all died. He sees the end of all physical privilege and pretension in this great fact. This is the basis of the new departure in his ministry at this time.

<sup>16</sup> Paul had been proclaiming the kingdom, with Christ and the nation which is related to Him by physical ties at its head. Entrance into that kingdom was by a birth from above. But now the figure of birth is not radical enough to denote the great change. Just as, after the day of the Lord, heaven and earth will be re-created, so is the spiritual change which took place at this juncture. There is a new creation. Paul never connects the new birth with his teaching to the nations. It suffices to figure the change necessary for the sons of Israel and their proselytes, fitting them for the earthly millennial sphere. For us, far more is needed. Like Adam, we are not a mere renewal in kind, but an entirely new creation.

<sup>18</sup> "All is of God!" This is the key to real evangelism. Here we have, in brief, the heart of the true evangel for the world in this administration of grace. The key note is *conciliation*. Not the sinner conciliating God by penance or prayers, but God conciliating the sinner. The sinner may be most offensive and insulting, but God does not reckon these offenses against him. Let this be clear. God is not charging men with their sins, for Christ died for sins. He is not pressing their offenses, for He is bent on conciliation. The evangel is not concerned with the sinner at all but with God's attitude toward him and with the sufferings of Christ. He has placed in us, not the message of judgment, but the word of conciliation.

<sup>20</sup> God insists on being at peace with the world, no matter how they treated His Son, or Paul, or any of His ambassadors. He will withdraw us, His ambassadors, before He declares war, in the coming day of His indignation. What a marvelous token of His grace and love that *God* (not the sinner) does the beseeching now! Nothing can be so foreign to this evangel as a sinner praying to God, for it closes his ears to God's entreaties. We are ambassadors for the high court of heaven, proclaiming peace and conciliation. When the sinner receives the conciliation there is mutual reconciliation between him and God. Sinner, God is beseeching you, through us, "Be conciliated to God!" Your sins are no hindrance, for He has

made Christ a Sin Offering for our sakes that we may become God's righteousness in Him. There is nothing for you to do but to accept His proffered love. Simply thank and adore Him for His grace.

<sup>8</sup> The true servant of God may well take heart from this list. Practically all the present day ministerial qualifications for service are absent. We know that Paul had no presence. His personal appearance did not commend him. His speech was counted contemptible. These were faults keenly felt by the carnal Corinthians, just as they are today. But he insists that he has given no one cause to stumble in anything. Paul deemed eloquence and physical appearance of no vital moment. Love, knowledge, toil, endurance, these ought to characterize the Lord's servant today even if he should not be called upon to bear affliction and distresses such as came to Paul. It is a vast comfort to the editor of this version to find himself able to enter fully into the apostle's experience in many particulars. His efforts have met with defamation and renown, he has been accused of deceiving yet is assured of his integrity, he is unknown yet recognized, disciplined yet not put to death, sorrowful yet ever rejoicing, poor yet enriching many.

<sup>14</sup> The church has fallen so low and has compromised so thoroughly with the world that the sharp distinction between saint and sinner has been almost obliterated. And with this the separation between believer and unbeliever is rarely acknowledged. Were we, who are Christ's, living up to our privileges, we would not even consider any alliance with unbelievers. In business we should have a standard of righteousness unknown to them. No partnership is possible between righteousness and lawlessness. The social organizations of the world are darkness to one who is light in the Lord. There can be no agreement between the religions of the world and Christ. The true believer cannot share in that which appeals to the unbeliever.

<sup>16</sup> A due sense of the solemn fact that God is making His home in us is the best preventive from contamination with the pollutions of the world.

<sup>16</sup> Lev. 26<sup>11-12</sup>, LXX, with variations.

<sup>17</sup> Isa. 52<sup>11</sup>, LXX, with alterations.

Paul is not misquoting from memory, as is usually supposed. He makes inspired alterations to suit the occasion.

<sup>2</sup> What a tender yet cutting rebuke to the Corinthians! The idea that Paul had injured any of them! They owed all their blessings in Christ to him. They, indeed, had injured him by their ungrateful conduct. Whom, indeed, had *he* corrupted? He had led them out of the corruption of heathendom into the holiness which is in Christ. Had he overreached any of them? He did not even charge them with his bare subsistence, when he might have claimed all they had. They owed their very selves to him. But their ungratefulness did not alienate his affections from them. No doubt, at his coming into Macedonia, there would be much to engage his attention, much in Philippi to encourage and comfort him in his distress, yet nothing set his heart at rest until he had tidings from Corinth. This is but another example of the function of evil. Had the Corinthians been exemplary in their conduct, this marvelous interchange and expression of affection would never have found occasion. Men cannot bring good out of evil: that is God's prerogative. But God can, and does, control all the evil in the universe, so that its ultimate result will be blessing far beyond what could have been had evil never entered and marred His perfect creation. God is able to cope with evil. It is not stronger than He is.

<sup>6</sup> At Titus' arrival in Macedonia he conveys to Paul the good news that the Corinthians as a whole have been greatly affected by his former epistle and have been diligent to right the wrongs which he had pointed out. At times the apostle seems to have regretted writing the epistle, for he did not wish to cause them sorrow. But now that the sorrow produced has had such a beneficial effect, he rejoices that it was not superficial, or despairing, but caused them to change their mind, and act accordingly. Above all it proved that the gross sins into which some of them had fallen were not widespread. It did not have the countenance of the ecclesia, for they

resented it, and defended themselves. They made it clear that, as an ecclesia, they were pure in this matter. The majority laid aside their party affiliations and united to purge the ecclesia of its defilement.

<sup>12</sup> It would seem that the opposition to Paul in Corinth was not deep-seated, unless we except some of the Jewish leaders. At heart they were true to him though their conduct seemed to belie it. So Paul brings home to them for more than one reason the gross sin which was committed among them. Indeed, he might have made it an individual matter, and could have written to the offender personally. But he chose rather to involve the ecclesia that they might realize the true heart allegiance which they gave him, notwithstanding their schisms and divisions. Great calamities and persecutions of the saints have much the same effect still. Petty differences and party spirit disappear when some common danger recalls the saints to their allegiance to Christ.

<sup>13</sup> Titus seems to have been much concerned about the Corinthians, lest they should prove refractory, and his visit to them lead to dissension and disobedience. Paul was the more concerned to know of his reception on this account, and because he had sought to soothe his fears and had boasted of the outcome of his endeavors. Titus must have been much pleased to find his fears unfounded, but not nearly so much as Paul, who would have been disgraced for boasting without cause, and for sending Titus to them in spite of his apprehensions.

<sup>1</sup> Macedonia, and especially its chief cities, Philippi and Thessalonica, were models in many ways. The epistles addressed to them have much praise and hardly any censure. If Paul could boast to others about Corinth, he surely had a right to boast about Macedonia. They seem to have been very poor and in the midst of trying circumstances, so that Paul did not expect them to take any part in the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. But they beg to have a share in it, and give beyond their ability, first, indeed, giving themselves to the Lord.

<sup>7</sup> Is it not remarkable that Macedonia, poverty stricken, in the midst of extreme affliction, deterred from contributing by Paul, entreats for the privilege as a favor, while Corinth, undoubtedly far richer and more able to contribute, needs their example and all the urging and spurring which the apostle can bring to bear in order that they should not disgrace him by a meager contribution?

<sup>9</sup> Paul begins his pleading by giving the true motive which should actuate us in our gifts to God's work and to His poor saints. Christ was rich once beyond all our conceptions of wealth. The whole universe was created for Him (Col. 1<sup>16</sup>). He subsisted in the form of God (Phil. 2<sup>6</sup>). He had no peer on earth or in the heavens. All this He laid aside to enrich us. He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2<sup>7-8</sup>). What poverty can equal this? The highest in heaven becomes the outcast of earth. Who was ever impoverished as He was? He gave up all He had and all He was to enrich us. Now we are rich. But few of God's saints are rich in this world's goods, yet all are blessed with untold spiritual wealth. Such is the example He has set before us. If such was His disposition, it should be ours as well.

<sup>10</sup> It is noteworthy that the apostle never commands them to give. He never forces them to be generous. It is no injunction. He gives his opinion. The tithe, which was regularly taken in Israel for the support of the Levites, is never applied to the nations, for it is a part of the law, and its spirit is entirely foreign to the spontaneous, hearty response which alone gives value to all donations.

<sup>13</sup> It is evident that the Corinthians were blessed with more than sufficient for their wants or they could not have given of their superabundance.

<sup>18</sup> It is probable that Titus' companion later returned with Paul when he conveyed the contribution to Jerusalem, and was one of the company which went with him into Asia (Ac. 20<sup>4</sup>). These were Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. Timothy would have been mentioned by name. Luke also was with them. Trophimus, we know, went as far as Jerusalem. It would be especially fitting that he should be among the bearers of this offering to the saints at Jerusalem and that they should thus requite him for his kindness, for Paul's long imprisonment began as a result of Trophimus' presence in Jerusalem. The Jews thought that Paul had taken him into the sacred precincts of the temple.

<sup>20</sup> It was necessary that one in whom they had implicit confidence should have a hand in the conveyance of the collection to Jerusalem, lest Paul should leave open any possibility for false suspicions.

<sup>22</sup> This brother was probably another of those who accompanied Paul on his return to Asia, possibly Tychicus.

<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note the usage of the word *apostles* in this connection. The Authorized Version hides it by translating "messengers". The American Revision repeats this, but puts "apostles" at the foot of the page. Others render it "ambassadors". But this occurrence is by far the best example by which to define the true meaning of "apostle." Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus and Trophimus are not ordinarily rated as apostles. While they were not apostles of the Lord, they certainly were apostles of the ecclesias. They had been elected and commissioned by the ecclesias to represent them in this matter. This shows that an apostle is an official representative, bearing a commission.

<sup>4</sup> The Macedonians had hurried their collection. The Corinthians had been preparing for it long before them. How would it appear if they should not be ready?

<sup>5</sup> God has no need. Gifts acceptable to Him must spring from a pure motive. It is better not to give at all than to give with a heavy heart or from an unworthy motive. Extortion, whether by appeals to pride, competition, tithing, or anything except the voluntary, spontaneous response to His grace, is not in keeping with His attitude toward us now.

<sup>6</sup> While giving should never be mercenary, in hope of some return, it is doubtless most profitable in every way. It brings immediate happiness and satisfaction and it bears a harvest in the future. The farmer who stints his seed will reap a spare crop. Many of us, in that day, will wish that we had been more bountiful in our sowing for, no doubt, the harvest will be a hundred fold.

<sup>7</sup> *Hilarious* is the English adaptation of the Greek word we have rendered "gleeful". One may give with cheerful resignation, but more than this is desired by the Lord. When we do it with irrepressible joy, then we come into closest communion with the God Who gave His Son and with Him gives us all.

<sup>12</sup> Paul had promised James, Cephas and John, that, in carrying out his distinctive ministry, he would not fail to remember the poor saints among the Circumcision (Gal.2:10). They may have had no higher thought than to relieve their distressed brethren. Paul was impelled by a worthier motive. Jews of the Circumcision were continually harassing him and threatened to create a bitter antagonism between the Jews and the ecclesias he had founded. They were already at work in Corinth and Galatia. If he could carry to Jerusalem some signal proof of the good will of these foreign believers he might repair the widening breach, and bring glory to God through the mutual interest and the thankfulness it would create. But they responded by putting him in chains. When the apostle came to bring the alms to Jerusalem, instead of giving him an ovation and gladly sharing their spiritual wealth with the nations, the mere suggestion that Paul had brought one of the aliens into the temple precincts nearly cost him his life.

<sup>1</sup> Paul now turns his attention to the minority in Corinth, who were still opposed to him. They may be that party which said, "I am of Christ" (1 Co.1:12) and seem to have been led by an emissary of the Judaizers. These men were proud and imperious, quite unlike the Christ in Whom they boasted, hence Paul appeals to the meekness and lenience of Christ. They walked according to the flesh and were continually opposing him on that ground. They misinterpreted his gentleness, and called it cowardice, they said he was brave enough at a distance, but afraid to put his threats into execution when present. Paul, in reply, hopes he may not be called upon to exercise the authority he possesses in a destructive way, but makes it plain that he has the spiritual power to wage a campaign if necessary. By a bold figure he likens his spiritual warfare to the pulling down of the forts of the enemy, and leading all opposition into captivity. The most powerful weapons are not material but spiritual. Neither are place and prestige as potent as truth. Paul alone was more than a match for the judaizing legates sent out from Jerusalem. False brethren such as these were his most virulent enemies.

<sup>7</sup> The unspiritual, fleshly minded man looks only on the surface. But nowhere are appearances so deceiving as in things spiritual. Our Lord Himself had none of the superficial marks of greatness. Paul seems to have been specially deficient in those qualities which were demanded from those who aspired to leadership in the world. His public speaking seems to have been the special point on which his enemies attacked him. Greek orators were probably the most accomplished the world has ever seen. By comparison Paul's presence was weak and his delivery contemptible. But what has become of all those masters of forensic art? They are dead and their efforts have died with them. The few that remain are models of beauty but are devoid of all spiritual power. Paul's words transformed his hearers, not by his mode of delivery, but by their truth and potency.

<sup>11</sup> Even forbearance and gentleness have their limits. The apostle makes it clear that, when he came to them again he would act quite as severely as he wrote in dealing with those who still opposed him. He does not wish to be judged by their standard, for it is of no use at all to measure men by men. Anyone can be great in a community of dwarfs. If the standard is false, so is the greatness.

<sup>12</sup> These opponents of his were overstretching themselves. They never came as far as Corinth in proclaiming the evangel, but after Paul had toiled, then they came along and boasted as if they, not he, had outstripped others in bringing it to them. Paul was planning to carry the evangel beyond them into regions where it had never been proclaimed. Were they intending to outstrip him in reaching out to virgin fields, that they might have a real cause for boasting? It is evident that it suited them better to boast in what was already accomplished by another, rather than endure the toil and privation of a missionary journey with all its difficulties and dangers.

Paul had a right to boast, if anyone had. He ought to have been so high in their esteem that no one could displace him in their regard, least of all those who had no real claim on them and who chose to defame the one who had toiled and suffered for them in their very midst.

<sup>1</sup> Paul did not wish the Corinthians to divide their allegiance among a number of men, nor indeed, to yield it to anyone but Christ. When a virgin is engaged, she is no longer free to follow other men, but should keep herself for her affianced. So with us. Let us not follow men, but be single toward Christ. The point in this figure is confined to the singleness and purity of the espoused virgin. It must not be overstretched into an allusion to the marriage state. The faithful in Israel are the bride of the Lambkin.

Israel was Jehovah's wife, but was divorced for her unfaithfulness. John the Baptist introduced the bride to the Bridegroom. His disciples left him for his Lord. The new Jerusalem will be on earth, the home of the twelve tribes of Israel. Ours is a heavenly allotment.

## II Corinthians 10:11-11:19

<sup>4</sup> The newcomers in Corinth did not have anything to proclaim more than Paul had already made known to them. Paul's speech may have been plain, but his knowledge was not deficient by any means. In this, more than in anything else, he was far beyond any other apostle. He knew all that the Circumcision had to proclaim. They could tell him nothing that he did not fully apprehend already. They, on the other hand, had to learn of his commission and the truth he taught, from him. Peter, the greatest of them, found some things in his epistles hard to understand (2 Pet. 3<sup>16</sup>). We may well go further than his own words, and acknowledge that he towers far above all the rest, especially in those later revelations which, at the time this epistle was penned, had not yet been made known.

<sup>7</sup> The only charge they could sustain against him was that he had proclaimed the evangel to them without receiving anything from them, not even enough to pay for his scanty wants. Poor Macedonia helped to supply his necessities in rich Corinth. Here is an excellent example for our modern evangelism. Where are the evangelists today who can say, I have preached the evangel gratuitously? Did these opponents of Paul in Corinth follow in his footsteps in this regard? Their mercenary motives would doubtless lead them in quite an opposite extreme.

<sup>13</sup> Satan changes his tactics to conform to God's administrations. At times he deceives, and again he destroys. Peter speaks of him as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5<sup>8</sup>). Such will be his course in the judgment era following the present administration of grace, when the epistles of Peter will have their application. Now Satan is transfigured into an angel of light. He is not hideous, but beautiful. His servants stand for righteousness and pose as apostles of Christ. His work is not found in the sinks of iniquity, but in the efforts to educate and reform mankind apart from the blood of Christ. He deceives by assuming the very role which he is popularly supposed to oppose.

<sup>20</sup> Paul's patient and forbearing behavior among them was in striking contrast to the course of his detractors. They treated the Corinthians like slaves, while Paul served them like a slave. They devoured their substance. Paul provided for himself by his own labor or the gifts of other ecclesias. They took what they could obtain. Paul refused to take anything from them. They set themselves high above the Corinthians. Paul humbled himself among them. They even treated them to personal indignities. Paul confesses ironically that he was too weak to intimidate them in this fashion. And yet they not only tolerated but actually relished such treatment!

<sup>22</sup> "Hebrews" denotes not merely Israelites, but that party in the nation which was zealous for the law and the traditions, in contrast to the Hellenists, who were tainted with Greek culture. (See Ac.6<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>22</sup> Paul now, in his assumed imprudence, compares himself with them. As to physical descent he can match them on every point. But when it comes to his service, he stands unparalleled and unapproachable. Here was a man by no means strong, often suffering from some form of physical infirmity, leading a life of incessant peril, enduring and daring all for the sake of the evangel. The record in Acts seems full of his sufferings, but it is evident that the account in Acts is by no means complete. There is no record of the five Jewish scourings. Only one of the Roman beatings, the one at Philippi, is elsewhere mentioned. The stoning was at Lystra (Ac.14<sup>19</sup>). Not one of the shipwrecks is found in the account in Acts, for the one there recorded was long after this.

<sup>26</sup> Travel was attended with much hazard in Paul's time, especially as he probably went unattended and unarmed. But more dangerous than the robbers who infested the highways was the constant plotting of the Jews to kill him, and the opposition on all sides to his evangel, which often clashed with the prejudice and material interests of the nations.

<sup>32</sup> When Paul returned from Arabia to Damascus and preached boldly in the name of Jesus, he confounded the Jews who lived at Damascus, proving that he was proclaiming the Messiah. Here was something for him to boast about! But no. He boasts only in his weakness. He had no strength to withstand the Jews who sought to kill him. They had the whole garrison of the city on the alert to arrest him. So he boasts in his humiliating escape, being lowered through the wall, probably at some overhanging window, in a wicker basket!

<sup>1</sup> Now, however, Paul comes to that which is, doubtless, his greatest ground for glorying. Fourteen years before finds him on his first missionary journey after his severance at Antioch. At Lystra he is stoned and left for dead (Ac.14<sup>20</sup>). It is more than likely that this, the time when his battered body was supposed to be finished with this life, is when he is transported in spirit to the third heaven. There are three heavens in Scripture. The first was of old (2Pet.3<sup>6</sup>) and perished, but was followed by "the heavens which are now" (2Pet.3<sup>7</sup>). But these, too, are transient. The third heaven is viewed by the apostle John in the Unveiling (Un.21<sup>1</sup>). John, however, does not enter the new heaven, but confines himself to a description of the new earth. Paul entered the third heaven and there saw (what he afterward revealed in his Perfection Epistles) the universal supremacy of Christ and the supernal dignity and bliss conferred on the ecclesia which is Christ's body. He also enters the new earth and its park, which John describes (Un.22<sup>2</sup>). All of this he had seen, but he was not allowed to disclose it until the time was ripe. This came when Israel's apostasy was full blown, as recorded at the close of the book of Acts. Till then he does not even claim to be the man who had seen and heard such transcendent revelations.

<sup>7</sup> Who would not be elated beyond

measure at such revelations as had been confided to him? But Paul had good reason to refrain from boasting. A painful physical infirmity was given him to keep him humble. A *thorn* in the flesh is hardly adequate, a *splinter* is nearer, but still too weak an expression, for Paul would not entreat thrice for the removal of some minor distress. But it was not removed. Instead, he received grace and the assurance that God's power finds infirmity its fittest tool. He needs none of man's strength. It hinders the manifestation of His power. O, that we could learn this lesson! We repine and are dejected when infirmity and persecution and necessity press upon us, when we should rejoice. Paul delighted in them, not for their own sake, but that the power of Christ may be manifested through them. May His grace be our sole sufficiency!

<sup>14</sup> What a fund of fatherly affection is revealed in his protest, "I am not seeking *yours* but *you!*" And it must have humbled them to think of their own lack of care and consideration. They deserved nothing further at his hands. But instead of rebuking them and asserting his rights as an apostle, he proposes to lavish still more affection on them. And he will do this even if it should still further dampen their affection for him. Is not this a reflection of God's dealings with us in grace? We accept His bounty with all too feeble a response, yet He is not offended, but pours it out in more lavish style.

<sup>15</sup> Paul anticipates a subtle insinuation which his enemies might suggest, even if he had cleared himself of their charges. He had sent Titus and others to them. Perhaps he had used them as tools to overreach them, so as to shield himself from blame. But it seems that Titus and those whom he had dispatched to them all were worthy delegates of the apostle, for they followed the same course he had done.

<sup>16</sup> Thus he closes his appeal. His own defense was necessary for their edification.

<sup>21</sup> It was probably some months before Paul fulfilled his intention of visiting them again in person. During the interval he went over Macedonia, and possibly as far as Illyricum, giving them much exhortation. But all this time his heart was in Corinth. He had written to them. He had sent messengers to them. They had given him much sorrow not unmixed with joy. He had exhorted and he had threatened. He had made it plain that he would not spare when he came again in person. Can we imagine his feelings as he approached the city? How he shrank from being severe! Yet he must be severe, should it be necessary. Doubtless the majority would receive him with hearts full of joy and affection. But what of the rebellious minority? It was with such powerful emotions that he followed this epistle some months later.

It would seem from the uncanonical epistle of Clement, that his efforts for the Corinthian ecclesia were not in vain, but bore precious fruit. According to Acts (Ac.20<sup>2</sup>), he stayed in Greece three months, and, as usual, had to leave because the Jews lay in wait for him.

<sup>4</sup> The power of Christ had been manifested amongst the Corinthians, yet Paul reminds them that even He was once crucified in utter weakness. Pilate and Herod and the chief priests all seemed stronger than He. But out of that very weakness came the power that saved them and that triumphed over His adversaries and that raised Him to the highest place in all the universe. So, says Paul, will it be with my weakness. The same power that raised Christ from the dead will impart strength to my weakness, and triumph over my adversaries.

<sup>7</sup> Paul had no desire, however, to exercise the power he possessed. This might serve to prove his qualification for the office of an apostle, but it would be ill for them. Rather would he appear as disqualified and spare them such a proof as this. No matter what he did, however, it would be for the sake of the truth, for he had no power against the truth.



<sup>10</sup> Edification should ever be the aim of God's servant in dealing with His erring saints. All other means should be exhausted before sharpness and severity should be used. They are a last resort, and seldom need be called into play if the example of Paul were followed, as it is given us in this epistle.

<sup>11</sup> The epistle closes with characteristic tokens of affection. Throughout

the appeal is to the feelings. This is especially true of the evangel and its proclamation. God on His part *beseeches* the sinner to be *conciliated*. The saint is *reconciled*. He is not merely righteous, but at perfect peace with God. This is the fruit of the evangel which is so delicious to God's heart and to ours. Let us not fail to appreciate the marvelous affection of His message!

# GALATIANS

PAUL's Galatian epistle is the divine commentary on the doctrine of justification as set forth in the first four chapters of his epistle to the Romans.

Some time after Paul had been severed (Ac.13<sup>2</sup>) and had gone among the nations preaching justification by faith (Ac.13<sup>39</sup>) and had returned to Antioch, Judaizing teachers came down from Jerusalem teaching that "If you should not be circumcised after the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." (Ac.15<sup>1</sup>). The matter was taken up in the council of the apostles at Jerusalem, and Paul and Barnabas were sent with the decrees which made it manifest that circumcision was not necessary for the nations who believed.

After they had delivered these decrees Paul passed through the Galatian province (Ac.16<sup>6</sup>) and founded the ecclesias to which this epistle is addressed. Some years later he visited the Galatian province again, establishing the disciples (Ac.18<sup>23</sup>).

We never hear again that the Judaizers taught that circumcision was essential to salvation. The decrees of the twelve effectually forbade this. Now, however, they try to graft the law on to the evangel and make circumcision and the keeping of the law a further privilege and a means of perfection for the believers among the nations. It is against this subtler form of error that this epistle is directed. Paul shows that spirit and flesh, grace and works, faith and law, cannot be reconciled.

Paul is called upon to present a defense of his evangel. This is divided into two distinct lines of thought. First he discusses its *origin* and then its *essence*. He proves that its origin was quite independent of Peter and the twelve. He demonstrates that its essence is incompatible with the keeping of the law. Then he further shows that its *fruits* cannot be produced in legal bonds.

The origin of the evangel involves Paul's personal history after his call, and his points of contact with the twelve, especially Peter. He carefully

## THE LITERARY FRAMEWORK OF GALATIANS

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rehearses the details of his three meetings with Peter, showing that he had no opportunity to receive his evangel from him, but that, in each case, he communicated his evangel to Peter and the others.

The doctrinal defense discusses the difference between the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants, showing the priority of the Abrahamic promise and the subordinate and temporary function of the law. It acted as an escort, during the minority of the chosen nation, to lead them to Christ. It was a guardian, suitable only for those under age. It must not continue. If faith came four hundred years before its advent, it is in no need of law. When law utterly fails then faith remains. Hence the utter folly of the Galatian ecclesias, to whom the law was never given by God, in voluntarily subjecting themselves to its demands when they already had far more than it could ever give them. Before law came, and after it fails, the just lived by faith. It never could give either righteousness or life. The Galatians had both, by faith in Christ.

In practice the law is powerless through the flesh. But grace, working through faith, can overfill the law's demands by ignoring its commands and curses.

<sup>1</sup> Paul loses no time in coming directly to the heart of the trouble at Galatia. If he received his commission from the twelve apostles at Jerusalem or through Peter, he could have no distinct evangel for the nations. But he insists that he, as well as they, received his evangel directly from the risen Lord. He was given it without the intervention of Peter, he proclaimed it on a par with Peter, he maintained it in spite of the opposition of Peter.

<sup>6</sup> Unlike Paul's other epistles, there is no note of thanksgiving or blessing in this opening strain. Corinth, with all its moral and doctrinal evil, did not fail to call this forth. But here, the defection is too serious. Instead, he marvels at the Galatians and hurls his anathema at those who are disturbing them.

The two evangels were different in kind and could not be classed together. They had been called in the grace of Christ. They were being transferred to the bondage of law.

<sup>8</sup> The intense zeal of the apostle for the evangel he had proclaimed comes out in the fact that he calls down this anathema on *himself*, in case he should be guilty of distorting the message he is proclaiming. It is worthy of note that he is not objecting to the apostles of the Circumcision preaching a distinct evangel to *them*. That was what they had been commissioned for. But they had agreed that they would not go to the nations. Hence he repeats the words to *you* thrice.

<sup>9</sup> The apostle now includes the Judaizing teachers in the second anathema.

<sup>11</sup> Those who were disturbing the Galatians had no message except what they had received from the twelve apostles. But Paul is unwearied in his insistence that he received nothing from them. His evangel was a fresh revelation made known to him by the Lord Himself. If Paul merely proclaimed what the twelve taught, why did he not receive it through them? What need for the Lord to descend and call him on the Damascus road? Why should he be severed from the rest at Antioch? Why did the *believing* Jews in Jerusalem oppose his ministry among the nations?

<sup>14</sup> While his opposers know nothing of the grace of Paul's evangel, he was better acquainted with Judaism than they were. And not only so, but he had exceeded them in the energy and zeal with which he had defended it.

<sup>16</sup> The first revelation which came to Saul of Tarsus prepared the way for those which were to follow. He was called *outside the land*. Hence he found his sphere of service among the nations. He was not seeking God, but was His most implacable human enemy. He is saved by a display of *grace* which had hitherto been unknown. Hence his evangel is the exponent of the unadulterated grace of God. His first meeting with Christ was after His ascension and glorification. Hence he is concerned, not with His earthly life, but with His heavenly position. He recognizes Him as the Son of God, and, as such, he immediately proclaims Him (Ac.9:1-20).

<sup>17</sup> The natural course for one in Saul's case would be to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and submit to them what he had received from the Lord and seek their patronage and fellowship in its proclamation, or, indeed, ask their opinion and permission to promulgate it. But what did he do? He went into the desert where no human influence was at work. He waited three years before telling Peter about it, and then he does not even form the acquaintance of the twelve or of the ecclesia. They actually did not know him personally, though they were glorifying God for the great change in him. All of this shows conclusively that Paul did not, at that time, derive his doctrine from Peter or the twelve.

<sup>1</sup> Paul's next visit to Jerusalem was pursuant to a revelation. The time had come to obtain official recognition of his apostleship and evangel. The occasion was furnished by those of the Circumcision themselves. They insisted that it was needful to circumcise those among the nations who had believed, and to teach them to observe the law of Moses. Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to put this question before the apostles and obtained from them the assurance that circumcision and law keeping were not necessary for salvation.

<sup>2</sup> Paul's method in Jerusalem seems to have taken into account the low spiritual state and prejudices of the Jewish believers. It would have been practically impossible to impress the whole company with the character and divinity of his commission to the nations, so he singles out the leading brethren and seeks to show them how God has committed a distinct work to him. Peter and James seem to have grasped the essential points which he wished to impress upon them. Peter had had some preparation for this change, through the vision given him in connection with the proselyte Cornelius (Ac.15<sup>7-11</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> Titus was taken along as a test case. If circumcision was essential, then he must submit to it. If it was not essential, then he was to be a living proof that it was not necessary.

<sup>7</sup> At the private meeting with those of repute Paul obtained the fullest recognition of his apostleship. James, Cephas and John, who were recognized as the chiefs, acknowledge his commission. This puts Paul on a par with Peter, the chief of the Circumcision apostles. There was a mutual understanding arrived at among them that they would confine themselves to the Circumcision, while Paul and Barnabas went to the nations. This agreement should have kept the judaizing disturbers of the Galatian believers from interfering with them. Paul kept his part of the compact, especially that which concerned the collection for the poor saints in Judea. He brought gifts from the nations. In return they harassed those to whom he had been sent and would have killed him.

<sup>11</sup> Paul's third meeting with Peter is most conclusive. At his first meeting he tells Peter of his commission. At his second he gets Peter's recognition. At his third he towers far above him and withstands him to the face. Peter had been taught not to call anyone common or unclean who had the witness of the holy Spirit, so that, when he first came to Antioch, he ate with the uncircumcised. But he was *afraid* of the Circumcisionists, and changed his attitude when they came down from Jerusalem. What prestige these men had, who could intimidate the very chief of the apostles!

<sup>14</sup> Peter's double dealing did not deceive Paul, though he seems to have dragged all the rest of the Jews in Antioch with him, not even excepting Barnabas. Paul is left alone as the champion of the truth. He has far more cause to fear Peter than Peter has to fear his misguided subordinates, but he does not flinch. He exposes Peter's inconsistent conduct.

Paul's logic is unanswerable. Peter had been living as the nations. If he was right then the nations were right in living as they did, and the Judaizers were wrong in trying to make Jews out of them. He could not withdraw without incriminating himself.

<sup>15</sup> Paul then takes up the case from the standpoint of the Jews who were with him. He and they were justified by the faith of Christ, apart from the law. Should they now voluntarily resume their former relations to the law they would become sinners, and Christ a dispenser of sin, for the law is not laid down for the just but for sinners. In fact, to go back under law would prove either that they had been wrong in leaving it or were wrong in returning to its bondage.

<sup>19</sup> Death is the ultimate effect of the law, yet it is also deliverance from law.

<sup>20</sup> We have endeavored to transcribe this marvelous compendium of the faith as nearly as possible as it is in the original, for even the order of the words is exquisite. The sentence opens and closes with *Christ*, and a negative *I* occupies its center. It may be shown graphically thus:

with Christ  
have I been crucified,  
yet I am living—  
no longer I,  
but living in me is  
Christ.

<sup>21</sup> What a contrast between the slavery of the law and the exultant life by faith of the Son of God and the gift of His love!

#### DOCTRINAL DEFENSE

<sup>1</sup> Paul has now finished his personal defense, thereby establishing his own apostleship and the unique character of his evangel, which, far from being derived from Peter, he upholds in spite of Peter.

<sup>3</sup> Paul now appeals to the experience of the Galatians themselves. Before the Judaizers came they received the Spirit of God, and suffered for the evangel, and did mighty works quite apart from the law.

<sup>6</sup> Three great names are associated, in Scripture, with three distinct lines of truth. David is the one with whom the kingdom covenant was made, and his name is foremost in the proclamation of the evangel of the kingdom. When justification is in view we are taken back to Abraham and his faith in God. God's covenant with him was unconditional and included all nations in its scope. The conciliation engages us with Adam, and embraces all mankind in its gracious provisions.

All injustice finds its earliest source in the unbelief of Eve, and all righteousness acceptable to God is based on a reversal of the lack of confidence her act revealed. Nothing can be more just than to take God at His word.

<sup>9</sup> How striking the contrast! As many as are of faith are *blessed*. *Accursed* is everyone who does not remain in all which has been written in the scroll of the law to do it. Who would be so perverse as to choose law? Yet the heresy of Galatianism is far more prevalent today than ever. Life under law can only come to one who keeps every precept perfectly at all times, yet is forfeited at the slightest infringement. Life through faith does not depend on conduct but on the One in Whom the faith is placed.

<sup>13</sup> The sacrifice of Christ made provision for all classes and all contingencies. For those under law He bore its curse, so that they may receive the blessing of Abraham. And He bore the sins of those not under law that they, too, may obtain the righteousness of Abraham. So both, through faith, receive the spirit, by which they may exceed the righteous demands of the law.

<sup>15</sup> A contract, or agreement, or covenant, once ratified, cannot be set aside, neither can any of its provisions be altered. The Abrahamic covenant contained no conditions to invalidate it. It did not depend on obedience to confirm it. It depended solely on God, who swore by Himself that He would carry it out (Gen.22<sup>15-18</sup>).

<sup>17</sup> The priority of the promise is most important. Nearly half a millennium elapsed, before the law was given. The promise is in no way dependent on the law for its fulfillment.

<sup>19</sup> Law changes sin from a mere mistake into the over-stepping of a divine command. It enhances the sinfulness of sin. Transgression is sin against a known law, entailing not only the usual penalties, but the added displeasure of God against one who defies His precepts. The law was not given to the people directly, but through Moses, who acted as the mediator. Neither was it given through Christ, the Seed of the promise.

<sup>21</sup> Far from being against the promises, the law was intended to guard those to whom the promise was made and to lead them to Christ. It could not give life or justify in itself, but it could bring them to a realization of the sinfulness of sin and the need of a Saviour. These were its functions, and these it fulfilled. This was, however, only *until the Seed should come*.

<sup>24</sup> It was the custom in well-to-do Roman families, to have the boys *escorted* to and from school under the guardianship of a slave, or have them instructed at home by a learned Greek pedagogue-slave (*paidagōgos*) who was their *tutor*.

<sup>25</sup> Those who believe are not under law. The grown sons would scorn the escort of their boyhood days. His presence would be an insult to their manhood. So those who know their maturity in Christ refuse the bondage of law as both unnecessary and humiliating. We are not children but sons. Law leads minors. Faith controls sons.

<sup>27</sup> Baptism, as practiced in Paul's early ministry, was a symbol of unity with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. "As many as" shows that not all the Galatians had been baptized. Nevertheless the truth of unity with Christ held for all, for in Him all physical distinctions vanish. In *service*, or in the *Lord*, the slave was still a slave, the sexes were still recognized, but in *Christ*, by faith, all have the same high place of privilege. All are entitled to the promise and the righteousness which comes by faith in God.

<sup>1</sup> The place of an infant heir differs from that of a slave in right but not in fact. Though entitled to all, he is treated as though master of nothing. He is watched by guardians, and supervised by stewards. This was the position of Israel under the law. **Theirs** was the sonship and the glory and the covenants, but these are all reserved for future display. Dignities are suited to capacity; privileges to age. Infancy is debarred from their use, not merely by the formal legal prohibition, but by intrinsic disqualification. The responsibilities of property are beyond the strength and understanding of a child.

<sup>3</sup> Israel, during the period of minority, was in bondage under the "elements" of the world. These "rudiments" or elementary religious observances, while "infirm and poor" (<sup>9</sup>) and put in contrast with Christ (Col. 2<sup>s</sup>), were necessary to their education and served an essential purpose in the progress of revelation. But no one who knows the liberty of sonship would tolerate their shackles for an instant.

<sup>4</sup> In Israel the assumption of the responsibilities and dignities of manhood was a notable event in a man's life. In the life of the nation this was signalized by the advent of God's Son, Who reclaimed them from the bondage of the law.

<sup>6</sup> The people in our Lord's day were bi-lingual. They used an Aramaic dialect in the familiar talk of the household, but all understood Greek, which was almost a universal language at that time, "Abba" is Aramaic, corresponding to our familiar "Papa".

<sup>9</sup> It is most remarkable that the apostle puts the Mosaic ceremonial on a par with heathen rites. They were not turning back to their previous idolatry but to the observances under the law, which they had not practised before. But he insists it is all the same in God's sight as if they really had returned to the rites of heathenism.

<sup>10</sup> Do any of us observe these things? Paul would be afraid of us!

<sup>12</sup> If Paul had given up the Mosaic ritual and became as they were for their sakes, surely they ought to follow his example, for he certainly had far more reason to cling to it than they had to lapse back into it.

<sup>15</sup> Eye diseases are very common in the East. Paul's first acquaintance with the Galatians was when, as a sick traveler, he proclaimed the evangel to them in the midst of his infirmities. From this passage we get a glimpse of the fervent love his message evoked, and are led to suppose that he had some affliction of the eyes.

<sup>17</sup> The words *zealous* and *jealous* probably were once the same in English, as they are so closely allied in form and meaning. They represent a single Greek word. It is not always clear which is the better rendering, but here *jealousy*, rather than *zeal*, seems to satisfy the context.

<sup>19</sup> What affectionate mothering stirs the apostle as he broods over his erring children!

<sup>22</sup> The controversy turns on the question "Who are the heirs of Abraham?" Is the ground of sonship circumcision and law keeping, or faith? The Judaizers said, We are Abraham's sons! Abraham had *two* sons, says Paul. Which line do you belong to, Ishmael or Isaac? You are Ishmaelites, sons of Hagar, born of the flesh, born into slavery. You are not heirs of Abraham! Isaac, the child of promise, is the true heir. These two sons of Abraham illustrate the relation between law and promise, flesh and spirit. Ishmael came into Abraham's home between the promise and the advent of the true heir. Born of unbelief, he was a continual trial and persecuted the son of promise. But finally the decree went forth: Cast out this maid and her son!

It could hardly be that the Galatians are listening to any but so-called "believing" Jews who were associated with the apostles, and with James. They would not listen to the persecutors of the ecclesia in Jerusalem. Tens of thousands of Jews believed but they all were zealous of the law (Ac. 21<sup>20</sup>). This shows that those associated with the Pentecostal administration were virulently opposed to Paul and his doctrine of grace. When he was in Jerusalem they led the multitude against him and nearly killed him. These Jewish Christians were the most troublesome enemies of the ecclesias among the nations which had been founded by Paul.

1 This paragraph is the summary and conclusion of the doctrinal argument. Tersely, he puts the case. Which shall it be, *Christ* or *circumcision*? No half hearted allegiance here, no serving of two masters. Circumcision might have been a badge of privilege in the past, but now it has become a sign of apostasy. It does not lead to justification from sin, but to exemption from Christ. It is incumbent on such to keep the entire law. Grace has no room in which to operate.

4 "Falling from grace" is not, as usually supposed, a loss of the benefits of Christ's salvation through *breaking* the law, but, on the contrary, through attempting to *keep* the law. He who falls into sin does not forfeit the grace of God. Blessed to relate, grace abounds in such a case (Rom.6<sup>1</sup>). But he who seeks to establish his own salvation by works has no need of the grace of God and forfeits all right to the benefits flowing from His redemption. He thus repudiates grace. He falls out of the sphere where grace operates. This is what "falling from grace" really means.

5 Righteousness is here put before us as an expectation for which we are waiting. This is required by the contrast between that produced by the law and that effected by faith. At present, in God's sight, the one righteous thing to do is to believe Him. The man who believes God is absolutely right in that act. If we could view this from God's side we would see that such a man is just, and needs nothing more to make him righteous. The effect of this on his dealings with others may not be fully in harmony with this fact now, but the time is coming when our conduct will partake of the righteousness of faith. This is the "expectation of righteousness".

11 The proclamation of circumcision, or of lawkeeping, or of any human effort to attain the favor of God entails no persecution. The cross is a snare, which not only captures but crushes us. No human pretensions can abide the great fact of His utter humiliation and shameful death for us on the cross, and the sober truth that such were *our* deserts, not His. Christ Himself is our righteousness. We loathe every effort of our own.

15 The Galatians were biting and devouring one another, while they supposed themselves to be keeping the law. The law usually acts thus. It makes men self-righteous and contentious. Instead of fulfilling its letter they destroy its spirit. Law should lead to regard for others and find its fruition in love. But it leads its votaries to despise others and finds its fruit in hate.

16 Here is the divine prescription for our most troublesome problem—the flesh. Every attempt to directly control the flesh, to curb it or cure it, must end in failure. The only way to deal with it is to ignore it. In the epistle to the Romans this is fully set forth under the figure of death. Here the conflict between flesh and spirit is met by such complete occupation with the spirit, that no opportunity is left for the flesh to accomplish its desires.

19 In this list there are some sins which we have come to condone or even justify, yet they are in the midst of a catalogue of crimes. Enmity and strife, jealousy and faction, too often assume a righteous garb. Sectarianism is defended as though it were an improvement on the divine unity of the body of Christ. In the kingdom of God there will be no one practicing such things.

22 The flesh acts, the spirit bears fruit, delicious not only to us but to God. Fruit is not the result of mechanical effort but the natural expression of life and growth. If we love others we will need no legal restrictions to keep us from injuring them. Law is a useless incumbrance to those who walk after the spirit. They need no promptings to do good and are above the penalties imposed on evil doers.

24 The *crucifixion* of the flesh means far more than putting it in the place of death. It gives it the *kind* of death it deserves, for it is a criminal of the deepest dye. The shameful, ignominious death borne by Christ for our sins is the only fit finish for the flesh.

1 A true self-knowledge will humble us so that we can deal meekly with a brother who has suddenly slipped. The law would condemn him, but we are to seek to bring him back into line.

<sup>5</sup> There is a contrast here between a *burden* and a *load*. Burden is from the element meaning *heavy*. Both of these elements occur together in Mt. 23<sup>4</sup> "heavy loads". In Mt. 11<sup>30</sup> our Lord did not say "My *burden* is light", but "My *load* is light". When a brother becomes overburdened it is our duty and privilege to help him bear his burden. But the load the Lord lays on us is not too heavy. We cannot do a service which God has assigned to another. In this each one must bear his own load.

<sup>6</sup> In order to perpetuate the instruction of His saints God has made it obligatory that such a service should be recognized and proper compensation provided for those who instruct.

<sup>7</sup> The figure of sowing and reaping is a most encouraging one to consider. The farmer plants the seed and sees no results at all for some time. He waits long and patiently ere he reaps the harvest. So we, too, may see little come of our sowing for the spirit, but in the proper season we shall reap as we have sown. That which is for the flesh will rot. That which is for the spirit will endure for the eons. There is much, very much, to make us despondent, but we should ever keep in mind the eonian harvest for which we are preparing.

<sup>11</sup> It seems probable that the rest of the epistle was penned by Paul himself. His usual custom was to write

only a short ending to attest the genuineness of a letter, but here he is so concerned that he rehearses the heart of the argument in his own handwriting. It has been suggested that the writing was in large characters because of his defective eyesight.

<sup>12</sup> In this marvelous finale, Paul focuses the light of the cross upon the motives actuating both sides of the controversy. The Circumcisionists played for popularity. They dreaded persecution. They appealed to the flesh. How many of us are following the spirit of this course today? Paul boasted only in the cross, which puts an end to the flesh, whether in us or in the world. Now there is a new creation, in which the flesh has no place. This should settle the whole controversy.

<sup>16</sup> Paul does not wish to condemn all of the Circumcision indiscriminately for the sins of his opponents. Those amongst them who acknowledge the power of the cross in the midst of their observances, on these he invokes peace and mercy, for they are the true Israel of God.

<sup>17</sup> It was customary to mark a slave with the brand of his master. Paul's many persecutions had doubtless left many marks, all of which indicated his loyalty to his Lord.

<sup>18</sup> Note the emphasis on *spirit*, in line with the teaching of the epistle.



## PAUL'S PERFECTION EPISTLES

PAUL's perfection epistles are emphatically *the* truth for the present. The Ephesian letter, being addressed to all believers in Christ Jesus, in contrast with the Circumcision, who hardly knew Him by this title, is the ranking revelation for the members of the joint body of Christ. Here first are revealed those secrets which distinguish this administration from all others. Never before has the celestial destiny of the present ecclesia been declared. All the other Scriptures deal with the elementary and immature, but here we find perfection. God's purpose had been only partially made known before and seemed confined to earth. But in this final transcendent revelation His ultimate universal goal is first revealed. These three letters are closely related to each other and should be studied together. As was shown in the outline of Paul's epistles, this may be graphically presented thus:

EPHESIANS 1-3, *Doctrine*—The Body: its Members

EPHESIANS 4-6 *Deportment*

PHILIPPIANS, *Deportment*

COLOSSIANS, *Doctrine*—The Body: its Head

Ephesians begins by presenting a careful and comprehensive statement of the truth for the present secret economy, laying stress on those aspects which concern the *members* of Christ's body. Colossians is the counterpart of this, dealing with the same doctrines but presenting them in their relation to the *Head* of the body.

Both begin with God and with His primordial purpose. The members of the body were chosen before the disruption and now become the beneficiaries in His celestial allotment. Christ is His Image, being the First-born of all creation and now becomes

the Head of all creation in heaven as well as on earth.

Ephesians, then, unfolds the truth of the joint body in which all the members are of equal rank. Colossians makes Him the Head over the body and the members subordinate to Him.

Two secrets or "mysteries" are disclosed in these epistles. The secret of Christ (Eph.1<sup>3</sup>4Col.2<sup>24</sup>) was previously revealed but not as it is now revealed. His headship over the earth had been made known to the prophets of old. His headship in the heavens was made known to the apostles, especially Peter (1Pet.3<sup>22</sup>). But the secret economy, the present administration of grace, was never disclosed to any one except through Paul (Eph.3<sup>9</sup>). It was not partially hidden, like the mystery of Christ, but was an absolute secret, hid in God. It is the function of the first three chapters of Ephesians to explain its three aspects for the believer, and of Colossians to reveal the position which it accords to Christ.

These letters should be read in this light. It is only when we apprehend their radical difference and vast advance over the epistles written by others than the apostle of the nations (Eph.3<sup>1</sup>) that we can appreciate their marvelous message. It is only as we allow them to dominate and modify Paul's previous epistles, of which they are the ripened fruit, that we are able to entertain the transcendent nature of their contents.

The title Christ Jesus, calling attention to His present place of power, is the key to the marvelous grace which came to them after the nation of Israel had been rejected, as recorded at the close of the book of Acts. As associated with Jesus Christ they

would be still subordinate to the favored nation, which will rule the earth. But the title which recognizes His present glory in the heavens makes it possible for the far off "Gentiles" to be blessed in celestial realms equally with a favored few of the nation of His choice.

Paul's Perfection epistles are based upon his Preparatory epistles to the Thessalonians, the Romans, the Corinthians, and the Galatians. They are addressed to those who had received the truth taught in his earlier ministries, who were in a state of prior expectancy (Eph.1<sup>12</sup> 1Thes.1<sup>10</sup>), who had been sealed with the holy Spirit (Eph. 1<sup>13</sup> 2Co1<sup>22</sup>), which was an earnest of more to come (Eph.1<sup>14</sup> 2Co.5<sup>5</sup>). They had been enjoyers of an allotment (Ro.8<sup>17</sup> Ga.4<sup>7</sup>), and now become *joint* allottees (Eph.3<sup>6</sup>). Once they were members of bodies in which the members were of the circumcision and uncircumcision. Now that Israel is set aside and the celestial destiny revealed, it is changed to a *joint* body, in which all the members are equally exalted (Eph.3<sup>6</sup>). The nations become *joint* partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph.3<sup>6</sup>) which once they held as guests of Israel's covenant.

All saints, during the eonian times, are under God's *government*, belong to His *family*, and become the nucleus of His *worship*. On earth, the nations are subordinate, for Israel must be the head. Such was the place of those who received Paul's message, before the Perfection epistles were penned. The new revelation not only changed their destiny to heaven, but made them the peers of the favored nation. We are *fellow* citizens. We are not merely guests, but members of God's family. We are an integral part of the temple which God is building for His worship (Eph.2<sup>19-22</sup>).

The Perfection epistles should be studied as a group. The truth is set forth didactically and logically in the opening chapters of Ephesians. Philippians goes over the ground experimentally, showing the truth operating in Christ and Paul and other examples. It applies the teaching of Ephesians to daily conduct. The "calling above" (Ph. 3<sup>14</sup>) is the celestial calling of Ephesians 1<sup>3</sup>. Colossians corrects departure from Ephesian teaching, with special stress upon the glories of Christ in creation and reconciliation.

Some of the chief figures in these epistles have often been misunderstood, especially that of Christ's headship of the ecclesia. It is usually taken that all of the body except the head figures the ecclesia. This is not true. The head is reckoned as a member. The headship of Christ is not figured by the head of the body. Its parts, such as the eyes and nose, are members. Christ is not a member of the body, but Head over the ecclesia, *as a husband is head over his wife* (Eph.5<sup>23</sup>). The wife has a head apart from the headship of her husband.

The new humanity (Eph.2<sup>15</sup>) is an entirely distinct figure from that of the body. It refers to the race, giving Christ the place lost by Adam. It can be *put on* (Eph.5<sup>24</sup>), or taken off. This cannot refer to our union with Christ under the figure of the body.

It should also be remembered that the "mystery", or secret, is not the body of Christ, for that had been known before. It is threefold, and includes our relationship to God as allottees, and to saints as partakers, as well as to Christ as His body. It consists in the fact that, in each of these relationships, grace has raised those among the nations who believe to equal rank, so that all are *joint* allottees and *joint* partakers, and members of a *joint* body.

# EPHESIANS

THE zenith of divine revelation, this heavenly epistle, leaving the earth, where the Christ is repudiated by His own people Israel, seats us among the celestials, where He is enthroned at God's right hand (1<sup>20</sup>). His saints, blessed with every spiritual blessing in Him (1<sup>3</sup>) in heaven (2<sup>6</sup>), are an object lesson to manifest God's manifold wisdom to celestial beings (3<sup>10</sup>), so that the purpose of the eons (3<sup>11</sup>), which embraces Christ's headship over the heavens as well as the earth (1<sup>10</sup>), may be effected through the transcendent riches of grace (2<sup>7</sup>) which has come to the nations through the repudiation of faithless Israel, until their salvation and reception (Ro. 11<sup>12</sup>).

The dimensions of the present grace are not constricted as with Israel. It reaches back to a time prior to the entrance of sin and forward to its exit. It includes not only all mankind who believe in the present economy, but is intended to affect the heavens as well. It takes men far below the plane of privilege on which Israel dwelt, with no claims whatever on God's mercy, and seats them far above the highest in heaven. May He help us to learn something of this grace! This knowledge leads us into the realm of the unknowable, for it reveals to us the transcendent love of Christ which we will never be able to fathom fully and which will always yield new delights.

As to time, it reverts to a period prior to the disruption of the first of Genesis (14Gen.12) and leads to the exaltation of Christ, not only in the coming eon (1<sup>21</sup>), but in the eon of the eons, too (2<sup>7</sup>3<sup>21</sup>), which is the economy of the fullness of the eras (1<sup>10</sup>).

Being addressed to those who believe in Christ Jesus, in contrast to those of the Circumcision whose blessings, on the earth, are postponed until His return in glory, this letter was intended only for those who had received Paul's previous ministries and were expecting to be with Him *before* His coming to the earth (1<sup>12</sup>).

The omission of "in Ephesus" (1<sup>1</sup>), the lack of the slightest local allusion, and the very general character of the epistle, all tend to show that it is the charter of the church of this economy, a treatise on present truth—the touch-

stone and standard by which all truth for today must be tested.

The letter proper is an elaboration of the definition of the present secret economy (3<sup>6</sup>) "that, in spirit, the nations are to be *joint-enjoyers*, and a *joint-body*, and *joint-partakers* of the promise in Christ Jesus" through the evangel of which Paul became the dispenser.

## FRAMEWORK OF "EPHESIANS"

*Reversion*

DEPARTMENT	DOCTRINE	JOINT ENJOYERS	JOINT MEMBERS	JOINT PARTAKERS	SUMMARY	Paul's commission 1 <sup>1</sup> Salutation 1 <sup>2</sup>
						The allotment—in heaven—blessing 1 <sup>3-14</sup>
						Paul's prayer for them 1 <sup>15-19</sup>
						The body—in Christ 1 <sup>20-21</sup>
						The members
						Participation—believers 2 <sup>11-22</sup>
						The new humanity
						Summary of grace <i>now</i> shown to the nations 3 <sup>1-13</sup>
						Petitioning the Father 3 <sup>14-21</sup>
						Beseeching the saints 4 <sup>1-6</sup>
						Summary of grace which <i>had been</i> shown to the saints 4 <sup>7-16</sup>
						No participation—unbelievers 4 <sup>17-5<sup>20</sup></sup>
						The new humanity
						The body—in the Lord 5 <sup>21-6<sup>9</sup></sup>
						The Head
						The allotment—in heaven—warfare 6 <sup>10-17</sup>
						Their prayer for Paul 6 <sup>18-20</sup>
						Tychicus' commission 6 <sup>21-22</sup> Salutation 6 <sup>23-24</sup>

The joint allotment is distinctly stated in 1<sup>3-14</sup>. It is expanded in 13-18, and enforced in 6<sup>10-20</sup>.

The joint body seats both Jew and Gentile together (2<sup>6</sup>) among the celestials in Christ Jesus. This is detailed in 1<sup>19-21</sup> and in 5<sup>21-6<sup>9</sup></sup>.

The joint participation is seen in creating the Circumcision and the Uncircumcision into one new humanity (2<sup>15</sup>). It is fully discussed in 2<sup>11-22</sup>, and is applied to our deportment in 4<sup>17-5<sup>20</sup></sup>.

A summary of the new revelation is given in 3<sup>1-13</sup>, which is reviewed as to its results in 4<sup>7-16</sup>.

The heart of the epistle is filled with two petitions, one to the Father, and one to the saints to preserve the spiritual unity which is founded on the transcendent truths and fathomless favor and limitless love which are revealed in this lovely letter.

<sup>1</sup> The title "Christ Jesus" is the token of His exaltation; "Jesus Christ" refers us to His humiliation. "Christ Jesus" is used by Paul, especially in his later ministries.

The words "in Ephesus" seem to have been added after the significance of "Christ Jesus" had been lost. The epistle is confined to those who, in contrast with the Circumcision, base their blessings on His present heavenly exaltation, rather than on His future glorious manifestation to the earth for the blessing of Israel and the other nations.

## THE JOINT ALLOTMENT

### CELESTIAL BLESSINGS

<sup>3</sup> Celestial is in contrast to terrestrial (Ph. 2<sup>10</sup>). The celestial is the realm beyond the earth's atmosphere.

<sup>4</sup> "Disruption" is demanded by its elements (*down-casting*) as well as its usage, rather than "foundation", which represents another Greek word.

<sup>4</sup> Not, as the English words suggest, that we *may* be in the *future*, but "to be" at *present*.

<sup>5</sup> Sonship involves privileges and dignities not granted to children (Ga. 4:1-7). The "new" birth has no place in Paul's writings, for he enters the new *creation* (2Co.5<sup>17</sup>).

<sup>7</sup> "Pardon" of *sins* becomes *forgiveness* when associated with *offenses*.

<sup>10</sup> The heading up of the universe in Christ is the so-called "mystery" or secret of Christ referred to in 3<sup>4-5</sup> (see 1Pe.3<sup>22</sup>). It must not be confounded with the secret economy (3<sup>9</sup>) which is in force at present. The two are in *accord*, but distinct. Christ's headship over the earth had been previously revealed. His heavenly headship was revealed to Peter. The present economy was an *absolute* secret made known to Paul *only*.

<sup>12</sup> The "perfect" or complete form of the verb marks a *state* rather than an action. The Circumcision looked for signs and did not expect Messiah until after the great affliction. Those under Paul's ministry were expecting Him at any time. Hence they were in a state of *prior* expectancy. To such as these this letter was written. To the Thessalonians Paul had first revealed this blessed expectation (1 Thess. 4<sup>13</sup>).

<sup>13</sup> The subject of these paragraphs is *the evangel of the nations: its seal<sup>13</sup>, its recognition<sup>17</sup>, its prospect<sup>18</sup>, its allotment<sup>14</sup> 18, and its power<sup>19</sup>*. This subject is kept in mind throughout.

The argument is as follows: Paul and his associates of the Circumcision received the celestial, spiritual blessings which have been detailed. The earnest of their allotment in Christ was the holy Spirit which was a pledge of its deliverance. As the believers among the nations received the same spirit when they believed, it is a seal to them that they too<sup>13</sup> will enjoy the celestial, spiritual favors which are lavished upon those of the Circumcision who believe in Christ Jesus during His rejection by the nation of Israel.

<sup>14</sup> The "spirit of promise" is not what was promised, but a spirit which promises, a *promissory* spirit.

Note carefully the pronouns *us* <sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup> <sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup> and *we* <sup>7</sup> <sup>12</sup> and *our* <sup>14</sup>, and the contrastive *you* <sup>13</sup> <sup>15</sup> <sup>16</sup> <sup>18</sup> and *your* <sup>13</sup>

<sup>15</sup> "The faith which relates to you" refers to the new truth set forth in this epistle.

This letter was probably sent to Ephesus where Paul had taught for two years (Ac.19<sup>10</sup>) and where he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God (Ac.20<sup>27</sup>). His prayer for "a spirit of revelation" makes it evident that this epistle deals with a *secret* (3<sup>9</sup>) of God's purpose (3<sup>11</sup>) quite distinct from His *counsels* which had been revealed before.

## THE BODY—IN CHRIST

### THE MEMBERS

<sup>23</sup> The sovereignty over the earth is given to the nation of Israel, according to the prophets. The sovereignty over the celestials is the portion of the ecclesia which is His body. Between the two the entire universe is brought under the administration of Christ. Thus His body is the *plerōma*, or complement, which fills up the lack which earth's deliverance would still leave in the celestial realms. Its function is to fulfill God's purpose for the entire universe, only part of which He is able to accomplish through His people Israel.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the condition of the two classes with that of the individual believer in Ro.6<sup>2</sup>. Such as have "died to sin" "together with Christ", "are vivified together with Him", and "are reckoning themselves to be dead, indeed, to sin" (Ro.6<sup>8-11</sup>), so here the nations and some of the Jews, collectively, are dead to sins and offenses, and are roused conjointly and seated conjointly, in Christ.

<sup>5</sup> We have not only *been* saved by grace, but salvation also introduces us into the sphere of grace's operation. Salvation calls for further favors of being vivified, and roused, and seated in Christ together with an election out of Israel. We are not *risen* with Christ, for *rise* refers particularly to the *body*.

<sup>7</sup> The on-coming eons—themselves the scenes of the riches of God's grace—will be directed to God's favor lavished upon us as the supreme, *transcendent* achievement of His unassisted, unforced grace.

<sup>8</sup> Salvation, in its beginning, is of faith, in order to accord with grace (Ro.4<sup>16</sup>). As a state, or condition, it continues to preserve its gracious character. It is not of us; it is God's way of winning our favor. This is the force of the term "approach present," which was used of the *corban*, or approach offering (Lev.12<sup>13</sup>, etc., Mk.7<sup>11</sup>).

## PARTICIPATION—BELIEVERS

### THE NEW HUMANITY

<sup>11</sup> This section deals only with the place that believers among the nations occupied *in flesh*, as physically uncircumcised, in the era before this epistle was penned. It is a complete contrast to the place occupied by the nations, as set forth in Acts, not as presented in Paul's previous epistles. *Physically* only may it be said that they had been apart from Christ, aliens, having no expectation, without God. Trophimus, the Ephesian, would understand this, for when he was in Jerusalem the mere rumor that he had approached as near to the reputed dwelling place of God as a Jew caused the whole city to rise up against Paul who, they supposed, had brought him into the sanctuary. What Paul was accused of doing then, physically, he does now, in spirit, and far more, for we have free access to the Father's presence.

### Joint Participation

<sup>14</sup> The central wall of the barrier was the so-called "soreg", a stone wall, for a partition, with inscriptions which forbade any foreigner to go in under pain of death. One of these was recently unearthed with the following inscription:

ΜΗΘΕΝΑ ΑΛΛΟΓΕΝΗΙΣ ΠΟ  
ΡΕΥΣΘΑΙΕΝΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΕ  
ΡΙΤΟΙΕΡΟΝ ΤΡΥΦΑΚΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ  
ΠΕΡΙΒΟΛΟΥ Ο ΣΔ ΑΝΛΗ  
ΦΘΗΕΑΥΤΟΙΑΙΤΙΟΣ Ε Σ  
ΤΑΙ ΔΙΑ ΤΟ ΕΞ ΑΚΟΛΟΥ  
ΘΕΙΝΘΑΝΑΤΟΝ

No alien is to enter within the balustrade and embankment about the sacred place. Whoever is caught will be responsible for his death, which will ensue.

<sup>15</sup> The decrees issued from Jerusalem by the apostles (Ac.15<sup>20-16</sup>).

<sup>15</sup> The enmity in His flesh is the national or race hatred between Jew and Gentile. In His flesh He confirmed the promises which gave primacy to the Jew. This was figured by the barrier which shut the aliens out of the sanctuary.

<sup>15</sup> The new humanity is quite a distinct matter from the one body. It can be put on (4<sup>24,25</sup>) and is in contrast with the old humanity (4<sup>22</sup>).

<sup>19</sup> Here we have our relation to the saints of other economies defined. All saints, whatever their peculiar position, have three things in common. They all are under God's *government*; all belong to His *family*; all are His *dwelling place*. These do not define the blessings which are our special privileges, but those which we share with the saints of every other administration.

### SUMMARY

<sup>1</sup> Contrast Paul as a prisoner of *Christ Jesus*, summing up the *doctrines* of the secret administration with Paul the prisoner of *the Lord* (4<sup>1</sup>), inculcating the *deportment* which adorns the doctrine.

<sup>1</sup> Paul insists that *he* is the one through whom God's revelation to the nations is given. It can be found nowhere but in his writings.

*Summary of the Present Grace*

The present secret administration of which there is no hint in any Scriptures before this epistle was penned, consists essentially of three separate items, all of which are marked by the prefix *joint*. The nations enjoyed much blessing before this (Ro.15<sup>9-12,16,27</sup>), they were members of the body of Christ (1Co.12<sup>13,27</sup>), they were guests of the promise (2<sup>12</sup>), but they had all this *subordinate* to the Jews. They were not joint allottees, or a joint body or joint sharers in those promises. Now they have their celestial allotment on equal terms, they are members of a body in which no member can claim precedence on account of physical descent, the promises in Christ Jesus are equally theirs with Paul and his Jewish companions. It is of the utmost importance to note that Paul only was given this stewardship and that it is worse than useless to seek for it outside of his writings. It was concealed in God, not in the Scriptures. No trace of it can be found in the prophets or in the preceding books of the Greek Scriptures.

8 The "untraceable riches of Christ" include celestial honors which had not been revealed. His terrestrial riches can be traced throughout the previous Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. He was to be the King of Israel and the Ruler of the whole earth. But now we know of celestial honors which were hid from us before. These are revealed at the same time that the celestial destiny of the body of Christ is disclosed, for it is necessary that He should have the highest place in the universe before we could be associated with Him in its administration.

## PETITIONING THE FATHER

14 This petition commences at 31 but was interrupted by a summary of the grace which is its motive. Now the prayer is resumed.

It is evident, and experience has confirmed the fact, that the greatest power is required, not for service, but to enable us to realize and appreciate the marvelous revelation of God's grace and love which is ours in Christ Jesus. May God exercise our hearts to this end!

*Petitioning the Father*

17 Every lack in the universe is filled by Christ. He is God's *Plērōma*, or Complement, Who supplies every deficiency. We, as members of His body, are His complement. To fit us for this place He wishes us to grasp the grace which this involves, which in turn will reveal the transcendent love of Christ. Thus we will be filled or completed—brought to that finished state which fits us for our future destiny. 18 The dimensions refer to the secret<sup>6</sup>. 20 It is most satisfying to know that God's ability is not limited to our requests, neither are His purposes for us confined to our meagre apprehension.

## DEPARTMENT

## BESEECHING THE SAINTS

1 How apt the titles used by our Lord and his servants! Here it is the prisoner in the *Lord* who deals with our walk.

3 We are not asked to *make* the spirit's unity, but not to *break* it. God's saints are one: let them be assiduous to recognize this by refraining from anything which mars the display of the spiritual unity made by God.

4 During the era covered by the book of Acts there were several bodies, and baptisms, and faiths, and expectations, but now that the secret economy is in operation there is no longer one faith for the Jew and another for the Gentile; but all have the same faith. Nothing should ever divide the saints of this administration.

## SUMMARY

## THE PREVIOUS GRACE

7 The readjustment of the saints, changing them from a condition of tutelage and dependence on the blessings of Israel to mature manhood and independent celestial blessings, was effected by sending them specially endowed apostles and prophets, pastors and teachers. The service of the apostles and prophets is now superseded by the Scriptures, such as this epistle, which were written to accomplish the same end. This is in contrast to the giving of the law, which brought them into captivity (Ps.68<sup>18</sup>). This grace sets aside all enslaving laws and decrees.

*Summary of Previous Grace*

<sup>13</sup> Before the revelation of the secret administration by means of this epistle the saints among the nations were in a period of adolescence. This is fully set forth by the apostle in writing to the Corinthians (1Co.13<sup>10</sup>). The gifts then given were for the purpose of leading them on to maturity but were to be set aside when "perfection" came. Paul's prison epistles bring maturity (Phil.3<sup>15</sup>Col.12<sup>8412</sup>). The shifting changes incident to the period of growth which characterized the era from Paul's call until his imprisonment, which brought the saints among the nations from a position like proselytes to Judaism to a place entirely independent of Israel, were all intended to prepare them for this final revelation in which they become Christ's complement.

We should not build upon all the doctrines of that transitional era, but only such as accord with the present grace. In Romans "to the Jew first" (Ro.2<sup>10</sup>) is now obsolete; in Corinthians the gift of prophecy and of languages (1Co.13<sup>8</sup>) have become inoperative.

<sup>16</sup> This is a notable comparison between the spiritual body of Christ and our physical bodies. Not only does the Head preside over the actions of the members of the body but only through it do the members receive sustenance and grow. Just as the nervous system unites the head to every individual member of the body, so each member of Christ's body is in touch with the Head, dependent on Him for food, development, and direction.

## JOINT PARTAKERS

## NO PARTICIPATION WITH UNBELIEVERS

<sup>17</sup> Notwithstanding the "practical" trend of modern science, and the increasing knowledge of the physical universe, men do not *comprehend* anything. They are not aware of the source or object of things, being interested only in the present profit or pleasure which can be derived from them. Their inventions and investigations have not affected the happiness of the race; they are vain. Their ignorance of God leads them to seek satisfaction and pleasure in temporary expedients which lead to misery.

*No Participation with Unbelievers*

<sup>22</sup> In Christ there is a new humanity. The divisions which mar the present humanity are gone in Him and the conduct which disgraces mankind should also be "put off" like a worn-out, filthy garment. The new humanity is "put on" by acting as those who no longer belong to the race of Adam but acknowledge Christ as their Head. Let us then be renewed in the spirit of our minds. Every exhortation here given depends upon our previous apprehension of His grace. Previous standards of conduct are far too low and in an entirely different key.

<sup>26</sup> "Being indignant" may also be rendered "Be indignant" but the context is against this rendering. It certainly is not a command to be angry, for we are distinctly charged to forego anger in this very chapter (<sup>31</sup>Col.3<sup>8</sup>). The next statement is evidently a parallel to this. In one we have indignation, in the other vexation. In both we are exhorted not to carry what may be quite right and just to an extreme which will make them injurious and sinful. It may be paraphrased: "Do not let indignation degenerate into anger: do not cherish a grudge. Do not flare up: do not let your resentment smoulder."

<sup>28</sup> Restitution, single, double, fourfold or fivefold is the requirement of Sinai (Ex.22<sup>1-5</sup>). Now the thief is to work that he may give to those in need.

<sup>32</sup> The key for conduct in the kingdom is *righteousness*: love is the true spring of all that pleases Him in this economy. The most powerful motive and perfect method to put this into practice is to charge our hearts with an overpowering apprehension of His grace toward us. This will not fail to influence our conduct toward others.

<sup>1</sup> God "walks in love"—He *is* Love. He is our Father. Just as pet children copy the actions of their parents, so we should reflect His love to all with whom we come in contact. God's glory should be the underlying motive of every act.

*No Participation with Unbelievers*

<sup>2</sup> The sacrifice of Christ has many aspects. The opening chapters of Leviticus deal with these in detail. The sin and trespass offering seem to be entirely for man's benefit. But the first offering of all, and the most important, the ascending offering, called a "burnt" offering, seems to have been entirely for God; nothing in it was for man. So with Christ. The questions of human sin and transgression were secondary in His sacrifice. It was, first of all, His obedience to the will of God which gave His death its infinite value. His object was to please His Father. This is the true motive for service acceptable to our God.

<sup>3</sup> Here the Spirit of God has laid a finger on the sore spots which all our advance in civilization has only served to accentuate. Physical excesses, sordid cupidity and questionable speech are but symptoms of the cankerous evil which pervades society in this day of boasted advance. As the literal Greek puts it, "more-having", or avarice, is more pronounced than ever, and does not need to hide its face, for it is disguised as a virtue. In the kingdom of God none of these will be able to take root.

<sup>4</sup> To behave as children of light is the complement of imitating Him as beloved children, for God is Light as well as Love. In nature light is indispensable for fruit: nothing will produce without it. The same is true in spiritual things. The most flourishing saint is the one who has the most light, who knows what his Lord's will is. The most strenuous endeavor to serve God will not meet His approval if it is out of line with His revealed purpose and plans. Let us rouse ourselves from our lethargy and the darkness which surrounds us and bask in the light of Christ.

*No Participation with Unbelievers*

<sup>18</sup> Excess of wine leads to drunkenness, which is not good, but an overflowing spirit is to be commended. It manifests itself in songs and thanksgiving and subjection.

<sup>19</sup> *Spiritual* songs suggests the need of conforming even our songs to the truth of this present time and singing with understanding as well as the lips. Most of the destructive errors of the day are based on or supported by popular hymns.

## THE JOINT BODY—IN THE LORD

## THE HEAD

<sup>21</sup> As is the case with every exhortation in the second division of the epistle, the deportment of husbands and wives is founded on the doctrine previously developed in the first division. A reference to the framework will show that it is based on the truth of the joint body. Wives are to be subject because the man is head of the woman as Christ is Head of the body. Husbands cannot be exhorted to love their wives on the ground that the ecclesia occupies this relation to Christ, for the faithful in Israel, who have no part in the blessings of this epistle, are figured as the wife or bride, not of Christ (an official title), but of the Lamb. Hence the argument of Eden is introduced showing that husband and wife become one flesh. Christ and the ecclesia are one body. Hence the husband is exhorted to love his wife as *his own* body, for it is thus that Christ loves the ecclesia. What limitless love is involved in the statement, "No one at any time hates his own flesh"! Men have hated their wives: Jehovah divorced His unfaithful wife (Jer.3:20). But Christ is so one with the members of His body that He cannot cast them off. Thus should a husband love his own wife, who has become one flesh with him. How exultantly precious is this close relationship to Him! What could be nearer? What could be dearer? Even evil, sinful men *cannot* hate their *own* bodies. So much the more Christ *cannot* but love us as He loves Himself! God grant that we may drink deeply of this delicious draught!



*The Joint Body—In the Lord*

<sup>32</sup> There are three secrets in Ephesians: the secret of Christ (<sup>19</sup>), the secret administration (<sup>39</sup>) and the secret of marriage, here referred to. The physical fact that the marriage union makes husband and wife a physical unit is used as one premise in the argument that husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. The secret of the evangel is also referred to (<sup>619</sup>). There is no such expression as "the bride of Christ" in Scripture.

It is of principal importance that we distinguish the double relationship which we sustain to Christ and to the Lord. In Christ all physical distinctions vanish. There are no slaves and masters, even the sexes are not distinguished "in Christ" (Gal. 3:28). But "in the Lord" these physical distinctions are recognized and made the basis of our conduct toward one another. Wives are subject, children are obedient, slaves are subservient "in the Lord".

The key to all correct conduct lies in the recognition of our heavenly Master. The true slave seeks to please Him; the master acknowledges Him in his behavior toward his slave. Children obey their parents "in the Lord", for such is His wish. Fathers train them "in the Lord", conforming to His gracious methods.

The slave is especially encouraged by the fact that he will receive his due from his heavenly Master even though he receives nothing from his earthly one.

### THE JOINT ALLOTMENT IN THE CELESTIAL SPHERE

#### WARFARE

<sup>10</sup> Israel's warfare is with flesh and blood on the earth. Ours is with wicked spirits in the celestial realms. We should always remember that those who oppose us are merely the intermediaries used by the spiritual forces and treat them accordingly. *It is not our place to wrestle with blood and flesh* but to look beyond the human instrument to the real adversary in the spirit world. Material weapons are worse than useless. Our attitude toward men should be one of purest conciliation, not strife (<sup>615</sup>).

*The Joint Allotment in Heaven*

<sup>14</sup> The spiritual armor here given covers the whole body and is for defense only. Truth will give us strength to withstand the attacks of error. Righteousness will preserve us from the wounds of wickedness. The evangel of peace, wherewith we go, will conciliate the human weapons used by the spirit powers which are directing human affairs.

<sup>16</sup> An ancient mode of warfare was to fasten fire to arrows which would not only wound but burn. It was especially used against elephants to cause them to stampede. When the adversary sends some burning dart in the direction of the believer it is his privilege to shield himself by means of the faith which this epistle affords. This will effectually stop the arrows and quench their fire.

<sup>17</sup> When all this has been done then we *receive* (not take) the helmet of salvation. And then we are entrusted with the sword of the spirit—a divine declaration. We have no offensive power at all except an explicit statement of God. The Scriptures contain many statements of men, such as the assertions of Job's friends, which are false. Hence only the declarations which proceed out of the mouth of God constitute the spirit's sword.

#### THEIR PRAYER FOR PAUL

<sup>18</sup> What a marvelous picture Paul presents of the ministry of conciliation! God's ambassador in a chain! Could anything show more clearly God's attitude towards mankind? Nothing is surer to provoke war than the maltreatment of an ambassador. God's ambassador goes to Rome, the greatest of earth's governments, and he gets a chain. Yet, instead of declaring war, he proclaims peace. This is the true spirit of the evangel for the present economy. It calls for conciliation notwithstanding everything which should provoke hostilities. The answer to this prayer is found in Phil. 1:12.

#### TYCHICUS' COMMISSION

<sup>21</sup> Tychicus means "Fortunate", and such he was, for no fortune could compare with the riches which this epistle was to him and to those to whom he brought it.

## SALUTATION

## GRACE BE WITH ALL

**23 What a balm this benediction brings! Peace, love, faith—may these be the portion of all who read these lines!**

**24 Here we have the true test—those who truly love our Lord. May favor, indeed, be theirs!**

# PHILIPPIANS

The Philippian epistle is a divine commentary on the latter half of Ephesians, and, like it, is especially concerned with the deportment demanded by the transcendent doctrines developed in the first half of the Ephesian letter. This is the key to its contents. *It does not deal with doctrines, but with deportment.* This will illumine many a difficult passage in it and this has been allowed to color the wording of the version.

As shown in the literary framework, the epistle is a perfect, though complex reversion. Its controlling theme is Participation in the Evangel, not only by its public proclamation, but especially by a conduct consistent with its teachings.

Following the Introduction and preceding the Conclusion the Philippians' fellowship with Paul by contributions and in sufferings is detailed, interspersed with Paul's own experiences in preaching the evangel.

The main subject, the Living Expression of the Evangel, or, "Having on the Word of Life" (2<sup>16</sup>), is illustrated by four examples: Christ and Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus. Four exhortations are introduced in this division. The entreaty to imitate Christ opens it and Paul places himself before them as a model at its close. So, too, the service of Timothy is preceded by an exhortation, and the sufferings of Epaphroditus are followed by an appeal.

These two themes, suffering and service, pervade the whole epistle, from the introduction, where Paul and Timothy style themselves *slaves*, rather than apostles, to the end where the grace of the *Lord*, or Master, rather than Christ, is invoked.

The humility of Christ is presented, in harmony with the transcendent truth of this economy. It did not begin with His birth or result only in His exaltation over the earth. It

## FRAMEWORK OF PHILIPPIANS

*Complex Reversion*

INTRODUCTION 1<sup>1</sup>  
Salutation 1<sup>2</sup>

The Philippians—Contribution—Doxology 1<sup>3</sup>

Paul—his bonds in Christ 1<sup>2</sup>

Paul—his indifference to death 1<sup>19</sup>

The Philippians—suffering with Paul 1<sup>27</sup>

Exhortation to imitate Christ 2<sup>1</sup>

CHRIST 2<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In God's form } Empties Himself

<sup>2</sup> Slave's form }

<sup>3</sup> Human shape }

<sup>4</sup> Death }

<sup>5</sup> the Cross }

Humbles Himself

Exhortation to Obedience 2<sup>12</sup>

TIMOTHY—his character and service 2<sup>19</sup>

EPAPHRODITUS—his character and his sufferings 2<sup>25</sup>

Exhortation to Beware 3<sup>1</sup>

PAUL 3<sup>4</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Law justness—blameless

<sup>6</sup> Zeal—persecuting saints

<sup>5</sup> Law—Pharisee

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew of Hebrews

<sup>3</sup> Tribe of Benjamin

<sup>2</sup> Race of Israel

<sup>1</sup> Circumcision

Exhortation to imitate Paul 3<sup>17</sup>

The Philippians—their care of Paul 4<sup>10</sup>

Paul—his complacency in want 4<sup>11</sup>

Paul—his strength in Christ 4<sup>13</sup>

The Philippians—Contribution—Doxology 4<sup>14</sup>

CONCLUSION 4<sup>21</sup>

Salutation 4<sup>23</sup>

PARTICIPATION IN THE EVANGEL  
THE LIVING EXPRESSIONS OF THE EVANGEL

commenced in glory before His incarnation, which was but a step in His downward path of obedience to God's will. It led from the highest place in the universe to the lowest, under the curse of the cross. It will exalt Him to headship over all creation, which will bow to Him as its Master, for God, the Father's glory.

For Christ to become flesh meant humiliation. Paul's physical connections were his boast. They pledged to him all the privileges and advantages which belonged alone to the Jew. But all of these are flung away once he knows Christ after the spirit, and His heavenly exaltation.

<sup>1</sup> This epistle was not written by Paul and Timothy in the character of *apostles*, but *slaves*. This is important, as it gives us a key to the character of the whole letter. The mention of the overseers, or supervisors, and servants leads to the same conclusion. The grace also is from the *Lord*. If we keep this in mind it will greatly simplify the understanding of difficult portions of the epistle.

#### THE PHILIPPIANS' CONTRIBUTION

A contribution, in its scriptural sense, is a sharing in common. The servant of God shares with the saints what he has received from God, and his hearers share with him the material wealth which they have obtained.

How refreshing it is to see the intimate interest of the Philippians in Paul's welfare and the mutual love which made their intercourse so delightful to read about after all these years! Here we have a picture of the ideal relations between the Lord's saints and those of His slaves who are seeking to defend the evangel. There is greater need now than in Paul's day. The evangel needs to be *recovered* before it can be confirmed or defended. God still uses such miserable means as an imprisoned apostle to make it known.

#### PAUL'S BONDS

<sup>12</sup> When Paul was taken to Rome he was permitted to dwell by himself with a soldier who guarded him. He had liberty to speak to the chief Jews and he delivered the final kingdom message to them. And then he lived two whole years in a rented house and received all who came to him. He spoke with all boldness and no one forbade him (Ac. 28<sup>16-21</sup>). These unusual privileges proved plainly, as the incidents on the voyage had already shown, that he was indeed a "prisoner of the Lord" (Eph. 4<sup>1</sup>). His bonds were "in Christ" and,

though they were designed to put a stop to the evangel, they aided its progress. Hitherto Paul had worked to support himself, now he was free to give all his time to the Lord's service. He evidently reached some in the very household of Cæsar (4<sup>22</sup>).

<sup>16</sup> Paul was located at Rome, at the very center of government, where his influence, even though he was a prisoner, especially among Cæsar's retinue, was doubtless used by God to control the opposition to the evangel. How like Him to station the defender of the faith in the very citadel of His enemies!

#### PAUL'S INDIFFERENCE TO DEATH

<sup>20</sup> The historical record emphasizes the fact that Paul taught the things which concern our Lord Jesus Christ "with all *boldness*, unforbidden" (Ac. 28<sup>31</sup>).

<sup>21</sup> If Paul lived, his efforts would further the fame of Christ: if he died a martyr's death, even that would be gain for the cause of Christ, for the martyrs proved to be the seed of the church. Paul could not be thinking of his own gain in this connection.

<sup>23</sup> A martyr's death would claim a martyr's reward, yet Paul lived at least two years at Rome, writing his letters from thence. Undoubtedly there has been more fruit from this work than from all of his previous service.

<sup>23</sup> The solution of Paul's dilemma, life or death (neither of which he would choose because of his longing for another, much better condition) is the resurrection life with Christ. This "solution" might be referred to the dissolution of his body at death (2 Tim. 4<sup>6</sup>) if it were not set in *contrast* with death. The same term is used in Lu. 12<sup>36</sup> of the breaking up of a wedding party. Words used in the physical sense are often used in a metaphysical sense in the epistles. We *dissolve* material things but *solve* spiritual problems.

*Participation in the Evangel*

<sup>27</sup> The citizenship or enfranchisement here referred to is celestial, not terrestrial.

THE PHILIPPIANS' SUFFERING

<sup>28</sup> It is our privilege to enjoy the sufferings which come to us in seeking to do God's work, for they are not, as we are wont to think, a token of His displeasure, but a favor which is granted to the few who are faithful in the performance of His will.

PUTTING ON THE EVANGEL

This division takes up the body of the epistle, setting before us the four models, Christ, Timothy, Epaphroditus and Paul, mingled with exhortations to imitate their example.

EXHORTATION TO IMITATE CHRIST

<sup>1</sup> Our conduct should reflect the unselfish humility of Christ, considering others and their honor rather than our own.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST JESUS

<sup>6</sup> *Form* denotes outward appearance, as is shown by Paul's use of it in the contrast, "having a *form* of devoutness, yet denying its power" (2Ti.3<sup>5</sup>). We have found it impossible to sustain the idea that it refers to intrinsic essence. *Figure* or *fashion* denotes the form prevailing at any time. Christ was the Image of God, the visible representation of the Deity. Paul himself saw Him on the Damascus road in celestial glory. Yet the *form* in verse 6 was laid aside for that of a slave, at His incarnation.

Adam and his progeny seek to exalt themselves and will be humbled. But Christ, Who might easily assume the place of equality with God, found His delight in submission and humiliation.

The ending *-mos* of the word for pillaging denotes the *act*, not the object of pillage. When He was in the form of God His glory was too bright to be gazed upon by men. The apostle John presents Him as the audible Word, but Paul shows Him as the visible Image of the Deity, too bright for mortal gaze and seen only by our spiritual perception. As such He is seen in this epistle.

<sup>7</sup> *Empties* cannot refer to a partial relinquishment of His previous state, but a total change of form, in which none of God's glory was apparent to the physical sight.

*The Example of Christ*

The enormous sweep of this synopsis of Christ's service and suffering takes in the whole universe and all the eons, from the beginning to the consummation. Being in the form of God, He was above the heavens, under the curse of the cross He was beneath all. Yet, as He voluntarily descended from the highest to the lowest place, so, too, shall be His exaltation. Every tongue will acclaim Him Lord for God the Father's glory. This cannot be until every heart will have been subdued at the consummation (1Cor. 15<sup>28</sup>). Until then there are enemies who oppose His rule. Ever since His resurrection God has been engaged in His exaltation. Even now, many celestial powers are subordinate to Him (1Pe.3<sup>22</sup>). When He comes again the earth will be added to His domain, until finally the whole universe will be reconciled to God by the blood of His cross (Col.1<sup>20</sup>). This is His reward. It is as Jesus (Jehovah the Saviour), the name of His humiliation, that He will be exalted to the place supreme. He Who was lowest shall become the highest.

EXHORTATION TO OBEDIENCE

<sup>12</sup> There is no question here of sinners working for salvation. This is an exhortation to saints to make the salvation they have effective in their daily life and action.

<sup>16</sup> The "word of life", or a *living expression* of the evangel consists in conduct so consistent with it that the life alone will proclaim the spirit of the message apart from its formal announcement. Christ, Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus were living expressions, for their service and sufferings exemplify its message.

<sup>17</sup> The priest in Israel, officiating at the altar, poured a libation, usually of wine, upon the sacrifice (Num.15<sup>5</sup>). Paul wished to be the libation on their sacrifice.

TIMOTHY

<sup>19</sup> Timothy was the ideal servant. Though himself suffering with infirmities, he was not concerned about himself but took a genuine interest in the saints whom he served.

*The Living Examples*

<sup>19</sup> The word *soul* has lost its significance in English, especially in its compounds, hence we render idiomatically "good cheer," for "well souled" and "equally sensitive" for "equal-souled."

## EPAPHRODITUS

<sup>25</sup> This is a most pathetic picture of the suffering which often accompanies the service of the Lord in this economy. In the previous economy Paul could and would have healed Epaphroditus, for his very handkerchief was potent with power. That course was in keeping with the kingdom which he then proclaimed. But now, when all blessing is spiritual (Eph.1<sup>3</sup>), Paul does not attempt to heal Epaphroditus and tells Timothy to use a sip of wine for his frequent infirmities (1Tim. 5<sup>23</sup>). How full of feeling is the statement that he was depressed, not by his own condition, but because the Philippians had heard of it and would be concerned about him!

<sup>26</sup> Epaphroditus was commissioned by the Philippian ecclesia to bring their contribution to Paul. He was *their* apostle. His case aptly illustrates the meaning of the term.

## EXHORTATION TO BEWARE

<sup>2</sup> Those who are elsewhere called the *Circumcision* are here termed the "*Maimcison*," and true believers in Christ Jesus are the genuine *Circumcision*. Circumcision signified the cutting off of the flesh, but speedily became a badge in which the flesh took great pride. Instead of cutting off the flesh it gave it the place of privilege. Only those circumcised dared to hope for God's blessings. Now a mere mutilation of the flesh is replaced by doing, in spirit, what circumcision typified. We cut off the physical altogether.

<sup>3</sup> The divine ritual of Judaism is replaced, in our case, by real spiritual worship, acceptable to God wherever it is offered.

## THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL

<sup>4</sup> Paul is the most brilliant example of the results of a divine religion in which the flesh is given a place. His birth gave him the most favored place among men. His attainments gave him the highest place among his own race.

But he forfeits all this and flings it from him because it interferes with the superior position accorded to him in Christ. His religion made him the chief of sinners, Christ's bitterest enemy. Now he will have no more of his own, but that which is founded on Christ.

<sup>8</sup> *Refuse* is defined (Syr.27<sup>4</sup>) "as when one sifts with a sieve, the *refuse* remains." "What is thrown to the dogs." (*Suid.*)

<sup>10</sup> It is notable that Paul never engages our attention with the life of Christ while on earth. Then, he tells us, He was a Servant of the Circumcision (Rom. 15<sup>8</sup>). All His practices and precepts were directly connected with the proclamation of the kingdom, which is now in abeyance. We have no vital relation with Him until His resurrection. We, too, are accounted as alive in resurrection. We, too, are ascended and seated among the celestials in Him (Eph.2<sup>5-6</sup>). Let us conduct ourselves, then, in harmony with this. This is our goal. Let us approximate it as nearly as we can in anticipation. The apostle has no doubts about attaining the actual resurrection. He is not so sure that he realizes its power in his present experience. All will be raised then. Not all realize it now. We should, however, accommodate ourselves to those who are still observing the rudiments.

<sup>14</sup> We have here the ideal experience of a believer in Christ Jesus. The shortcomings and sins, the aims and ambitions of the past are all forgotten, lest they hinder us in our race to the goal, which is conformity to Christ Jesus in His glory. Though we cannot fully attain this until resurrection, we should aim to come as near it as possible in our present experience. He who comes nearest this ideal will obtain the prize.

## EXHORTATION TO IMITATE PAUL

<sup>17</sup> The imitation of Christ, when He was concerned with an economy which was, in some ways, the opposite of the present, has led to endless failure and confusion. The reason for Paul's exhortation that he be made a model for their imitation arises from the

*Exhortation to Imitate Paul*

fact that in him alone do we see the resurrection life of Christ interpreted in terms of present conduct. Christ's earthly life needs no such interpretation, so none of the other apostles are models in this sense even for the Circumcision.

<sup>18</sup> The enemies of the *cross* of Christ are those who, failing to apprehend the significance of His shameful death, still cling to the terrestrial and the physical.

The *cross* of Christ brings before us the *manner* of His death. It was an ignominious, shameful, malefactor's death, to which God's curse was attached. Hence we may avail ourselves of the efficacy of His blood, and yet, by clinging to the world and the flesh, become enemies of His *cross*.

<sup>20</sup> Our citizenship, or enfranchisement, in contrast to that of Israel, is in the heavens. We have no political privileges where the sovereignty of our Lord has been rejected. But we *have* high hopes both politically and physically. We shall reign with Christ in the celestial spheres. And this body of humiliation will be transfigured to conform to His glorious body. He is coming as a *Saviour*.

<sup>21</sup> Here we have the definite assurance of His ability to subordinate the entire universe. This will not be accomplished until the consummation (1Cor. 15:24-28).

<sup>5</sup> The Lord is always near when men are high handed with us. It is not our place to retaliate but to be lenient and considerate, for He is near and will take care of our interests.

<sup>6</sup> Worry kills more men than war. To get beyond its reach is one of the most precious privileges of all who belong to Christ. There is no promise here that our prayers will be answered, or that, if several agree, they shall have their request. It goes far deeper than that. The knowledge that God is guiding all things to the goal He has set before Him, unhindered by the stress and storm which so distresses us, leads us to wonder whether our own petitions are in line with His will, and whether it is better to leave all with Him, confident that He will grant that only good which we crave but do not apprehend. We enter into His peace and acquiesce in His will whether our prayer be answered or not.

THE PHILIPPIANS' CARE OF PAUL

<sup>10</sup> The Philippians seem to have had Paul constantly on their hearts though circumstances, at times, kept them from contributing to his needs.

PAUL'S COMPLACENCY IN WANT

<sup>11</sup> It is blessed for the believer to recognize the fact that his environment and his condition are all of God, Who is using them for his welfare. Wealth or want, opulence or poverty are alike means for our blessing. There is no real contentment apart from this.

PAUL'S STRENGTH IN CHRIST

<sup>13</sup> What encouragement there is in this brief word! Nothing is too great for those who know their own weakness and the invigorating power of Christ.

THE PHILIPPIANS' CONTRIBUTION

<sup>14</sup> The gift of the Philippian ecclesia is especially precious because of the memories it awakens in Paul's mind. They alone came to his aid at the first, and then helped him even in Thessalonica, among his friends. Their contribution, being a token of their heartfelt appreciation and love, not only meets his need, but ascends, like the sacrifice of old, redolent with the perfume which speaks of the sacrifice of Christ. In return he reminds them of the glory that Christ has brought to God and that they, in Him, shall have all their needs supplied according to God's estimate of His work.

<sup>19</sup> While God does not fill all our *wants*, He supplies all our *needs*. Nor does He do this in accord with our service or deserts, but in harmony with the glory which has come to be His in Christ Jesus. Thus He ever deals with us, not as we are in ourselves, but as He sees us in Christ. This should assure our hearts of His continual care and provision notwithstanding appearances to the contrary. Paul was humbled at times, and hungry, yet this to him was an evidence of His care as well as the times of superabundance.

<sup>21</sup> Every saint "in Christ Jesus" limits this greeting to those who know Christ, not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

<sup>22</sup> Grace finds its trophies in the very household of that infamous monster, Nero!

<sup>23</sup> The epistle closes as it began, with the emphasis on conduct, by the use of the title *Lord*.



# COLOSSIANS

COLOSSIANS is the complement of the doctrinal section of Ephesians. Two mysteries dominate both. Ephesians elaborates the present Secret Economy, which concerns the *members* of the body of Christ: Colossians dwells upon the secret of Christ, Who is the *Head* of that body. Ephesians, however, *teaches* the truth, while Colossians *corrects* departure from it.

The literary framework gives us a clear clue to its contents. Within the Salutations and Mutual Reports, the whole body of the epistle deals with the details of the Secret of Christ. First the apostle, in one of the most sublime passages in Holy Writ, sets forth the secret glories of Christ as the Son of God.

At the close of the epistle he speaks of this again, desiring to make it known.

The bulk of this letter deals with correction in doctrine and deportment necessitated by departure from the Secret of Christ. A knowledge of this secret is vital to the spiritual welfare of all who know God.

Rationalism and ritual, the philosophy of the nations and the religion of Israel, are the two great enemies to the truth which find correction in Colossians.

Every false theology or philosophy which places anything of human origin between God and man, is set aside by the great truth that Christ is God's Complement. As our Complement He displaces all the decrees and rites of Judaism. In Christ we are complete and need naught else to fit us for the Father's presence.

The secret of Christ is presented in its future aspect in Ephesians. There is to be a harvest era in which Christ is to be supreme, not only on earth, but in the heavens also. His sway will be universal (Eph.1:10,32). In Colossians, however, the emphasis is placed on His past headship in creation and His present headship in redemption with a view to a future reconciliation of the universe. The unity of creation has led philosophers to

## FRAMEWORK OF COLOSSIANS

*Repeated Reversion*

SALUTATIONS	MUTUAL REPORTS	THE SECRET OF CHRIST	CORRECTION	INTRODUCTION 1 <sup>1-2</sup>
				Report of Epaphras to Paul 1 <sup>3-8</sup>
				THE SECRET OF CHRIST Its Realization 1 <sup>9-27</sup>
				DOCTRINE 2 <sup>8-23</sup>
				Philosophy, 2 <sup>8</sup>
				Empty Seduction 2 <sup>8</sup>
				Human Tradition 2 <sup>8</sup>
				Elements 2 <sup>8</sup>
				God's Complement 2 <sup>9</sup>
				Our Complement 2 <sup>10</sup>
				Circumcision, Baptism
				Decrees 2 <sup>11-14</sup>
				Sovereignities and
				Authorities 2 <sup>15</sup>
				Shadows, Food and Drink
				2 <sup>16-19</sup>
				Teachings of Men 2 <sup>20-23</sup>
				DEPORTMENT 3 <sup>1-4</sup>
				Christ in Heaven 3 <sup>1-4</sup>
				Put to Death Members
				on Earth 3 <sup>5-7</sup>
				Put Off the Old
				Humanity 3 <sup>8-11</sup>
				Put On the Young
				Humanity 3 <sup>12-17</sup>
				Modify Relationships
				on Earth 3 <sup>18-21</sup>
				Master in Heaven 3 <sup>22-4</sup>
				THE SECRET OF CHRIST Its Expression 4 <sup>2-6</sup>
				Tychicus to the Colossians 4 <sup>7-9</sup>
				CONCLUSION 4 <sup>10-18</sup>

trace it back to a common origin, by some called a "primordial germ." This first element in creation, however simple it may be said to be, must possess within itself a potential universe. The Son of God, the Firstborn of Creation, is the satisfactory solution to all questions which concern creation. Creation did not begin in chaos but in Christ. It will not end in ruin wrought by man but in universal reconciliation wrought by the blood of His cross.

<sup>1</sup> "Paul, a commissioner of Christ Jesus," introduces us to a glorified Christ in heaven and invokes the authority vested in Paul as His legate. Contrast the character assumed by Paul in Philippians.

<sup>4</sup> Their faith in *Christ Jesus* and their heavenly hope reminds us of the opening words of Ephesians. Before these letters were written the saints among the nations had no clear indications of a celestial destiny. This is practically unknown outside Paul's epistles, and even in them it is gradually approached. The Thessalonians are taught the Lord's descent from heaven to meet them in the air (1 Thess. 4:16). The secret of the resurrection is made known to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:51), showing that our bodies will be changed to fit the celestial spheres. But not until the prison epistles were penned are we given definite assurance that the saints are destined to enjoy a celestial allotment.

<sup>6</sup> A true realization of God's grace is the accomplishment most to be desired of all things, for it is impossible to please God without faith and an intelligent grasp of His gracious purpose. Zeal must be directed by knowledge.

## THE SECRET OF CHRIST

### ITS REALIZATION

<sup>9</sup> Here we have a prayer which is well worthy of our imitation.

<sup>13</sup> The kingdom of His Son is a figurative allusion to the kingdom of Christ. Messiah's kingdom is literal and future and destroys and displaces earth's kingdoms (Dan. 2:44). The kingdom of the Son here spoken of is a present spiritual power. We are not rescued from earth's governments but from the powers of Darkness which direct and dominate them. The term "pardon" is borrowed from the kingdom phraseology to accord with this figure.

<sup>15</sup> God is an invisible Spirit (John 4:24 1Ti. 6:16). The Son of God is the visible, tangible embodiment of Deity. Only in Him can we see God. All other images are condemned because they are false and dishonor God (Deut. 5:9). All creation was in Him, as the tree and its fruits are found in the seed. In Him

God created all else, for the whole universe was created in Him. This includes the celestial as well as the terrestrial spheres and every form of spiritual power and dignity. These exist *through* Him and *for* Him and He makes all a unit for the accomplishment of God's purpose.

<sup>18</sup> As God's Complement, His supremacy becomes pre-eminent in reconciliation as well as creation. Their relation may be shown as follows:

<i>The Image of God</i>	Firstborn of all Creation:
	The Universe Celestial, Terrestrial Created in Him
<i>The Complement of God</i>	Firstborn from the Dead:
	The Universe Celestial, Terrestrial Reconciled through Him

The two paramount points in universal history are the creation and the resurrection of the Son of God. Through His death and vivification He will yet more than restore the lost creation to the Father. The cross, which speaks of His estrangement from God, is the basis on which reconciliation is built. The benefits it brings are not confined to earth or mankind, but include the celestial realms as well.

<sup>20</sup> Just as His glories in creation take us back to the very beginning, so the greater glories of reconciliation take us to the very consummation. The universal reconciliation cannot be fully accomplished until the close of the eonian times, when all sovereignty and authority and power and even death are rendered inoperative (1 Cor. 15:24-27) and when all mankind are saved (1 Tim. 4:10) and justified (Rom. 5:18). This takes us far beyond the new earth portrayed at the end of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, for there He still reigns, many of mankind are still lost, and death is not yet abolished.

<sup>21</sup> At present reconciliation includes only those who, like the Colossians, believe in Him and have not lost their hold on this great truth (or indeed, have never heard of it). Salvation depends only on the work of Christ and is not affected by our moods: reconciliation depends, on our side, upon our enjoyment of His favor.

*The Secret of Christ*

<sup>23</sup> The scope of reconciliation is not confined to mankind: it is as broad as creation. Its proclamation was made to every creature under heaven. It is God's loving purpose to bind all His creatures to Him with the cords of affection. To accomplish this purpose demands suffering—not only the essential suffering of Christ on the cross, but those of His afflictions which He endures in His members in the course of its dispensation.

<sup>25</sup> This epistle may not have been the very last of the Greek Scriptures to be penned. The Revelation of Jesus Christ and John's writings might have been written, as we are told, long afterward. Paul completed or filled up the word of God in another sense. All the other Scriptures were limited in their scope to the terrestrial, as to space, and to the eons, as to time. They were concerned with a fragment of the universe. In them the nations could have only a subordinate place and portion. As the secret of Christ breaks beyond the barriers of Judaism, these restrictions vanish. On earth Messiah never left the land of Israel. Now, in spirit, He walks among the nations, dispensing blessing as He did in the days of His earthly sojourn. Christ, Who *never* went among the nations before His ascension, met Paul outside the land, on the Damascus road, not as the lowly Jesus, but as the glorified Son of God. Gradually, in spirit, through the apostle's ministries, He unfolds His secret purpose to be to the nations, in spirit, all that He had been to Israel in flesh, and far more. This is the secret: *Christ among the nations, a glorious expectation*. Not a subordinate place in the earthly kingdom, but a pre-eminent place in His celestial domains.

Let us, too, note the tremendous importance which he attaches to an appreciation of this most marvelous mystery or secret. It satisfies both the heart and the head. It reveals depths of affection in which we may revel. It discloses the treasures of wisdom and knowledge for which earth's sages and philosophers have been groping without avail. It solves the riddle of the universe—its beginning and its end, its creation and its reconciliation.

## DOCTRINAL CORRECTION

<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to discern that the divine religion given to Israel in the flesh may be one of the greatest hindrances toward an appreciation of the grace which is ours in Christ Jesus. Hence the Spirit of God forces it down to the same level with human philosophy and tradition by alternating them in this passage. The empty seduction and rudiments, the circumcision, baptism, and shadows refer to the rites and ritual Jehovah gave His earthly people. Yet they are interspersed with references to the authority and teachings of men. Ritual is just as dangerous an enemy as rationalism. As God's Complement, Christ is the answer to philosophy: as our Complement, He is the end of religion.

<sup>8</sup> By a striking figure the apostle warns us lest we lose all our possessions in Christ by a legal process, such as is served when property is seized for debt. Legality levies an attachment on us so that we lose the enjoyment of our possessions and philosophy interferes in the same way.

<sup>11</sup> The spiritual history of those who know Christ as their Complement may be summarized in three words: death, and burial and resurrection. Not, of course, literally, but in Him. Two rites, in Israel, set this forth in figure. Circumcision is the cutting off of the flesh. It signifies death. Baptism pictures both burial and resurrection. Now, the believer need not be circumcised, for Christ, his Complement, descended into death itself. In Christ's burial he has been baptized. In His resurrection he has been raised from the dead. Faith in God's operation is all the ceremony needed to place the believer beyond the tomb in full possession of every privilege ever procured by the rites of religion. Christ, our Complement, makes full provision for our approach into the divine presence, just as the brazen altar and the laver provided for the approach of the priest in the tabernacle (Ex.27:130<sup>17</sup>).

<sup>14</sup> The decrees issued by the apostles from Jerusalem (Acts 15:23-29) were a standing symbol of the subjection of the nations to the Circumcision even though they absolved them from observing all the rudimentary rites, especially circumcision.

## Doctrinal Correction

<sup>15</sup> Not only is the believer exempt from the authority of the apostles of the Circumcision, but, in spirit, he is beyond the reach of all human jurisdiction. Even before His resurrection our Lord reminded Pilate that he had no authority whatever in His case except what had been granted him from above (John 19<sup>10-11</sup>). By His rising He reversed the sentence of death pronounced against Him by the Sanhedrin and the Roman governor.

<sup>16</sup> The prohibition of certain foods under the law, the observance of festivals and fasts and rest days, all foreshadowed the rest and joy and plenty of that future kingdom on the earth, in which the body of Christ has no part. The divine picture of our portion is the physical body of Christ, risen and ascended and seated at God's right hand in the celestial spheres. As the physical members are to this body, so we, His spiritual members, are to Him. We, too, are roused and seated there, and are the instruments through which He will effect His Father's will in the empyrean.

<sup>19</sup> "Holding the Head" is a succinct expression of our duty as members of the body of Christ. A conscious connection and subjection to Him as our Head will sever us from the things of the world, whether it be its religion (however divine its origin) or its philosophy. Any attempt to improve our position before God by physical means, whether it be an appeal to the senses or a curbing of its normal needs, denies our completeness in Christ.

## CORRECTION—DEPORTMENT

<sup>1</sup> The secret of pleasing God is a conduct conformed to our *spiritual* position. The key to this position is the great truth that we have not only died and have been roused with Christ, but have *ascended* with Him into celestial spheres. Our interests, our expectations, are no longer on earth at all, but among the celestials. Let this great and glorious truth be behind our motives and guide us into the path that pleases Him.

## Correction—Deportment

<sup>5</sup> We are exhorted to transform faith into fact. Are we dead to the world? Then let us live as those who are past the practices which pollute it. How can we keep on in the course which will draw down God's indignation—not upon us—but upon those who do not trust Him?

<sup>9</sup> The old humanity, with its diversity and division, no longer reflects the Image of its Creator. In the new, or fresh, humanity, in which Christ displaces Adam, these divisions disappear. The religion of the Jew and the philosophy of the Greek, the privileges of the Circumcision and the proscription of the Uncircumcision, the subjection of the slave and the superiority of the freeman—all these find no place in the young humanity of which Christ is the Head. We should so behave that it will be recognized as created in His image.

<sup>12</sup> The greater our appreciation of our Lord's grace toward us, the greater grace will we show towards all who belong to Him. Without this compelling power we shall be able only to exercise our natural, ungracious dispositions.

<sup>14</sup> Love, the greatest of the abiding trinity (1Cor. 13<sup>13</sup>), is the tie which binds us to the Lord and should be the tie which unites us to our fellow saints. Before maturity, in the preparatory era preceding the present economy, the saints were united (or rather divided) by a common rite, as Circumcision, or a common ancestor, as Israel. Now that these are abolished there is a spiritual unity unmarred by any division (Eph. 4<sup>3-6</sup>). Love is the tie that makes us one, peace is the tie that keeps us one.

<sup>15</sup> All difficulties should be submitted to the arbitration of the peace of Christ.

<sup>16</sup> The sincerest source of song is a heart full of grace. It should be the overflow of a heart surcharged with an appreciation of God's love. All other motives are a mockery, and discordant to His ears.

<sup>17</sup> God is jealous that His Son be duly honored in all we do or say. Even our thanksgiving must be accompanied by the incense of His name.

## Correction—Deportment

<sup>17</sup> We should always distinguish between our place "in Christ" and "in the Lord". "In Christ" physical distinctions vanish, even the distinction between the sexes is gone. There is neither male nor female (Gal.3<sup>28</sup>). But "in the Lord" these are all recognized and regulated. Let us never base *conduct* on our place in Christ, it is in the Lord. Service is to the Lord, not to Christ. In the Lord, woman is subject, in Christ, she is the equal of the man.

<sup>18</sup> The ideal family is characterized by love on the part of the husband, which smoothes the way for subjection on the part of the wife and obedience on the part of the children. It is a sign of the last days that children no longer heed this injunction (2Tim. 3<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>22</sup> As slavery is almost a thing of the past, these injunctions may well be the guide of those whose service is voluntary rather than compulsory. It is a marvelous help to look beyond all earthly masters and work for One above. Our employer may be hard to please, or unjust, or harsh, not giving proper compensation, but if we become the slave of Christ our work will be sincerely done and we will look to Him for appreciation and due deserts. On the other hand we will be restrained from injurious acts by the fear of Him in that day.

<sup>1</sup> Masters, too, by remembering that they are His slaves, will deal justly with those who serve them.

## THE SECRET OF CHRIST

## ITS EXPRESSION

<sup>2</sup> The great burden on the apostle's heart at this time was the transcendent revelation of Christ and His secret glories, which had been committed to him. Why did he publish his message when he was a prisoner at the court of Rome? God's ways are not our ways. If the apostle had been free he would probably have proclaimed Christ's universal dignities by word of mouth. Being bound, he committed his message to writing, a method which has been immeasurably more effective.

## Mutual Reports

<sup>7</sup> Tychicus is well named, for who ever had a better "chance" than the bearer of this epistle as well as the letter to the Ephesians? (Eph.6<sup>21</sup>). The spiritual wealth with which he was entrusted passes our utmost comprehension.

<sup>10</sup> The mention of Mark is another affectionate touch. Barnabas and Saul brought him from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts12<sup>25</sup>) and took him with them on their first missionary journey, but he forsook them and returned to Jerusalem (Acts13<sup>13</sup>). For this Paul refused to take him the next time, causing the separation of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15<sup>37-40</sup>). But Mark has been drinking deeply of *grace*. He no longer is prejudiced against the uncircumcision. Paul tells Timothy "he is useful for the service" (2 Ti. 4<sup>11</sup>). Now he makes sure that his friends receive him. And this man, whose service was so unsatisfactory, is the one chosen by God to write the account of the perfect Servant!

<sup>10</sup> Aristarchus, Mark and Justus were once members of the circumcision body who are now joined to the uncircumcision. They had proclaimed the kingdom. Here we have the point of contact between these two companies. The course of the Circumcision is traced in the epistle to the Hebrews.

<sup>12</sup> Epaphras seems to have been the principal teacher in the Colossian ecclesia (1<sup>7</sup>) through whom they learned the grace of God. How effectively that grace wrought in his own heart is evident by his prayers and anguish while absent from them. His great concern was that they should be *mature* and *complete* in all the will of God. How rare are such saints in these days!

<sup>18</sup> It is likely that the Laodicean epistle here referred to is the same as that now called the epistle to the Ephesians. It has the character of a circular letter, copies of which were sent to various ecclesias.

<sup>18</sup> The epistle was probably penned by a professional scribe, but the apostle appended the greeting with his own hand.

## PAUL'S PROMISE EPISTLES

THE blessed expectation of our Lord's return before the day of His indignation is the subject of these, Paul's earliest epistles. It is the early opening wedge between those who received his ministry among the nations and those of the Circumcision, who looked for Messiah's advent after the display of His indignation and the destruction of man's kingdoms.

The historical background for this change is given in the book of Acts, though the doctrine itself is not found there because the Acts is a treatise on the kingdom of God for Israel. In the ministry of our Lord and His twelve apostles His coming is always presented in its connection with the promised kingdom. It will be with power and great glory (Mt.24<sup>30</sup>Mk.13<sup>26</sup>Lu.21<sup>27</sup>). His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives (Acts1<sup>11-12</sup>Zech.14<sup>1-5</sup>). All the predictions in the book of Daniel and in the Revelation of Jesus Christ will find fulfillment from then on. It will follow an era of the most awful and terrific judgments mankind will ever be called upon to endure. So long as the kingdom was impending these judgments, also, were hanging over a rebellious race.

At first Paul, like all the rest, confined his ministry to the Jews. At Antioch, where the disciples were first called "Christians," there were none except Jews and proselytes. From this he was separated (Acts 13<sup>2</sup>). At *Pisidian* Antioch he first turned to the nations, or Gentiles. After that, though he spoke to the Jews first, he proclaimed Christ freely among the nations, preaching grace. One of the first questions for these believers

among the nations was, What shall become of us in the great judgments which precede the coming of the kingdom? Will God pour out His bowls of wrath upon our heads? In answer to this the apostle is given an entirely new revelation concerning the future presence of the Lord. The believers among the nations were saved on the ground of *grace*. This is to characterize all God's dealings with them. Hence they *cannot* remain in the scene which is visited by His indignation. They must be sheltered or removed. Some saints in Israel are sheltered, but the new company, composed principally of saints from the other nations who have believed Paul's preaching, are to be removed. Paul receives the revelation that, long before the Lord descends in glory to set up His kingdom, He will descend, not to the earth, but to the air, and His saints will be caught up to meet Him there. Thus they will be above the lightnings and thunders of the terrible day of the Lord.

In later epistles, as the truth was gradually developed, more details were added to this glorious revelation. The Corinthian mind found difficulties in this doctrine, so the apostle unfolds to them the secret or mystery of the resurrection (Co.15<sup>51,52</sup>), that our bodies, which, at present, are adapted only to an earthly environment, are to be *changed* to suit the celestial spheres. The Philippian letter caps the climax by the added revelation that they shall be *transfigured* into the glorious likeness of our Lord Himself!

# I THESSALONIANS

THE historical setting and occasion for this epistle is found in the book of Acts (17:1-18:5). By constraint of the Spirit of God, after he had revisited the scenes of his first missionary journey, Paul is led to go across to Macedonia. He perceived a vision in which a Macedonian entreated him, "Cross over into Macedonia. Help us!" In response to this appeal Paul and his party founded an ecclesia in Philippi, to which also he afterwards penned the epistle of that name. After being beaten and imprisoned, they are besought to leave the city, and came to Thessalonica.

Paul first reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue for three sabbaths, showing from their Scriptures that Christ must suffer and rise from the dead and that Jesus was their Messiah. Some believed but some did not. As at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:46-48), Paul then turns to those outside the pale of Judaism and of these a vast multitude believe. But, as at Pisidian Antioch, the unbelieving Jews stirred up a persecution against them so that they were sent away. After going to Berea (Ac. 17:10) and Athens (Ac. 17:15-34), he came to Corinth, where both Silas and Timothy joined him (Acts 18:5, 1 Thess. 3:6) and where he probably wrote this, the first of all the writings of the Greek Scriptures.

Paul did not desire to leave the Thessalonians. They had only just received the evangel and needed to be taught and confirmed in the faith. He was deeply concerned about them and sought twice to return to them, but was hindered. So he sent Timothy in his stead. The report of Timothy greatly comforted him. Not being able to go to them, he pens this epistle.

The literary framework shows that the whole epistle takes its color from the persecutions endured by the Thessalonians. At present they are suffer-

## FRAMEWORK, I. THESSALONIANS

*Complex Reversion and Alternation*

### SALUTATION 1<sup>1</sup>

THANKSGIVING: receive, imitate, wait,  
rescued from indignation 1<sup>1-10</sup>  
PAUL'S ENTRANCE to the Thessalonians  
2<sup>1-2</sup>12

THANKSGIVING: receive, imitate, suffer,  
indignation upon Jews 2<sup>13-2</sup>16  
PAUL BEREAVED of the Thessalonians  
2<sup>17-3</sup>11

THE LORD'S PRESENCE 3<sup>12-3</sup>13

ASKING AND ENTREATING 4<sup>1-4</sup>8

WRITING: not necessary 4<sup>9-4</sup>12

THE LORD'S PRESENCE: those  
asleep, consolation 4<sup>13-4</sup>18

WRITING: not necessary 5<sup>1-5</sup>3

THE LORD'S COMING: those  
drowsing, consolation 5<sup>4-5</sup>11

ASKING AND ENTREATING 5<sup>12-5</sup>22

THE LORD'S PRESENCE 5<sup>23-5</sup>24

### SALUTATION 5<sup>25-5</sup>28

ing from the anger of men, but they shall be saved from the indignation of God. The Jews who persecute them are drawing down God's indignation, but the Thessalonians will never be subjects of His wrath (1<sup>10</sup> 2:16<sup>59</sup>).

The doctrinal burden of the epistle is based on the truth of the Lord's future presence. He had taught this during the few days he was with them but it needed further explanation.

Some had died and some were indifferent. Would these two classes be left out when He comes? The answer is that those who are asleep will be roused first and accompany the living when they are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. They will not be left behind.

So, too, those who do not watch. The death of Christ provides for their salvation from future wrath quite apart from their present walk. All who are His, whether watchful or drowsy, shall live together with Him.

## PAUL'S THANKSGIVING

2 This is the pattern pastoral epistle. Paul's deep concern leads him to constant prayer for them, for he knows their need and has been torn from them before it was possible for him to teach them much.

3 It is most significant to find in the opening strain of this, Paul's earliest epistle, that abiding trinity, faith, expectation and love, which have continued the leading characteristics of his ministry and which alone remain throughout this economy (1 Cor. 13<sup>13</sup>). Expectation is expounded in these Promise Epistles. Faith is fully set forth in the Preparatory Epistles, especially Romans. Love overflows in the Perfection Epistles. When all the "gifts" vanished, these remained.

It is the *character* not the quantity of work that counts with God. Apart from faith it is impossible to please Him. Let us avoid all efforts which are not firmly founded on faith. Even toil and weariness depend on their motive to meet His approbation. Love alone can give value to our toil. Expectation, not the indefinite, uncertain desire which "hope" suggests, but an assured and confident prospect of their Lord's return, gave these young believers their endurance in the midst of persecution.

4 Paul might well question the reality of the work done in Thessalonica. In a few weeks' time a great multitude heard and believed. There was danger that the enthusiasm of the moment had carried many into their company who were never the subjects of God's grace. But as Paul reflects upon the vision which sent him there (Ac. 16<sup>9</sup>) and the mighty power of the preaching, and their subsequent service and sufferings, he is convinced that God has chosen them. At this very time God assures him that He had many people in Corinth (Ac. 18<sup>10</sup>).

6 What fervor, what zeal, was shown by this ecclesia! Only a few months before they bowed down to idols. Now, in the face of a furious persecution, they fearlessly proclaim Christ. They have no thought of confining themselves to their own city or even their own province. This was indeed a model even at that time, and how

## I Thessalonians 1:1-2:6

much more so now! Every member was a missionary. Their conduct forced the very enemies of Paul to bear testimony to the reality of his work amongst them (Ac. 17<sup>6</sup>).

10 *Waiting* has no English equivalent. It is used in the papyri of those who were required to settle their debts without *waiting the full term*.

The secret of Paul's Thessalonian evangelism is twofold. He did not seek to turn them from their idols. That was incidental. He turned them *to God*. God and His grace provide the impelling power. In doing this they must needs turn their back on the idols they had worshiped. But more than this, he put before them a vital expectation. It was not a dead Christ he proclaimed to them. Nor did he stop with the resurrection. He engaged their hearts with the ascended Son of God, Whom they might expect to leave His place in heaven in order to receive them to Himself.

## PAUL'S ENTRANCE

4 There is an overwhelming temptation to please men, in evangelistic work. The marvelous success of Paul's short ministry in Thessalonica arose from his determination to please God at any cost.

5 The apostle, in discussing his own motives and methods, gives us an ideal by which to test all such efforts. Flattery is barred out. Avarice is denounced. He himself did not even get a living for his labor, for the Philipians sent him aid even in Thessalonica (Phil. 4<sup>16</sup>). How many are willing to work for such wages today? As an apostle he deserved the highest honors, and could have demanded them, but he preferred to get no glory from men. His personal presence was weak and his oratory despicable (so said the Corinthians, 2 Cor. 10<sup>10</sup>), but his love was great, his tenderness was touching, his toil and labor, to avoid being a burden to them, were more eloquent than words, and his conduct above reproach.



<sup>7</sup> What figure could more touchingly convey the apostle's genuine affection for the Thessalonians than that of a nursing mother? How unselfish and gentle and self-sacrificing is her care! The soul is the seat of sensation. To impart his own soul to them conveys the thought that he, like the true mother, would endure any discomfort or weariness for their sakes.

<sup>11</sup> The figure of a father is no less affectionate. His solicitude for his own is spontaneous and real. He has the welfare of his children at heart. So Paul dealt with the beloved saints at Thessalonica.

## PAUL'S THANKSGIVING

<sup>13</sup> Nothing is more important than that the Scriptures, in their pristine purity, be received as the word of God. Greece and the adjacent provinces were famed for their philosophies. Yet which of them ever produced effects to compare with the few words spoken by the apostle? He who fails to get beyond the preacher to the One Whose word he speaks has less than nothing. The one who hears the words of God receives everything.

<sup>16</sup> What an exhibition of God's sovereign grace! The Jews, with all their advantages and their divine ritual, suffer a foretaste of God's indignation as it will be displayed in the day of the Lord. After the siege of Jerusalem under Titus, their temple was destroyed, their city razed and their whole polity brought to an end. When they go back to their land and establish their religious rites again they are meeting the more disastrous indignation of Jehovah. The Thessalonians, who had no claims on God's mercy, suffer, indeed, from their countrymen, but are promised immunity in the day of His indignation.

## PAUL BEREAVED

<sup>17</sup> Paul was torn from the Thessalonians long before he wished to go, but God had other work for him to do, especially in Corinth, where he wrote this letter. It does not seem that his desire was gratified till some years later, when he went over Macedonia on his way to Greece (Ac.20<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> The record in the book of Acts passes over this journey of Timothy back to Thessalonica from Athens. Timothy and Silas were, indeed, charged to come to him at Athens (Ac.17<sup>15</sup>) and came back from Macedonia to Corinth (Ac.18<sup>5</sup>), but this visit, being outside the scope of the book of Acts, finds no place there. Such was the apostle's solicitude for them that, seeing that he cannot return to them himself, he sends his son in the faith. The persecution which forced him to leave rages about them and threatens to undermine their faith, for unlike Corinth and Ephesus, where the apostle remained for years, he had been with them but a few weeks and even then spent much of his time toiling for his living.

<sup>10</sup> The "deficiencies" in the faith of the Thessalonians are met in this epistle and in his second letter to them, as well as in all his nine letters to the seven ecclesias. The historical order of Paul's epistles should always be borne in mind. While the Thessalonian epistles come after the Ephesian group in the canon, they were written long before, during one of the earlier ministries of the apostle. Perhaps one of the important lessons for the apostle himself lay in his enforced absence from Thessalonica. The spiritual contact of an epistle accords much more with the trend of his ministries than his personal presence. His epistles, also, have ministered to millions who have found themselves in need of the same help that he extended to the Thessalonians.

This is the key to much that is inexplicable in the later epistles of Paul. He is always looking forward with confidence to a physical presence with those to whom he wrote. Even if the expectations were fulfilled, the Scriptures are silent, and leave us with the impression that his presence, like his ministry, forsook the physical.

## THE LORD'S PRESENCE

<sup>12</sup> Paul gives us the true motive and incentive of a holy life and a steadfast faith. It springs from the overflow of love to our fellow saints and to all others as well. It looks forward to the presence of Him Who does not decide by the outward appearance, but rewards according to the secret motives of the heart. The presence of our Lord is to be understood in its plainest literal sense. This is His absence. Whenever He is actually near and known, He will be present.

## ASKING AND ENTREATING

<sup>8</sup> Looseness in marriage relations is one of the saddest spots on the history of mankind. The gods of the nations were most offensive in this regard and their reputed misdeeds gave ample excuse for the trespasses of their devotees. Besides this the religious ceremonies and rites by which they were worshiped gave sanction to the most debasing excesses and abuses. No wonder the apostle speaks plainly and sharply. He will allow no trifling. Each one is to have his own wife and is not to interfere with his brother in this matter. No doubt the apostle refers to special customs and abuses in Thessalonica.

## WRITING NOT NECESSARY

<sup>9</sup> One of the earliest impulses of the new life of the believer is to love his fellow saints. We are taught by God. It is instinctive and should be fostered and encouraged. Let us not allow party lines and differences in details to divide between us and all who have the same life and harbor the same love.

<sup>11</sup> In the midst of such a great spiritual awakening as occurred at Thessalonica there is a temptation to neglect the necessary duties of life and mistake enthusiasm and noise for the quiet yet powerful operations of the spirit. The apostle urges them to attend to their own affairs and provide for their needs, so that their enemies will not find occasion to reproach them.

## I Thessalonians 3:12-5:3

## THE LORD'S PRESENCE

## THOSE REPOSING

<sup>13</sup> We do not sorrow when our dear ones are literally reposing. The reference is to death under a most beautiful figure for the distressed Thessalonian saints. The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee that all who are His will likewise be raised. Until Paul received this revelation, the only resurrection of the saints was the "resurrection of life" (Jn.5:29) called the "former" resurrection (Un. 20<sup>5</sup>), at the beginning of the thousand years, *after* the judgment period. Then the Lord comes down to earth. The saints are not snatched into the air. But this resurrection follows the Lord's *presence* in the air long before His *coming* to the earth. It precedes the great judgment era which ushers in the day of Jehovah. Being justified in the blood of Christ, we shall be saved from God's indignation through Him (Rom.5<sup>9</sup>). God has not assigned us to indignation but to the procuring of salvation (5<sup>9</sup>). This new revelation is further unfolded to the Corinthians (1Co.15:51), where the secret is disclosed that the living, as well as the dead, will be *changed*. Both will be given incorruptible, spiritual, celestial bodies, without which, indeed, they could hardly meet Him in the air. The crowning glory of this blessed expectation was made known to the Philippians. These bodies of humiliation will be *transfigured* to conform them to that glorious body which blinded Paul when first he beheld Him (Phil.3:21 Ac.9:3,18).

<sup>17</sup> "We, the living." Paul does not insist that he must survive to the advent, any more than he meant to assert positively that he should die when he said the Lord Jesus "shall raise us up" (2 Cor.4:14).

<sup>2</sup> This is man's day (1 Cor.4:3). It is near its end. The day of Jehovah, with its awful divine judgments, is fast approaching. It will give no notice of its coming. On the contrary, it will seem unnecessary and impossible. Is it not true that never, in the history of the race, was there such a hope and expectation of the end of war? The parliament of nations, the reduction of armaments, the federation of the world—are we not always hoping for peace and security?

<sup>4</sup> The day of the Lord with its terrors and destruction is not for us. The cry of "peace and security" should not lull us to sleep. We should be on the alert, knowing the futility of all security and peace apart from Christ. And, though aware of the whirlpool into which this world is sweeping, we have no fear, for it will not engulf us. But, suppose that we, too, relax our vigilance and take a nap along with the rest. Will we be left for judgment? At His coming to set up the kingdom it is vital that they watch or they will lose their reward (Mt.24<sup>42</sup>25<sup>13</sup>Mk.13<sup>34</sup>Lu.12<sup>37</sup>Un.3<sup>3</sup>16<sup>15</sup>). Not so here. Those who received Paul's gospel of faith apart from deeds, find their salvation a matter of pure unadulterated grace. This is true of the future as well as the past. The death of Christ, not our conduct, our watchfulness or the lack of it, is the foundation on which our future salvation rests just as really as the salvation which we already enjoy. This confidence will not lead to laxness.

<sup>8</sup> The believer's armor is defensive. His only weapon is the spirit's sword, the word of God. Not, indeed, every statement in the Scriptures, for some of it is an inspired record of human philosophy and the very lies of the adversary are contained in its pages, but every actual declaration which has proceeded forth from God through His accredited prophets and apostles. These are powerful and effective. No

other weapon should be used. For defense we rely on faith and love for the present and on the blessed expectation of our gathering together unto Him for the future. This is figured by the helmet. No judgment from above can harm us. When heaven's judgments fall we will be safe above them in His presence.

### ASKING AND ENTREATING

<sup>12</sup> Love and patience should characterize all our intercourse with fellow saints. Love will lead us to acknowledge those who are over us and to bear with those below. It will rule out all retaliation.

<sup>16</sup> Constant joy, constant prayer, constant thanksgiving is the normal privilege of all saints.

<sup>20</sup> These exhortations are made in view of the changing character of Paul's ministries. They became more spiritual as time advanced. The gift of prophecy was especially adapted to meet the need of the saints until God's complete revelation should be given (1 Cor.12<sup>10</sup>13<sup>8</sup>). Yet they were to be tested and only those in line with the ideal toward which God was working were to be permanent.

<sup>23</sup> The lame man who sat at the Beautiful gate of the temple (Ac.3<sup>2-16</sup>) had unimpaired health and strength after he was healed. The same word is used here but is extended to the soul and spirit as well. This, and far more, will be our lot in His presence even should any part be lame or deficient now!

## II THESSALONIANS

This second letter to the Thessalonians is a sequel to the first. The Thessalonians are still unable to distinguish between the rage of man and the wrath of God. Their continued trial and persecution leads them to conclude that God is against them instead of for them. The kingdom of God, which was proclaimed among them, is to be introduced with divine judgments. The day of the Lord, in which it will be set up, opens with an unparalleled display of divine indignation. They still persist in imagining that this day had begun, especially as, in some way, this was represented to be the apostle's teaching (2<sup>2</sup>).

In reply Paul and his fellow workers define these dreaded judgments as those which fall only on those being unacquainted with God and who do not obey the evangel, especially on such as their persecutors. Their main argument is founded on the teaching of the first epistle in reference to the Lord's presence and our assembling with Him in the air. There they had been definitely taught that this must occur *before* the day of His indignation.

The secret phase of lawlessness has been in operation throughout this economy, but its full development has been held in check by the presence of the saints. When we are taken out of the midst, then, and not till then, will the apostasy bear its bitter fruit. Its presence will be indicated by the presence of the man of lawlessness, corresponding to the head of the wild

beast of the Unveiling of Jesus Christ (Un.13<sup>1</sup>) who will be seconded by the false prophet who does signs and miracles to prove his claims (Un.13<sup>11</sup>). By these mankind is deluded to its destruction.

But the Thessalonians are not deceived by God but preferred for salvation and belief of the truth and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The latter part of the epistle is devoted to some practical disorders, especially busybodies who do not work for their living.

### FRAMEWORK, II. THESSALONIANS

*Reversion and Alternation*

**SALUTATION**, Grace and peace 1<sup>1</sup>-1<sup>2</sup>

**THANKSGIVING** 1<sup>3</sup>

Reason 1<sup>3</sup>-1<sup>5</sup> Ease 1<sup>6</sup>-1<sup>10</sup>

**PRAYER**, Paul for the Thessalonians 1<sup>11</sup>-1<sup>12</sup>

The Name of the Lord 1<sup>12</sup> Glory 1<sup>12</sup>

**ADMONITION**: The Apostasy 2<sup>1</sup>-2<sup>12</sup>

**THANKSGIVING** 2<sup>13</sup>-2<sup>17</sup>

Reason 2<sup>13</sup> Glory 2<sup>14</sup>

**PRAYER**, the Thessalonians for Paul 3<sup>1</sup>-5

The Lord's Word 3<sup>4</sup>-3<sup>4</sup> Endurance 3<sup>5</sup>

**ADMONITION**: Disorder 3<sup>6</sup>-3<sup>15</sup>

**SALUTATION**, Peace and grace 3<sup>16</sup>-3<sup>18</sup>

The literary framework is a simple alternation within the salutations. A thanksgiving, a prayer, and an admonition are found in this order in both the former and latter half of the letter.

If the epistle is read with its leading thought in mind—that we are delivered from the coming divine indignation—it will be seen to give it color and warmth everywhere, and especially in the assurances of God's mind toward them in their trials.

<sup>1</sup> While Silvanus and Timothy are associated with Paul in this salutation, the epistle is practically by Paul himself and its genuineness is attested at the close by Paul's own signature(<sup>317</sup>).

## THANKSGIVING

<sup>3</sup> The sufferings which were distressing the Thessalonians were the occasion of joy and boasting on the part of the apostle, for it proved the reality of their faith in Christ and developed their affection for one another. He adroitly turns their mistaken idea, that God is afflicting them, into the opposite, that their very sufferings are a sure index that those who afflict them will suffer at His hands. He lays due stress on the fact that God's indignation comes upon those who do *not* know Him and who do *not* obey the evangel. By thus turning the minds of the Thessalonians to the future he consoles them in their present trials. Then the opposers will suffer, not only for their sins, but for their persecution of God's saints, while those who are now in distress will enjoy ease and relaxation during the unveiling of the Lord Jesus from heaven. This passage alone should restrain us from including the saints of this economy in any of the companies of the saved mentioned in the scroll of His Unveiling. The persistence with which this thought clung to the Thessalonians is accounted for by the fact that the Circumcision *did* expect to go through the terrors of that day. Those who endured to the end would be saved. Paul was introducing a new and unknown doctrine, corresponding to his evangel for the nations, in which God's unadulterated grace is far more pronounced than in the gospel of the kingdom as proclaimed by the other apostles.

## PRAYER

<sup>12</sup> His prayer for them was that they might respond to this grace of God by a present conduct, in the midst of suffering, which would glorify God and His Christ.

## ADMONITION—APOSTASY

<sup>1</sup> The controlling thought in this section of the epistle is based on the teaching of the first letter. Had they fully accepted and understood what he had already written to them they never would have been led to believe that the day of the Lord was already present. In the meantime it seems that Paul has been misrepresented in this matter, perhaps by a forged letter (<sup>317</sup>). He now gives two of the salient signs which will be present when the day of the Lord comes: the apostasy and the man of lawlessness. Neither of these was present at that time.

<sup>3</sup> The man of lawlessness (as the two best manuscripts name him) seems to correspond closely with the head of the wild beast (Un. 131<sup>3</sup>). The whole earth will worship him except the few whose names are written in the Lamb's scroll of life. It is evident from this passage that, at the time of the end, there will be a temple of God. That this should be elsewhere than Jerusalem seems impossible. So we may look, not only for a return of the Jews to their own land, but also for a restoration of their ancient ritual and a rebuilding of their temple. For anyone except a priest to enter the holy place is itself a terrible desecration, but for any man to usurp Jehovah's place in the holy of holies and demonstrate his own divinity is the most awful and appalling crime of which a human being is capable. This leads to the desolating abomination of Daniel 9<sup>27</sup>, which probably consists in placing the image of the wild beast (Un. 131<sup>4</sup>) in the holy place of the temple. Our Lord warns those living in Judea to flee to the mountains (Mt. 24:15-22), for *then* the great affliction (which alarmed the Thessalonians) would come.

<sup>7</sup> The influences which will bring about the great apostasy of the end time have been at work from the beginning, but have been restrained by another, counteracting force. What is this? Some have supposed it to be the Spirit of God. But the Spirit of God will continue to work throughout the apostasy, enabling a few to endure to the end, and empowering

others to be faithful unto death. It has been suggested that Satan "holds fast" his place in the celestial spheres, for when he is cast out the apostasy commences. His ejection does mark the crisis between the secret and open manifestation of the apostasy, but that which is restrained is evidently the apostasy, not a place in the celestial realms. The apostasy is restrained by the presence of the saints. When we are taken out of the midst by our assembling with Christ in the air, then the apostasy and all its terrible train of afflictions will deluge the earth with fire. Thus the apostle proves that their own presence on earth is conclusive evidence that they were not enduring the afflictions of the Lord's day.

9 Nothing is more necessary in these declining days of this dispensation than to warn the saints of the danger of being deceived, not by that which appears evil, but by that which has all the outward evidences of good. Satan is transformed into a messenger of *light* and his servants are servants of *righteousness* (2Co.11<sup>14,15</sup>). But, for the next era, God has warned of the deception. The false prophet will do the very signs which, in Elijah's day, proved the deity of Jehovah (1Ki.18<sup>24</sup>Un.15<sup>13</sup>), and he is empowered even to give a spirit to the image of the wild beast (Un.13<sup>15</sup>) so that it will actually speak. Thus will the man of lawlessness demonstrate his divinity.

#### THANKSGIVING

13 The Thessalonian saints (and all who believe in Christ) need have no fear of the terrible trial which is coming on the earth, for God has not sent them a deception, to condemn them, but prefers them for salvation through belief of the truth and for the procuring of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a glorious contrast!

#### PRAYER

1 Paul desired their prayers that he might lead others into the blessed position which they occupied.

## II Thessalonians 2:9-3:16

5 The appreciation of God's love would destroy the idea that He was pouring out His indignation upon them. The contemplation of the endurance of Christ would help them to endure.

#### ADMONITION

6 Discipline was necessary even in such a warm-hearted, zealous ecclesia as Thessalonica. The occasion was not doing wrong but doing nothing. Just as the grace of God provides for our salvation from all trial and all affliction in the future, but brings both in the present, so it will also bring rest and relaxation in that day but calls for toil and labor until then. We should not shirk our work. He who does not work has no right to eat. And if anyone goes about as a busybody, seeking his food from his friends, we should avoid him, yet treat him with all the grace necessary to correct his disorderly conduct.

7 "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn" is the divine law for God's servants. They have a right to require support, for the Lord has appointed that those who are proclaiming the evangel should live of the evangel. But Paul did not use this right, but availed himself of the higher privilege of making the evangel absolutely free (1 Cor.9<sup>1-18</sup>). He pursued the same course in Corinth and doubtless wrote this letter in an interval between evangelistic labors and tent making, for he worked with Aquila and Priscilla at that trade (Ac.18<sup>1-3</sup>). Thus he was able to point to his own conduct as a model for the disorderly. The power of such an argument is apparent.

16 In closing Paul once more tenderly touches the theme of the epistle. Their Saviour is "the Lord of peace" and He will never visit them in judgment but give them peace through all their trials by all the means at His disposal.

## II Thessalonians 3:17, 18

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<sup>17</sup> It is evident that the apostle did not pen his own epistles. To avoid forgery, however, he wrote the greet-

ing himself and, in this case, signed his own name (2<sup>2</sup>).

# PAUL'S PERSONAL EPISTLES

PAUL's letters to Timothy and Titus are concerned with conduct in service. Not only are they given instructions for their own guidance, but rules are laid down for the selection and service of elders, or supervisors, and servants. These two classes were officially recognized and appointed and their functions defined. Besides this there are exhortations for all the various classes in the ecclesias, old and

young, the rich and the dependent widow, and slaves. Indeed, these epistles contain the constitution of the church. The second epistle to Timothy is especially applicable to the last days, showing whom and what to avoid, and with whom we may associate.

Philemon makes most gracious provision for those in bondage to believing masters.

## I TIMOTHY

As a guide in understanding the great contrast between Paul's two epistles to Timothy it is important to know when the first epistle was penned. If it was written to Timothy in Ephesus while Paul went to Macedonia, we have no situation corresponding to it in the book of Acts, and it is difficult to understand why the instructions given should be needed in Ephesus where Paul had labored so long and which had the benefit of his personal superintendence for years.

If we reverse the situation and send Timothy to Macedonia to the ecclesias from which Paul had been driven before he could set them in order, and to which he dared not go on peril of his life, every precept in the epistle is full of point, and we have circumstances which exactly correspond in Acts 19<sup>22</sup>. This places the epistle at the second crisis in the apostle's ministry (Ac.19<sup>21</sup>Ro.15<sup>19</sup>2Cor.5<sup>16</sup>). His second epistle was written after the third and final crisis. This places a great gap between them which accounts for the vast difference in the aspect of affairs.

In the first epistle we have the ecclesia described as God's house, the pillar and base of the truth (3<sup>15</sup>). In the second it has become a "great house" with utensils of various kinds, both honorable and base (2<sup>20</sup>). In the first the pristine power of faith holds

all together. In the second the dominant note is apostasy.

### FRAMEWORK OF I TIMOTHY

*Complex Reversion with Alternations*

#### INTRODUCTION 1<sup>1,2</sup>

- | Charge: Different Doctrine 1<sup>3,4</sup>
- | The Law Misplaced 1<sup>5,11</sup>
- | Paul's Stewardship 1<sup>12,16</sup>
- | The Invisible God 1<sup>17</sup>
- | Faith Shipwrecked 1<sup>18,20</sup>
- | A Prayer for All 2<sup>1</sup>
- | Saviour of All Mankind 2<sup>4</sup>
- | Paul as Apostle 2<sup>7</sup>
- | Women 2<sup>9,16</sup>
- | Supervisors 3<sup>1,7</sup>
- | Servants 3<sup>8,13</sup>
- | Temporary Instructions 3<sup>14</sup>
- | The Secret of Devoutness 3<sup>14,16</sup>
- | Subsequent Eras 4<sup>1</sup>
- | Marriage, Food, Physical Exercise 4<sup>1,8</sup>
- | A Saying for All 4<sup>9</sup>
- | Saviour of All Mankind 4<sup>10</sup>
- | Timothy as Example 4<sup>11,16</sup>
- | Widows 5<sup>1,16</sup>
- | Elders 5<sup>17,28</sup>
- | Slaves 6<sup>1,2</sup>
- | Devoutness not Capital 6<sup>3,10</sup>
- | Timothy's Avowal 6<sup>11,12</sup>
- | The Invisible God 6<sup>13,16</sup>
- | Riches Properly Placed 6<sup>17,19</sup>
- | Guard: False Knowledge 6<sup>20,21</sup>

#### CONCLUSION 6<sup>21</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Translators have experienced much difficulty with this opening sentence, because it seemed to lack the principal verb. The AV adds *so do*, the Revisers *so do I now*. It is very seldom that any translator goes so far as to add a complete sentence to the Word of God. To be sure, the question as to who remained in Ephesus and who went to Macedonia does not seem to play any important part in the understanding of the epistle, so should not be the cause of any great spiritual loss, whichever way we may translate. Instead of "As I exhorted thee to tarry... [when I was] going," we may translate, "...remain with [them]... [when] going." Colloquially we would say "stop over," or "drop in at," or "visit [with them when] going."

*Remain* and *going* seem to be incompatible at first glance. Actually there is no conflict between them (cf. Matt. 15<sup>32</sup> Mark 8<sup>2</sup> Acts 18<sup>18</sup>), *prosmenai* does not denote to remain permanently.

<sup>4</sup> The interminable genealogies and teaching of the law point directly to the Circumcision. The unbelieving Jews were not only the bitterest enemies Paul encountered, as the record in Acts reveals, but those who joined the believers were often unable to break away from their inborn traditions. It was just at this time that Paul announced the new creation, in which physical relationships are ignored (2 Cor. 5<sup>16</sup>). The genealogies of Judaism have their place, but not in his evangel.

<sup>5</sup> The law, too, had its place and mission. It was never given to the nations (Ro. 2<sup>14</sup>). By it is the recognition of sin (Ro. 3<sup>20</sup>). It was added, long after the promise was given, to involve Israel in transgression, until the Seed came to Whom the promises were made (Gal. 3<sup>19</sup>). He redeems them from it and gives them the place of sons (Gal. 4<sup>5</sup>). Christ is the law's consummation to everyone who believes (Ro. 10<sup>4</sup>). Against the believer there is no law (Gal. 5<sup>23</sup>). We are not under law, but under grace (Ro. 6<sup>14</sup>).

<sup>11</sup> "Happy" seems to be the only word we have which enables us to distinguish between this term and "blessed".

<sup>16</sup> Paul's case is a pattern of God's present ways in grace. Instead of reforming and repenting and seeking to gain God's favor, he was madly endeavoring to do all in his power against Christ and His people (Ac. 9 1-2). He was the foremost sinner of his day, and deserved the direst doom. Instead, he receives the greatest grace. Once outside the land of Israel, where God's grace was unrestrained by the law and His dealings with the covenant people, God calls him and transforms him into His most brilliant exponent of grace. Corresponding to the gracious character of his call, he is assigned to the dispensation of God's grace among the nations, a ministry distinct and different from that of any of the twelve apostles. They had *mercy* for the nations as a result of Israel's blessing: he dispensed *grace* in spite of, and resulting from, Israel's failure.

<sup>17</sup> The title "King of the eons" does not limit God to the eons in time, even as "the Lord of the earth" does not limit Him in space. It describes His sovereignty during the eons, for only in them is kingly government known (1 Cor. 15<sup>24</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> At the crisis in the apostle's career when this epistle was written, he first made known the secret of the evangel, the conciliation (Ro. 5<sup>11</sup>). The scope of blessing has been gradually widening. The evangel of the kingdom, linked with the name of David, included only Israelites and proselytes. The evangel of God, associated with the name of Abraham, brought blessing to those among the nations who believed. The secret of the evangel (Ro. 16<sup>25</sup>) set forth in the fifth of Romans, called the conciliation, refers us to Adam, and reaches the whole race, though it brings reconciliation only to those who receive it. Hence our sympathies and prayers should go out for all mankind.

<sup>4</sup> God's will for all mankind will not be fulfilled until the consummation (1 Cor. 15<sup>24</sup>). Only those who believe receive eonian salvation now. Those who acknowledge that God is greater than man, and that His will is more powerful than man's will, believe and exult in the final salvation of all mankind.

<sup>5</sup> This passage is primarily intended to break down the bounds in which salvation had hitherto been confined. The testimony of past eras is no basis on which to build in this era. The testimony to the nations, committed to the apostle Paul (which he deems it necessary to solemnly affirm) is to the effect that Christ was not only the Son of David, to confirm the kingdom to Israel, or the Son of Abraham, to bring blessing to the faithful, but He is Adam's greater Son, a Man, and as such, is the Mediator for the whole human race. Nor is Israel's God limited to them: for there is only one God for all mankind. The Man Christ Jesus is giving Himself as a Ransom for all. Only a few, comparatively, are vitally affected by this fact at present, but, in due time, the offense of Adam will be much more than offset by the just award of the Man, Christ Jesus (Ro.5:18). Paul was assigned this testimony for the present era. No other apostle presents it, for it is foreign to their ministry. Christ gave His *soul* a ransom for *many* (Mt.20:28), but gives *Himself* a ransom for *all*. Redemption is for the saints, during the eons. Ransom is for all when the eons end.

<sup>9</sup> The dancing women of the East, who are, perhaps, the only class who appear in public, braid their hair with strands strung with gold and pearls, and their vesture is most elaborate, to attract the attention of the men, who form their audience. How much better, for those whose reputation is bound up with the glory of God, to be adorned with acts which reflect His love and grace!

<sup>14</sup> The part played by Adam in the temptation receives much light from this passage. While Eve was utterly deluded, Adam was not, and probably partook so as to involve himself in the same plight as Eve. In this light, his defense, "the woman that thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen.3:12) has more of truth than is usually conceded. Perhaps it is especially in this sense—as deliberately involving himself in Eve's transgression—that we are to consider him as a type of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Each ecclesia in Paul's day seems to have had two distinct classes of officers, if we may so term them. There were the supervisors (sometimes called overseers or bishops), and the servants (or deacons). The supervisors seem to have had a general oversight of the ecclesia and its members, while the servants took a subordinate place, rendering such service as the ecclesia stood in need of. The qualifications for these positions are here given. Young and untested men were not welcome to these responsibilities. Indeed, it seems taken for granted that the supervisor is an elder (Compare Tit.1<sup>5</sup> and 1<sup>7</sup>). Both supervisors and servants must show their fitness by controlling their own households.

<sup>15</sup> In this epistle the ecclesia is the public exponent of the truth. It is called "God's house." Like a pillar in the temple it upheld and manifested the truth of God. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, written after the apostasy had set in, he calls the ecclesia a "great house" in which are utensils both honorable and otherwise. Such is the case today. The church is no longer "the pillar and base of the truth."

<sup>16</sup> Not only is the manuscript evidence against the reading "*God manifest in flesh*", but other considerations force us to the same conclusion. In the typical teaching of the tabernacle the *curtain* represented His flesh (Heb.10:20). Now the veil did not *reveal*, but rather *hid* the Divine presence. It could not be said to *manifest* it. The phrase "justified in spirit" is also inept when applied to Christ. The proclamation among the nations is out of place, as no such ministry was attempted until long after He had been "taken up in glory."

The whole passage is concerned with *conduct*. The secret of devout conduct is traced in its various manifestations in those who are its subjects. It should be manifested in flesh by the ideal acts which it produces, it enjoys justification in spirit, is the subject of angelic inspection (Eph.3:10), is proclaimed among the nations, and will be removed from the world before the Lord appears in judgment.

1 The signs of the last days are all present with us now. The teaching of deceiving spirits and demons has become one of the great and popular cults of the day. Their deception seems chiefly to take the form of pretended communication with the dead, whom they personate. Their teaching, so far, has been fragmentary and contradictory, but an effort is being made to collect and publish their vague presentations. The following is a condensed epitome of their creed:

1. The Fatherhood of God.
2. The Brotherhood of Man.
3. Continuous Conscious Existence.
4. The Communion of Spirits.
5. Personal Responsibility.
6. Compensation and Retribution in the Hereafter.
7. Endless Progression.

That most of these are held for truth in Christendom proves this passage to be true. We should thoroughly purge ourselves of these doctrines of demons.

3 The prohibition of marriage, for a limited class, has long defied this scripture, but now the sentiment against it is growing in many quarters which hitherto have not opposed it. Abstinence from certain foods, especially meat or flesh food, has become a recognized feature of some creeds.

7 Physical gymnastics has largely replaced spiritual exercise in many religious institutions.

9 There are three "faithful sayings" in this epistle (1:15; 3:14<sup>9</sup>). These should be especially heeded and enforced. There is a logical relation between this one and the first. If Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and has saved the foremost, it follows that, since all men are sinners, He is the Saviour of all mankind. At present this takes effect only in those who believe: the rest are not saved until the consummation. Worthy of all welcome as this faithful saying is, it led Paul into reproach. Nevertheless, he charged Timothy: *These things be charging and teaching.*

15 How expressive is the phrase, "In these be"! Such meditation makes these things a part of our very being and so molds our motives that our progress will appear in all our actions.

1 Much love and consideration should characterize the acts of one who, like Timothy, has temporary oversight of an ecclesia. This applies especially to his dealings with the older men, some of whom, when he is absent, supervise its affairs. Widows presented a special problem, and they were the wards of the ecclesia under some circumstances. Young widows, or those having a claim on relatives, were not to become dependent on the ecclesia. The younger ones are charged to marry; those having children are expected to be supported by them.

3:16 It is supposed that a list of church widows was kept, which probably included all widows of sixty years and over, whether self-supporting or not. Those who were entered on this list undertook certain duties and promised to give themselves to the work. The younger widows were not to be put on this list lest they should tire of their promise and break faith (13). They might grow restive, and so fall into judgment. As the whole passage refers to widows, this is supplied in verse fourteen, after "younger".

5 The widows seem to have been a special charge even in the pentecostal era (Ac.6<sup>1</sup>).

17 The highest place in an ecclesia seems to be accorded to an elder who makes it his task to teach. Indeed, the passages quoted seem to suggest that such a one should receive support. In the East grain was threshed by driving cows over it to separate the grain from the stalk. It was a law (Deut.25<sup>4</sup>) that such animals should not be muzzled, but allowed to eat as much as they needed. The apostle claims this privilege for all who minister the word (1 Cor.9<sup>9</sup>). The Lord has prescribed that those who proclaim the evangel should live of the evangel (1 Cor.9:14). The Lord Himself said to the seventy He sent forth, "The worker is worthy of his wages." (Lu.10:7).

<sup>19</sup> Unless sufficient evidence to establish his guilt is produced, no charge against an elder is to be entertained. A single witness may be mistaken, or biased: he must be corroborated by one or more others. When, however, an elder's guilt is clearly established, his sin is to be made public. Such a punishment will deter others from similar offenses.

<sup>21</sup> Prejudice and partiality should have no place in the judicial acts of an ecclesia. Natural inclination should be laid aside and all done in view of the Invisible.

<sup>22</sup> The imposition of hands for the impartation of some grace (2 Tim.<sup>16</sup>) was to be done deliberately, without haste, so that only those who would honor the gift might receive it.

<sup>23</sup> At this juncture in the apostle's ministry we begin to note the decline of physical blessings. His own thorn in the flesh was not removed (2 Cor. 12<sup>7</sup>), Timothy, his nearest and dearest friend, is afflicted with frequent infirmities. Instead of healing him, or recommending such a course, he suggests a remedy.

Paul's ministry was divided into four periods separated by three crises. The first crisis occurred in Antioch when he was severed from the rest (Ac.13<sup>2</sup>). The second crisis occurred while Paul is at Ephesus, and is brought before us in the words "As these things were fulfilled" (Ac.19<sup>21</sup>). The third was at Rome, when the Jews finally refused the kingdom (Ac.28<sup>25-28</sup>). We have found that this letter was written at the second, central crisis in his career. Then it was that he no longer knew anyone according to the flesh. Except in the lingering testimony to the kingdom, all physical blessing vanishes. Otherwise he surely would have cured Timothy and Epaphroditus (Phil.2<sup>26</sup>). When once the progress of Paul's ministries is recognized, from glory to glory (2Co.3<sup>18</sup>), away from the earthly and physical to the celestial and spiritual, healing and other gifts will be seen to be among those things which belong to immaturity.

<sup>1</sup> A slave with a believing owner was sometimes above his master in faith, and would be tempted to forget his subordinate position. They are exhorted to take their true place as slaves, in the flesh, even though they are brethren in spirit.

<sup>5</sup> The tendency to make capital out of religion has greatly increased since the apostle's day. Devoutness as a means to material gain is one of the most insidious of sins, which finds its followers everywhere. From the "rice Christians" of China to the very highest ecclesiastical dignitaries, its baneful influence has paralyzed God's testimony. One of the great benefits of persecution is to purge the saints of this sin.

<sup>6</sup> Material gain, beyond what is needed for sustenance and shelter, is not true capital. It cannot give contentment in the present, and is a total loss in the future. True capital is contentment, which gives happiness now, and devoutness, which insures a reward in the life to come. These, indeed, are great capital—far greater than the billions which men amass, but which they cannot use, and which they are sure to lose. The really rich man is he who, having provided for shelter from the elements, a house and clothing and sustenance in the form of food and drink, banks the balance in such a way that it will follow him into the future.

<sup>9</sup> Those who refuse this course will find that they lose in every way. Riches do not give contentment, but breed foolish and harmful longings, the gratification of which is destructive to happiness and lead away from the faith. Money getting and the hoarding of means not needed for our own welfare, not only is a prolific source of evil, but robs the rich of happiness now, and only increases our loss in the life to come.

<sup>13</sup> To make alive or vivify does not refer to the giving of life in creation, but is always used of the impartation of immortality and incorruption when used of mankind (Ro. 4<sup>17</sup> 1 Co. 15<sup>36</sup>).

It is distinguished from resurrection (Jn.5<sup>21</sup>) in that it refers to spiritual life (Ro.8<sup>11</sup> 2Co.3<sup>6</sup>). *Resurrection* refers primarily to the *body*, *rousing* to the *soul*, and *vivification* to the *spirit*. Elsewhere we are told that all mankind will be vivified (1Co.15<sup>22</sup>). Here the whole universe is included in God's mighty purpose to defeat death.

<sup>16</sup> Christ Jesus is the only One Who has been vivified. No one else has life beyond the reach of death. Immortality is His exclusive possession. The glory of deathlessness shines forth in Him with an intensity beyond the possibility of human perception. The apostle himself came as near to this as anyone, but the brilliance blinded him. He *saw* Him (1Cor.9<sup>1</sup>), but He appeared as a Light, which his eyes could not bear. At His advent, they shall be like Him, since they shall view Him as He is (1 Jn.3<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>17</sup> Those who *are* rich, in contrast to those already considered, who are fond of money with the *intention* of becoming wealthy, are exhorted not to place their dependence on their possessions, which may desert them at any moment, but to rely on God, Who alone can make their enjoyment possible. Their most profitable course lies in the employment of their wealth for the benefit of others. This brings them present happiness (for it is blessed to give), and, at the same time deposits their wealth in the divine treasury where it will appear to their account in that day. In this way they will assure for themselves real life, both now and for the eons.

<sup>20</sup> All knowledge or "science" which is not in line with God's revelation has been found false in the past and will be so in the future. There is no conflict between true science and the Scriptures.

## II TIMOTHY

PAUL's second epistle to Timothy is, perhaps, the last letter from his pen. In all his other epistles he looks forward to further service. Now he tells Timothy that he had finished his career (4<sup>7</sup>). The period of his dissolution was imminent (4<sup>6</sup>). The whole epistle takes character from this fact.

The first epistle was probably written at that great crisis in the apostle's ministry when he first formed his purpose to go to Rome (Ac.19<sup>21</sup>). Its subject is service. Its object was the organization of the ecclesias to uphold God's truth. The subject of the second epistle is suffering (2<sup>3</sup>). The ecclesias themselves have become filled with evil. Separation from the evil becomes the duty of all who wish to please God.

This letter should be especially prized by the Lord's slaves in these last days, for the apostasy which began even in Paul's time has become worse with each succeeding century. The practical question, How shall we serve in the midst of present day departure? is fully answered in this, Paul's latest letter.

The remedy for the present distress is clearly shown in the literary framework. The epistle proper begins with an exhortation to have the pattern of sound words (1<sup>13</sup>). It closes with the charge to proclaim the word (4<sup>2</sup>). Its central subject contains the command to "correctly partition" the word of truth (2<sup>15</sup>). The Sacred Scriptures

### FRAMEWORK OF II TIMOTHY

*Complex Reversion with Alternation*

#### INTRODUCTION 1<sup>1</sup>

Timothy's Grace: Rekindle 1<sup>6</sup>

Paul's Commission 1<sup>11</sup>

That Day

The Pattern of Sound Words 1<sup>13</sup>

Apostasy 1<sup>16</sup>

Onesiphorus 1<sup>16</sup>

Paul's Instructions 2<sup>1</sup>

Exhortation: Endure 2<sup>3</sup>

God's Faithfulness 2<sup>11</sup>

Upsetting 2<sup>14</sup>

Worker 2<sup>15</sup>

Gangrene 2<sup>17</sup>

Subvert 2<sup>18</sup>

Stand 2<sup>19</sup>

Great House, 2<sup>20</sup>

Slave 2<sup>24</sup>

Antagonizing 2<sup>25</sup>

The Last Days: 3<sup>1</sup>

Paul's Example 3<sup>10</sup>

Exhortation: Remain 3<sup>14</sup>

The Sacred Scriptures 3<sup>15</sup>

Proclaim the Word 4<sup>1</sup>

Apostasy 4<sup>3</sup>

Timothy's Dispensation: Discharge 4<sup>5</sup>

Paul's Career 4<sup>6</sup>

That Day

#### CONCLUSION 4<sup>9</sup>

are the one great need for these degenerate days (3<sup>16</sup>). It is the aim of the CONCORDANT VERSION to furnish a pattern of sound words, without which the truth has eluded us. It is the aim of the notes to "correctly partition" the truth, assigning each truth its proper place out of which it becomes dangerous error.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy had been with the apostle in Rome, whence he was probably sent to Philippi (Phil.2<sup>19</sup>). The most loving and intimate relations existed between them, and Paul continually refers to him as his own child in the faith. His father was a Greek, but his mother was a Jewess (Ac.16<sup>1</sup>). His grandmother Lois and his mother were believers and he seems to have inherited their faith. He was constantly associated with the apostle in his labors, often being sent on some mission which Paul himself could not fulfill. His name is joined with Paul's in the salutation of six of his epistles (2 Cor. 1<sup>1</sup>, Phil. 1<sup>1</sup>, Col. 1<sup>1</sup>, 1 Thess. 1<sup>1</sup>, 2 Thess. 1<sup>1</sup>, Philemon<sup>1</sup>). He seems to have suffered imprisonment for a time but was set at liberty (Heb.13<sup>23</sup>). Paul gives him the highest possible praise, so that he himself is given as an example of true service and the letters sent to him are most important to all who wish to engage in a like service.

<sup>6</sup> The apostle's prolonged imprisonment, and the growing evils which were creeping into the ecclesias, seem to have had the effect of dampening and discouraging Timothy. To counteract this tendency the apostle reminds him that God's calling is not dependent on men's acts but on His own purpose and grace, and this cannot be disturbed or hindered by the flood of evil, for it was given us in Christ Jesus before eonian times. The eons are the times of evil. Before the times of the eons there was no evil, neither will there be any after they have run their course. As a result, God's purpose is before and above evil, and we should not be unduly moved by its presence. Death is sin's ultimate. The crucifixion of Christ is the furthest limit to which sin can go. The vivification of Christ is the first step in the abolition of death. He can die no more. At His coming advent the saints will triumph over death and receive eonian life. Its final abolition, however, is at the end of the eons, called the consummation.

<sup>10</sup> The abolition of death is put in the indefinite or *aorist* tense, as He has done it in His own case and will do it for all in the future.

<sup>12</sup> The transcendent truths committed to the apostle Paul always meet with opposition and bring suffering on their exponents. But God Himself guards them and revives them from time to time even though the vast majority of His saints hardly know of their existence.

<sup>13</sup> The pattern of sound words is one of the most serious needs for the student of the Scriptures. If it was necessary for Timothy to cling to the particular Greek expressions used by the apostle, how much greater is the need for some definite pattern on which to model the words of a version? How can the English reader hope to fulfill this exhortation when the translations which he uses publicly proclaim their avoidance of any uniformity or pattern in their production? The constant and consistent use of correct terms is one of the greatest possible aids in assimilating and teaching truth. The greatest hindrance is the inconsistent use of inexact terms which have their force nullified by use in incorrect contexts.

<sup>1</sup> "The grace which is in Christ Jesus" is a most comprehensive expression including all the infinite favor associated with a present acknowledgment of Christ's exaltation in the heavens. Salvation, justification, reconciliation and every spiritual blessedness among the celestials is surely enough to invigorate all who appreciate their possession even in a feeble measure.

<sup>3</sup> To *inflict* evil is the object of the world's soldiers. All their training is to this end. To *suffer* evil is the duty of the ideal soldier in the ranks of faith.

<sup>5</sup> A most important principle, almost unheeded. Effort and endeavor is of no avail in God's service unless it be in strict conformity to the rules. Hence it is of prime importance to acquaint ourselves first of all with God's instructions and adhere to them closely. Otherwise the most pretentious effort, which seems to meet with most success, may be utterly rejected at the judge's stand. Do not attempt to work for God until you know the will of God.

<sup>8</sup> The literal resurrection of Christ as the Seed of David seems to be the apostle's answer to the theory of a spiritual resurrection. The Seed of David can be nothing less than a literal Man.

<sup>10</sup> "The salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eonian glory" is a most apt description of the grace shown to us.

<sup>11</sup> This faithful saying shows that our life and all that comes to us by His grace is immutable—it depends on His faithfulness. *Service*, however, has two sides, reward and loss. Endurance will be recognized by a place of authority in His celestial realm. If we disown Him we cannot expect Him to give us a public place of power in the future. This does not infringe in the least degree on our salvation or life or anything which is ours by His grace.

<sup>15</sup> Translators have found great difficulty in rendering the phrase "correctly cutting." While desiring to improve on the common rendering "rightly dividing", the Revisers have translated it very loosely "handling aright". This is very vague. The meaning is clear from the illustration which follows. Hymeneus and Philetus did not deny the resurrection, like the Corinthians (1 Cor.15:12), but they misplaced it. They made it *past*, when it was *future*. So all truth has its appropriate place, out of which truth itself becomes the most insidious error, because it *seems* to have the support of Scripture. We must not transfer the truth of one eon into another, nor of one economy into another. We should leave truth concerning Israel to them and that for us should not be mixed with it. In no other way can we really have the truth.

<sup>19</sup> God's solid foundation still stands. The "pillar of the truth" (1 Tim.3:15) has fallen under the flood of false teaching, which is found in the Bible, but through misplacement has become distorted into error. But the foundation is fixed. The Lord Himself is never at a loss to recognize His own. We, on our part, may demand that those who take His name upon them should act accordingly.

<sup>21</sup> The figure of a "great house" is most appropriate in the present day. The struggling, persecuted, unrecognized ecclesia of the early days has become great, but with its greatness it has lost its primitive purity and power. Like the utensils needed in the service of a mansion, it harbors two classes. Some, like gold and silver plate, are fit for honorable uses; others, like the pots and buckets of the scullery, are for degraded service. The method of transforming ourselves into holy and desirable utensils, fit for honorable uses, is very simple. We are to purge *ourselves* from the unclean utensils. It is personal, individual heart cleansing that is needed rather than outward reforms.

<sup>22</sup> On the positive side, we are to confine our fellowship to those who call upon the Lord out of a clean heart. This is the true basis of fellowship in the midst of the failure in which we find ourselves. It is not doctrine, however desirable it is that we should agree. It is not church government. It is not the knowledge of the truth, but the motive which underlies it. We should not exclude from our fellowship anyone who calls on the Lord out of a clean heart, however much his person or his doctrine may repel us. Every creed, man-made, is crude and full of error. No one should subscribe to aught but the Word of God.

<sup>24</sup> The Lord's slave must not fight, for his object is not destruction, but salvation. He does not aim to wound or disable, but to capture his antagonists alive and subject them to God's will.

<sup>1</sup> We, who are living in these last days, will bear witness to the truth of the Scriptures, for no one today could give a more accurate indictment of the times than is given in this passage. The whole list from selfishness to self-gratification is characteristic, yet nothing more so than the form of devoutness which is devoid of its vital power. We are not asked to correct this condition, but to shun those who are involved in it.

<sup>6</sup> The diminutive, "little women", expresses contempt.



<sup>12</sup> This is a crucial test of our true state. Are we suffering persecution? If not, are we in earnest in our will to live devoutly in Christ Jesus? All who tread this path will be persecuted. Paul himself delighted in persecutions for Christ's sake (2Cor.12<sup>10</sup>). His bold stand for the evangel invited them at every turn. At Lystra they stoned him and left him for dead (Ac. 14<sup>19</sup>). Nor are we to look for any improvement in the course of time, for wicked men and swindlers will wax worse and worse, not only deceiving others but being themselves deceived.

<sup>14</sup> Again and again the apostle returns to the Sacred Scriptures as the one sufficient recourse. What Timothy had heard from Paul has since been incorporated in them, being recorded in the epistles he has penned, both in his personal letters and in his epistles to the seven ecclesias.

<sup>16</sup> The inspired Scriptures are the sole and sufficient equipment for the man of God in these trying times. All else has failed and fallen into ruin. It has become an imperative and absolute necessity that the sacred writings should be recovered in something like their pristine purity, for they alone are the last resort of the saints. Their inspiration is confined to the original text. Whatever promises the closest contact with the inspired records, and the safest index of their contents is the best equipment possible for the man of God. The CONCORDANT VERSION, the consistent sublinear of the Greek Text and its concordance, will, we trust, be used by God to meet the one prime necessity of the times.

<sup>3</sup> *Proclaim the word!* This is the greatest need in the last days. There is no lack of preaching or of proclaiming, but the word of God has entirely too little place in them. The next need is to stand by it, whether it seems opportune or not.

<sup>6</sup> The pathos of this passage appears when we recall the many plans of the apostle which it repeals. He intended to go into Spain (Ro.15<sup>24</sup>), he wished to winter in Nicopolis (Titus 3<sup>12</sup>) and he hoped to be granted to the Colossians (Philemon 22). There is no record that any of these wishes were fulfilled. Now he faces death with an exultant cry of triumph. His contest is over, his career is ended, the faith is kept, the reward remains. Hitherto the advent filled his heart and his horizon. Now that he realizes the imminence of his dissolution, he passes on that blessed expectation. The wreath of righteousness is promised to all who love His advent. This alone should be a sufficient incentive for us not only to love but to proclaim that blessed expectation. There is no evidence in the *Scriptures* that Paul was released and later imprisoned a second time. Even if it was a fact, the *truth* demands the entire removal of everything physical from the scene.

<sup>9</sup> "Loving the present eon" is in direct contrast to loving His advent. If the present evil eon appeals to us, and engages our affections, we will have no desire for the glorious grace which His advent will reveal.

<sup>11</sup> How touching is this commendation of Mark! He had proven unfaithful (Ac.13<sup>13</sup>) and Paul had refused his services, notwithstanding it cost him the companionship of Barnabas (Ac. 15<sup>38</sup>). Yet God's grace operates in him so as to win this commendation from Paul and he is inspired to write the account of the Faithful Servant, for that is the character of our Lord in Mark's evangel.

<sup>18</sup> There was a custom in Rome that, when a man was tried for any crime, his friends attended him in court to countenance and assist him. Roman law recognized the legality of such assistance and even the emperors did not shun their friends under such circumstances. The early believers were derided because they availed themselves of this privilege. How majestic stands the solitary figure of the apostle! His friends in Asia had abandoned him (1<sup>15</sup>). Demas aban-

doned him (4<sup>10</sup>). And now *all* abandoned him to his fate. He stands before his accusers unfriended and alone, except for his faithful Lord. Nor did this embitter him. Like his Lord, he prays, "May it not be reckoned against them!" This is our last glimpse of the apostle of the nations. To the last he stands as God's herald, welcoming death itself if it only gives him an opportunity to proclaim the evangel to all the nations.

<sup>18</sup> Paul realizes, at length, that his work on earth is finished and he now looks forward to the celestial kingdom, of which he, and all who accepted his message, were participants.

## II Timothy 4:18-22

<sup>20</sup> Trophimus is a picture of the place the nations occupied before Paul's final ministry. His name means "nourished". The nations were nourished at Israel's board. As their apostasy increased the nations received less and less spiritual food from them. If it had not been for Paul's last letters from Rome they, too, like Trophimus, would have pined away. His case is significant, too, of the fact that all blessing is now *spiritual*, else Paul could easily have healed him. But neither he nor Timothy nor Paul himself is healed. God's grace becomes their sufficiency, in the midst of physical weakness.

# TITUS

THE only recorded visit of the apostle Paul to Crete was when his ship was detained there some time on his journey to Rome (Ac.27<sup>7-12</sup>). The writer of the Acts was with the apostle, and doubtless others, as Demas and Crescens, accompanied him, including, it would seem, Titus, as far as Crete. Paul's direction that he should leave the island and meet him in Nicopolis (3<sup>12</sup>) seems to confirm this, for, later, Paul writes to Timothy that Titus had gone to Dalmatia (2 Tim.4<sup>10</sup>). There was a Nicopolis on the Adriatic near the boundary of Macedonia and Dalmatia. Hence this letter was probably written from Rome not long after his arrival. His early intention to visit Spain (Rom.15<sup>24</sup>), and his decision to winter in Nicopolis (3<sup>12</sup>), seems to have failed of fruition, for he is still in Rome when he informs Timothy of his imminent dissolution (2Tim.4<sup>6</sup>).

The evident purport of the epistle is hortatory. It deals with the practical duties of life. No doctrine is developed. As shown by the literary

## FRAMEWORK OF TITUS

### *Reversion*

#### INTRODUCTION 1<sup>1</sup>

| Character of Elders 1<sup>5</sup>  
|      Insubjection 1<sup>10</sup>

|      Old Men 2<sup>2</sup>

|      | Old Women 2<sup>3</sup>

|      | Young Women 2<sup>4</sup>

|      Young Men 2<sup>6</sup>

| Conduct of Slaves 2<sup>9</sup>

|      Subjection 3<sup>1</sup>

#### CONCLUSION 3<sup>12</sup>

framework, the chief subjects are the appointment of elders who are to serve as supervisors, and the conduct of those who are slaves. The paragraph dealing with elders is logically followed by one describing their duties and difficulties due to the insubjection of some. The section on slaves is fittingly followed by one on subjection, for even those who are not in physical bondage owe subjection to the government and to their fellow men.

The central subject sets forth the ideal character of men and women, old and young.

1 Paul writes this letter in the character of a slave. This shows that the epistle deals with service. He adds the title apostle, to give weight to his injunctions.

2 Eonian life, usually called "everlasting" life, is here put, as is usual in Paul's epistles, as a future expectation. God promised it before the times of the "evers" or eons and it will last until the eons come to an end (Heb.9<sup>26</sup>).

4 Titus is not mentioned in the narrative of the Acts, doubtless because his case and ministry were not at all in line with the subject of that treatise. Only that aspect of Paul's work is there touched upon which was in subjection to the Circumcision and connected with the proclamation of the kingdom to Israel. Titus was a Greek whom Paul refused to circumcise, so that he might be a standing reminder of the fact that circumcision was not a part of his evangel for the nations (Gal.2<sup>1-5</sup>).

5 The island of Crete is also named Candia. It is the most fertile island in the Mediterranean.

6 The elder and supervisor seem to be different aspects of the same office. The name elder was given in recognition of their age and dignity. The term supervisor describes the character of their service. His relations with the world and his own family must be such as will not compromise the ecclesia which he serves. His name in the world must be above reproach, his domestic relations must be ideal. Men with many wives were not eligible.

10 It was very natural for the Circumcisionists to arrogate to themselves the supervision of the ecclesias to which they belonged, but they were often unfit for the office.

11 In the very early days impostors set themselves to use devious means for securing their own advantage and getting dishonest gain. This is a most destructive plague in teachers, for, as soon as they make wealth their

object of pursuit, they necessarily endeavor to be popular and obtain the favor and support of the people. This is almost sure to be followed by corruption in teaching.

12 It is supposed that this is a quotation from Epimenides, a poet and philosopher who lived about six hundred years before Christ. It was common to give the Cretans a bad name, for to "Cretanize" was the equivalent of lying and deception. Paul adds his confirmation in order to aid them in guarding against these grave defects in the national character.

14 The Jewish doctors have so covered the law with their myths and traditions that little, if any, of the law is left. Ceremonial uncleanness is a constant menace to the orthodox Hebrew. So much is unclean that their consciences and minds are contaminated. This is entirely out of tune with the grace which has come to those who are themselves ceremonially unclean, yet have been subjects of God's cleansing grace. A true knowledge of God's grace acknowledges, as Peter did, that what God has cleansed is not to be called unclean (Ac.10<sup>14</sup>).

15 True cleanliness is an inward condition which views all without from its own standpoint. A defiled mind and conscience will defile even that which is, in itself, clean.

1 The apostle segregates the ecclesia into young and old, men and women, and gives to each the appropriate exhortation. All are entreated to be sane (2,5,6). The usage of this word in the Greek corresponds very closely with its English equivalent. In Mk. 5<sup>15</sup> and Lu.8<sup>35</sup> it is used of those who had been insane. Here and elsewhere it is used of mental soundness and good judgment. We say "Adversary" where the AV has "devil." The plural (3, 1 Tim.3<sup>11</sup>, 2 Tim.3<sup>3</sup>) is "adversaries" rather than "false accusers" or "slanderers" (AV). (The AV term "devils" stands for another Greek word which we transliterate *demons*).

9 Slaves are given the privilege of adorning the teaching, by their good behavior.

11 The saving grace of God, properly appreciated, has no equal as a means for training God's saints to live ac-

ceptably in His sight even in the midst of the abounding evil of this eon. It softens the heart, and attracts the will, and provides the power for putting its precepts into practice. The law was not so. Its demands withered the arm that would fulfill it. In some measure God's grace enables us to anticipate the overwhelming bliss which will be brought to us at His glorious advent, which will mark the end of sin and suffering for His saints.

14 The ransom of Christ has a present power. Lawlessness is that basic conception of sin in which it is viewed as a departure from the normal and natural course of things. The ransom of Christ will eventually restore us into that ideal condition which conformity to the laws of the universe produces. At present this takes the form of zeal for good deeds.

1 The place of the believer is one of subjection in this eon. It is not our time to reign (1 Cor. 4<sup>8</sup>). That will come in the next eon. The path of the saints is not at all aggressive. It is not for them to redress wrongs, but to yield to injustice, not to speak evil of others even if they justly deserve it, not to stir up trouble, but to be pacific, making allowance for the failure of others, meekly enduring what would naturally inflame our indignation.

3 The emphatic *we*, repeated in the fifth verse, suggests that the apostle is now referring to himself as one of the Circumcision—those who, indeed, *ought* to have kept the law and who *thought* that their salvation depended on their righteousness, but who needed to be regenerated and renewed by the holy Spirit, as the Lord taught Nicodemus (Jn. 3<sup>5</sup>), according to His mercy.

5 The Septuagint uses this word *loutron* twice for a *bath* in the Song of Solomon (4<sup>26</sup>), but renders *laver*

by another form, *loutēr*, in all of its occurrences. Hence it is evident that here it is not the instrument which contained the water, but the element itself which is a figure of renascence. Though literally *regeneration*, the word is always used in a much looser sense of any renewal, much like our word *renascence*.

9 It would seem that by far the largest share of the difficulties of the early ecclesias was introduced by the Circumcision—the very ones who ought to have been a help instead of a hindrance. The record of the book of Acts is full of their opposition to the evangel and they were directly responsible for Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Pharisees who believed were the source of continual turmoil. They could not clear themselves of the trammels of Judaism. They could not rise to the new revelation vouchsafed to Paul. With their genealogies, and circumcision, and contentions about the law, they were continually drawing the saints from the ground of grace and faith down to law and works. Finally the apostle put a stop to the discussion of these subjects.

10 Though this is the Greek *hairetikon*, it does not refer to a heretic, but one who belongs to a *sect*. It is applied to the Sadducees (Ac. 5<sup>17</sup>), the Pharisees (Ac. 15<sup>5</sup> 26<sup>5</sup>), and the Nazarenes (Ac. 24<sup>5</sup>). These could not all be called heretics. Sectarianism is essentially *preferring* to associate with a class or clique. The Circumcisionists would readily prefer their kind.

12 Tychicus was later sent to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4<sup>12</sup>). As he delivered the letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 6<sup>21</sup>), it appears that this letter to Titus was written some time before the Perfection epistles. Titus seems to have gone to Nicopolis, but Paul remained in Rome.

# PHILEMON

THIS, the only private, personal letter from the pen of the apostle Paul, is a perfect specimen of its kind. Its powerful yet pathetic appeal is the ripe fruitage of that overwhelming grace which Paul dispensed from his Roman prison. Himself a prisoner, he captures the runaway slave and gives him the freedom of Christ, yet sends him back to the master from whom he had escaped.

This note was doubtless written at the same time as the epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians. Onesimus accompanied Tychicus (Eph. 6<sup>21</sup>) to Ephesus and Colosse (Col. 4<sup>7-9</sup>). From the fact that Onesimus is spoken of as "one of you" (Col. 4<sup>9</sup>), we may infer that Philemon belonged to the ecclesia at Colosse, and that he was given the message to masters in that epistle at the same time (Col. 4<sup>1</sup>). But this precious little letter goes far beyond what is "just and equal" so far as Onesimus is concerned. No picture of God's grace can better this. Not only a slave, but subject to torture and death for stealing from his master, he is first reconciled to God through Paul's preaching, and then is reconciled to his master through Paul's pleading. He is caught upon the very crest of the great tidal wave of grace which was just then ready to overflow the whole world. The transcendent grace of Paul's perfection epistles was

doubtless his precious possession even before it was delivered to Philemon. Can we realize what this must have meant to him? To be taken from the deepest depths of social degradation and to be seated with Christ in the celestial realms, by faith, almost exhausts the possibilities of grace. And now upon all this, he is given this precious passport to his master's heart! Is it not a lovely little letter?

In literary form, too, it is a perfect example of a simple reversion. Every topic is repeated in reverse order, as set forth in detail in the following literary analysis.

## FRAMEWORK OF PHILEMON

### *Reversion*

Introduction 1-3

| Prayer—Paul for Philemon 4-7

| Paul's Authority 8

| Paul Beseeches 9-10

| Paul's child Onesimus 10

| Onesimus' Wrong 11-12

| Paul and Philemon 13-14

| Onesimus' Departure 15

| Onesimus' Reception 15

| Paul and Philemon 16

| Onesimus' Wrong 18

| Philemon a convert of Paul's 19

| Paul Pleads 20

| Paul's Confidence 21

| Prayer—Philemon for Paul 22

Conclusion 23-25

<sup>4</sup> The name Philemon means "fond". He seems to have been a most exemplary character, whose reputation had reached Paul's ears, and had given him joy in the midst of the sorrows and dangers of his situation in Rome. But Paul is not thinking of himself but of the service Philemon renders to the saints.

<sup>8</sup> Paul's apostolic authority gives him the right to dictate to Philemon regarding Onesimus. It would have been perfectly proper to have held the runaway slave for his own comfort and service without consulting his master in the matter. Yet grace does not demand its rights, or stand upon its privileges, but, led by love, entreats. What a glorious sunset to such a life as Paul's! The rare graces of the gospel glow in the aged apostle and prisoner with greater splendor than ever before. Age has not soured but rather mellowed him.

<sup>11</sup> There is a pleasing play upon the name "Onesimus", which means *profitable*. Paul uses it as a verb in verse twenty. He may be regarded as a picture of those of the nations who had strayed away from God, who are the fruit of Paul's bonds as Onesimus was, and who now return to God to become His "profitable" slaves. He is also a marvelous example of God's method of transforming evil into good. No one would condone the act of Onesimus in running away from his master, yet God made it a blessing not only to Onesimus, but to his master and to Paul. All were enriched by it. In this way He is able to make all evil subserve His purpose. It is the background of His grace and will become the means of drawing His creatures infinitely closer to Himself and His affections than would be possible if sin had never invaded the universe.

<sup>15</sup> The short period of Onesimus' absence was not worth reckoning compared with the fact that, as a brother in Christ, Philemon would have him for all the eons. So the short term of sin (which seems to us so long) is not worth reckoning compared with the eonian and everlasting tenure of the bliss which follows it.

<sup>15</sup> *Collect as a repayment*, FROM-HAVE, is a special term used in the papyri for *receiving in full* for any debt or obligation. Thus the Lord, in the sixth of Matthew, said concerning those whose deeds were done before men, that "they are collecting their wages," i.e. they have their reward and the receipt for it in full—there is no more due them from God.

<sup>18</sup> Philemon was evidently called under Paul's preaching, so that he owed all he had in grace to his ministry. With all this to his credit, Paul may well assume all of Onesimus' debts to his master.

<sup>20</sup> There is a play on the name Onesimus, or Profitable. If he should be sent back to Paul, to serve him in the evangel, he would indeed be "Profitable" to Paul, both in name and in fact.

<sup>22</sup> At this time Paul still hoped to be released and return to his itinerant ministry. But the very spiritual character of his latest ministry did not demand his physical presence. It was more in keeping to convey it by epistles. We have no evidence to show that he ever went to Colosse.

<sup>23</sup> Later, all except Luke left him (2Ti.4<sup>11</sup>). Demas abandoned him. And to this very day his inspired epistles, by means of which he still speaks, and which are the only source of the truth for this economy of God's grace, are often unheeded, neglected, abandoned, forsaken.

## **THE CIRCUMCISION EPISTLES**



## THE CIRCUMCISION EPISTLES

At the notable conference in Jerusalem when Paul submitted his evangel to those of repute, they submitted nothing to him, but perceived that he had been entrusted with the evangel of the Uncircumcision as Peter had been with that of the Circumcision (Ga. 2 6-9). James, Cephas and John gave him the right hand of fellowship. He was to be for the nations, they for the Circumcision. The decision of this conference is reflected in the epistles written by those who were present. The epistles written by James, Peter, John, and Jude, the brother of James, form the greater part of the following collection, hence we term them

### THE CIRCUMCISION EPISTLES.

Nothing will contribute more to the understanding of these writings than the clear cut apprehension that, in every detail, they differ from Paul's epistles, and do not apply at all to the present interval of God's gracious dealings with the nations, during Israel's temporary defection. Not a single truth is discussed in these writings which cannot be duplicated on a higher plane in the writings for the Uncircumcision.

The vital difference is this: In these epistles all blessing comes to or through faithful Israel: in the present economy of grace all blessing overflows notwithstanding that Israel's apostasy choked the channel of blessing. We are blessed in spite of Israel's failure. They will be blessed, and the nations will be blessed through them, in the coming day to which these epistles apply, on the ground of their return to God.

The final sphere of blessing in Paul's epistles was transferred to heaven (Eph. 1<sup>st</sup>). No such note is struck in the Circumcision epistles. They are all concerned with Israel on the earth, not with an election from the nations having a celestial destiny. They are all based on a physical relationship to Messiah, and lay great stress on His flesh, while Paul came to

the point where he eliminated this from his ministry entirely (2 Co. 5<sup>14</sup>).

They deal with Christ as He was on earth and as He will return to earth. Paul commences at His ascension and reveals a prior return of Christ, not to the earth, but to the air, to call His saints to Him there.

As Paul's name implies, he deals with an interval, a parenthesis in God's program. Hence we should read from the book of Acts right on to Hebrews and through to Jude (omitting Paul's parenthetical epistles) to get the true connection between the proclamation of the kingdom in the book of Acts, and the epistles dealing with the temporary consequences of its rejection.

Paul's ministries changed with fresh revelations, so that his career in the book of Acts is only premonitory to his written revelation, especially that given at its close. Not so with the other apostles. Nothing new is revealed in their epistles; they are but the modification of their former ministry due to the conditions consequent on the temporary rejection of the kingdom.

The perplexities of those Pentecostal believers who remained faithful to the end are answered in Hebrews. The difficulties of those who will suffer when the kingdom is once more on the divine program are met by Peter, who enters the kingdom through suffering and death. The course of those who will be guided through the time of trouble and enter the time of blessing alive is prefigured and provided for by John (See Jn. 21<sup>18-23</sup>). James deals especially with the rebellious and the rich.

These writings cannot be "applied" to the saints today without considerable confusion and loss. As it is of more present importance to distinguish this line of truth from our own than to fully understand its message for the Circumcision, special attention will be given to its contrast with the grace which is ours in Christ Jesus.

These epistles do not treat of such themes as the body of Christ, the church as a spiritual organism, the believers' identification with Christ before God, crucifixion with Christ, exemption from law, righteousness by faith, the conciliation, and the heavenly destiny. Failure or refusal to discern that Paul brought a distinct revelation accounts for the prevailing confusion as to what the gospel for the present administration really is.

Much has been written concerning the authorship of Hebrews, but nothing is so helpful as that fact that the writer did not reveal himself. Anyone who has imbibed the spirit of his epistles will agree that Paul not only *did* not but *could* not write such an exhortation. It is impossible for him to associate himself with a company of people from which he had been separated by the holy Spirit, whose destiny is utterly different from his. In contrast with this, the epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude are to be interpreted in the light of their characters and careers.

James links us with the last and lowest period, in the book of Acts, for the nation will be in an even more serious spiritual state when God begins to recall them to Himself. Peter was destined to suffer. Hence he writes with reference to the sufferings which are still in store for the apostate nation. John was to tarry till His coming. Consequently he writes for those who will live through the day of indignation, and will enter the kingdom without dying.

The main point to perceive is that all of these men belong to the Circumcision, and write for the Circumcision, not for the nations. Their ministry and message is in abeyance so long as the present administration of celestial favor, apart from the mediacy of Israel, will continue. Paul alone writes for us. He, with a few Hellenists, are granted a grace which far transcends anything in the Circumcision epistles. And, as it is pure grace, those among the nations who believe are associated with them on equally exalted terms.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS resumes the subject of the book of Acts. Paul's epistles are a parenthesis in God's administrations. In Acts the kingdom is proclaimed, and rejected by the nation of Israel as a whole. Yet there was a remnant who believed. Of these the Hellenists followed the revelations given to Paul and found a new and a celestial destiny. But the Hebrews, associated with the twelve apostles and James, whose destiny is the kingdom as promised by the prophets, are left in a distressing situation due to the national defection of Israel. What is to become of them during the time that the nation stumbles? The kingdom cannot come until after the fulness of the nations has come in. That could hardly be during their lifetime. The book of Hebrews deals with the problem of these Pentecostal believers and takes them back to the same position as was occupied by the patriarchs and prophets of old, as explained in the eleventh chapter. They died in faith, not having received the promises.

An important distinction between Hebrews and Hellenists will help in understanding this epistle. Both were Jews, of the stock of Israel as to the flesh. Both are brought before us in the sixth of Acts, where the widows of the Hellenists were distinguished from the widows of the Hebrews. Both spoke Greek. But the culture and training of the Hebrews was essentially Eastern and according to the traditions of their ancestors. The Hellenists, who were composed mostly of

those who had lived in foreign lands, were Greek in culture and customs. So distinct were they that they had special synagogues in Jerusalem. The Hebrews were strong for ritual and the religion of their fathers. They are the special subject of this epistle, as is manifest from the opening strain.

As the faith of the Pentecostal believers rested on signs and wonders and miracles in anticipation of the powers of the kingdom, some fell away when these manifestations ceased and the promised kingdom failed to appear. Their apostasy is dealt with in the sixth and tenth chapters—passages which can have no application in the present administration of grace, but which have hung as a cloud over the heads of those who imagine themselves in a similar position. Saints in Israel were conditionally pardoned. Its continuance depended upon their extension of this pardon to the other nations, as in the parable of the ten thousand talent debtor. The pardon could be and was withdrawn. It is not in force now. We have the infinitely higher favor of justification.

Hebrews is the antitype of the wilderness journey of Israel from Egypt to the promised land. It brings Christ before us as the true Mediator, greater than Moses, the true Saviour, greater than Joshua, the true Chief Priest, greater than Aaron. It holds forth better promises concerning the land and the kingdom. Its type is the tabernacle and its ministry, before Israel entered the land.

<sup>1</sup> Though the title, "Hebrews" is not inspired, the opening strain shows that this epistle is addressed to Israelites "whose are the fathers" (Ro. 9<sup>5</sup>), and who alone had the oracles of God. No author is given. This is an inspired omission. It is a grave mistake to seek to supply one. It is fatal to put Paul's name here, for his ministries are distinct from and above all that this epistle has for the Hebrews.

<sup>2</sup> The Son is the Speaker to Whom the Hebrews are directed. His glories, as they relate to the kingdom and their blessing, is the great theme of the epistle. Beginning with a brilliant cluster, showing His relationship to God, He is given a place superior to angels, and to all the great figures in Hebrew history.

<sup>2</sup> "Tenant" seems the nearest word in English for one who has the possession and enjoyment of a thing, yet is not the owner. But it should also include the distribution by lot. So we have used the phrase "enjoyer of the allotment". The whole universe was created for the Son (Col.1<sup>16</sup>). He is the Image of the invisible God, and He it was Who made the eons. Thus the Hebrews are introduced to the higher glories of the Messiah of their ancient Scriptures.

<sup>3</sup> We speak of seeing the sun, but it is hid behind its brilliant beams. So the Son is the Effulgence of the invisible God. The shekinah glory, which filled the temple, was a token of His presence. God condescends to assume certain characters in relation to His creatures in order to reveal Himself to them. Even as Father, He cannot be known except through the Son (Jn. 14 <sup>9,10</sup>). It is only through His Emblem that God reveals Himself. Not only the creation, but the operation of the universe is in His hands. The entrance and presence of sin in the universe is all accounted for by one word—He has made a cleansing of sins. It is evident that, in His grand concerns, sins are considered only as a temporary stain on His escutcheon, already disposed of in truth, as they will be eventually in fact. The right hand of the divine Majesty is the true place of the One Who wields all the power of God, and Who, for creatures such as we, is the only One in Whom we can apprehend and approach the Deity.

<sup>4</sup> The term "messengers", often rendered "angels", does not denote nature but office. They may be men. Many in the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as John the Baptist (Mt.10<sup>11</sup>), his disciples (Lu.7<sup>24</sup>), the Lord's disciples (Lu.9<sup>52</sup>) are called by this appellation. Applied to celestial beings it denotes those who are God's couriers, who have the power of moving about freely in the universe, and thus perform the duties of messengers. Our Lord Himself is God's Chief Messenger (1 Thes.4<sup>16</sup>). The Hebrew oracles had come through messengers. The law was prescribed thus (Gal.3<sup>19</sup>). Now all further revelation will flow through the only begotten Son.

<sup>5</sup> God has had many "sons". When earth's corner stone was laid, all the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38<sup>7</sup>). Adam was a son of God (Lu.3<sup>38</sup>). The prophet Hosea foretells the time when all Israel shall be called the sons of God (Hos.1<sup>10</sup>). So that the particular point in this passage is the introduction of His Son, not by creation, but by begetting. He is His only begotten Son (Ps. 27; Mt. 12<sup>3</sup>; Lu. 13<sup>2,33</sup>; Jn.11<sup>4</sup>). As such He is infinitely better fitted to communicate the heart of God to man.

<sup>5</sup> This, in its first application, was said of Solomon (2 Sam.7<sup>14</sup>) the type of David's greater Son.

<sup>6</sup> See Ps.97 and Deut.32<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> The messengers are like the forces of nature, mere instruments to carry out His will (Ps.104<sup>4</sup>).

<sup>8</sup> As Christ, He reigns over the next eon, including the thousand years. After that, in the new earth, He reigns as Son. This is called "the eon of the eon", because it is the fruit of His reign during the preceding eon. When the Son has reigned to such purpose that there is no further need of His rule, He abdicates, turning over the kingdom to God the Father (1 Co.15<sup>28</sup>; see also Ps.45<sup>6,7</sup>).

<sup>10</sup> The Greek term here used means "originally." There is a remote possibility that it denotes "through sovereignties" and that these (Eph. 3<sup>10</sup>; Col. 1<sup>16</sup>) may have been associated with the Lord in the foundation of the earth, much as the saints in Israel will be in the administration of the kingdom. Thus the term would correspond to "hands" in the parallelism.

<sup>11</sup> The destruction of the earth and the heavens is but a crisis in their change (<sup>12</sup>), for they are not to be made non-existent, but created anew. All things are in a state of flux until the consummation. Only the Son remains the same, and through Him all else attains permanence and perfection.

<sup>13</sup> David's Son and David's Lord will, like David, subdue all His enemies (1 Chron.22<sup>18</sup>; Ps.110<sup>1</sup>). It is the very essence of His glory that this is only "till". When the last enemy has been abolished, the Son subordinates Himself. All enmity being banished, His sovereignty ceases.

<sup>14</sup> Nothing is said here of the great part which angels play in judgment, for judgment, in its last analysis, is but a prelude to salvation. Paul never mentions any such angelic ministry, because our nearness to God precludes the necessity of any intermediaries. The higher the revelation, the nearer we approach the consummation, the more intimate is the creatures' fellowship with God and the less need there is of any link until finally all these vanish when God becomes All in all.

<sup>1-4</sup> Here the teaching of Hebrews is definitely linked to that of the Lord in the gospels and those who heard him, in the Acts. Paul's ministries are thus carefully excluded. The fact that these ministries had failed to eventuate in the kingdom, is the ground for this exhortation, for, doubtless many paid no further heed to the promises, now that they seem to have failed of fruition. That the kingdom is in view is shown in the next paragraph. A study of the contexts of the above quotations reveals the fact that they all deal with "the future inhabited earth whereof we speak".

<sup>5</sup> Nowhere are messengers or angels accorded a place of rule. In the future, in the heavens, we shall judge them. On the earth the Circumcision saints will have dominion. Even now the sovereignties and authorities in the heavens are distinguished from the messengers (Un.5<sup>8-12</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> Man's inferiority to angels is only temporary. In the resurrection they will no longer be greater in strength and power (2 Pet. 2<sup>11</sup>). <sup>7</sup> Even in the heavens the saints of this economy will be above them. This is only hint-

ed at in Hebrews. <sup>8</sup> The immediate "all" refers only to the earth (Ps.8).

<sup>9</sup> The resurrection and exaltation of the suffering Saviour is the promise and pledge that He will elevate all who are His during the eons into the place of dominion over the universe. Only the One Who has been lowest can claim the place supreme.

<sup>9</sup> The words "in the grace of God" may, originally, have been "apart from God". This reading is supported by several early fathers and versions, as well as by the context.

<sup>1</sup> It is not easy, in English, to distinguish between the celestial calling, here referred to, and the "calling above" (Phil.3<sup>14</sup>) of Paul's latest revelation. That which is celestial as to location is often spoken of in Ephesians, as our blessing among the celestials (<sup>13</sup>), His seat (<sup>120</sup>), our seat (<sup>28</sup>), the sovereignties and authorities (<sup>316</sup>), our conflict (<sup>612</sup>). This is in the dative case, which gives us the place in which anything is found. It occurs once in Hebrews (12<sup>22</sup>). The genitive denotes source or character. The shadow of the divine service of the celestials (Heb.8<sup>5</sup>) was on earth. So the city sought by the faithful (Heb.11<sup>16</sup>) will descend to earth (Un. 21<sup>10</sup>), and the celestial calling is from the ascended Christ, not to heaven, but from heaven. We are called to heaven, the Hebrews are addressed from heaven. They have no part in the calling above. Their blessings, though celestial in character, are on earth.

Our calling is gracious (Ro.11<sup>29</sup>), for God's glory (1 Co.12<sup>6</sup>), fraught with the highest expectations (Eph.1<sup>18</sup>), not in accord with our acts, but in accord with His own purpose and the grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before eonian times (2 Tim.1<sup>9</sup>), but this calling is conditional (3<sup>6-14</sup>) as in Peter, who exhorts his readers to confirm their calling through ideal acts (2 Pet.1<sup>10</sup>).

The spiritual in Israel are God's house (1 Pet.2<sup>5</sup>). Just as, at the exodus, Moses was over the nation, so now, God's Son is their Mediator. And as Moses combined the office of apostle with that of priest, so Christ is commissioned by God to the people and stands before God for the people.

<sup>7</sup> The Pentecostal period is the anti-

type of the wilderness experiences. As Israel wandered forty years in the desert, so now they wander a like period in the wastes of unbelief. The kingdom does not come.

<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew of Ps.95<sup>7-11</sup> reads "as at Meribah" and "the day of Massah", and the passage refers to the twentieth of Numbers. The quotation substitutes their meanings. Meribah is "contention," or "bitterness," Massah is "trial." Thus he brings before us the two great occasions which exhibited the unbelief of the people. They followed the report of the ten spies, and refused to go into the land (Nu. 13, 14). Jehovah proposed to wipe them out and make a greater nation of Moses. But He relented, yet doomed them all, but Caleb and Joshua, to die in the wilderness. At Meribah or Massah the people had no water and they murmured against Moses and Jehovah (Ex.17<sup>1-7</sup>; Nu.20<sup>1-13</sup>). All those in the wilderness had been redeemed out of Egypt, yet they failed to enter the land because of unbelief. The Pentecostal believers who are addressed here find themselves in precisely the same predicament. The Lord had come, offering the kingdom, but they had refused to enter in. Now again the kingdom had been proclaimed, and now those who had been redeemed murmur because the kingdom is not set up. This epistle is meant for those at Meribah.

This quotation is the keynote of the warnings of this epistle. Despite them the bulk of the nation drew back, and we witness its wanderings to this day. Abraham was not an Israelite, nor a Jew, but his descendants who imitated his faith in obedience to the exhortations of this epistle are Hebrews indeed.

<sup>8</sup> That the entrance into the land was only a typical suggestion of the reality is evident when the psalmist speaks of a future entrance. The word "rest" is not a correct rendering of the Hebrew "sabbath" or the Greek word here used. God was not tired when He first instituted the sabbath (Gen.2<sup>2</sup>). He stopped, not rested. So the unbeliever is not asked to rest from his works, to gather strength to resume them, but to stop because God has finished His work.

## Hebrews 3:8-4:16

<sup>8</sup> Joshua (in Greek the same as Jesus) signifies Jehovah the Saviour. He brought them into the land. Hence, while Moses and Aaron are discussed at length, their ministry being in the wilderness, Joshua is barely mentioned. This shows how consistently this epistle clings to the wilderness experiences of Israel. It is not concerned with the entrance into the promises.

<sup>9</sup> The sabbatism which remains for Israel is the millennial kingdom. Those who, like Caleb and Joshua, spy out the land, and have confidence that God will fulfill His promise, enjoy the sabbatism by faith. All the rest are strewn along the wilderness.

<sup>12</sup> The soul has to do with the physical senses. It is usually confused with the spirit. The nation in the wilderness was soulish. They sighed for the flesh pots of Egypt. They were sensual. So too with the people in our Lord's day, who responded to the loaves and fishes, but could not digest His words. And this is the danger with these Hebrew believers. They sighed for the physical blessings of the kingdom. But when the signs which accompanied its proclamation in the Pentecostal era withdrew, they fell away. Only the word of God is able to judge whether an action is spiritual or soulish.

<sup>13</sup> "Him to Whom we are accountable" is an impressive and suggestive description of God whose Word makes apparent every thought of the heart.

<sup>14</sup> Priesthood is a standing symbol of distance and alienation. There was no priest in Eden. There is no temple in the new creation (Un.21<sup>22</sup>). In the present economy of grace each one has unhindered access, by one spirit, to the Father (Eph.2<sup>18</sup>). The Aaronic priesthood arose out of Moses' inability to perform all the functions of a mediator. As Christ has no such disabilities He exercises all the duties pertaining to mediatorship, and thus becomes a Priest of a different order. From the time when no priest was needed, through Melchizedek, who was both priest and king, down to Aaron was a descent. The ascent is through Christ, Who is both Priest and King, to the last eon, when priesthood vanishes in reconciliation.

<sup>1</sup> The chief priest in Israel was able to sympathize with the human frailties of the people because he himself had the same, and sinned, like the rest. But Christ's sufferings, unspeakably more trying than any priest's, never led Him into sin. The priest could offer a sacrifice for himself. Christ could not, for He was the Sacrifice, which must be without blemish. Yet, though He had no sin and did no sin, His close contact with sin and its sufferings enables Him to enter into perfect sympathy with those thus placed.

<sup>4</sup> The honors of the priesthood have been coveted or usurped only at awful cost. Korah, Dathan and Abiram claimed the priesthood and were swallowed up by the earth (Nu.16). The censers of those with them were made into broad plates to cover the altar as a memorial that no stranger, not of the seed of Aaron, may come near to offer incense before the Lord (Nu. 16<sup>40</sup>). King Uzziah also transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense. In consequence, the leprosy rose up in his forehead before the priests, and he was thrust out, and was a leper to the day of his death (2 Chron.26<sup>16-21</sup>). Hence it would appear a most serious matter for anyone outside the line of Aaron to set himself up as a priest. Only one called by God dare aspire to the honor. It is necessary, therefore that Christ Himself, Who was not of the tribe of Levi, much less a son of Aaron, should have a definite call. Not by personal ambition, but by the call of God which involved such suffering as is most repugnant to flesh and blood, did Christ obtain His priesthood. God did save Him out of death, but not from the "cup".

<sup>11</sup> The Jews were blind to the failures and disabilities connected with the Aaronic priesthood, hence could not appreciate the necessity of a new order for the Messiah. This made the whole subject a difficult one to unfold to them. The principal lessons are drawn from the inspired omissions in the record, which require a measure of spiritual apprehension which they did not possess.

<sup>1</sup> The six rudiments which form the foundation which the Hebrews are exhorted to leave for more mature teaching are closely connected with the proclamation of the kingdom, and are not the substructure of present truth. Repentance and baptism are the keys to the kingdom, and are not for the body of Christ. Peter, at Pentecost, proclaims repentance and baptism to the Jews—perhaps to some who later received this epistle. Faith is the basis on which the present administration of grace is built. The Jews were zealous religionists. Their ritual was the dead works of which they repented when they turned to Messiah.

"Faith on God" is probably the equivalent of our "belief in God", that is believing that He is, rather than what He has said. Believing God, as in Abraham's case, leads to justification, a grace entirely absent from this list.

<sup>2</sup> Paul did not put baptism in the foundation of his evangel. He insisted that Christ had not sent him to baptize, but to evangelize (1 Co.1<sup>17</sup>). Now there is only one baptism—that in spirit, which unites us into one body (Eph.4<sup>5</sup>). In the kingdom proclamation, however, baptism in water was essential.

The imposition of hands for the conveyance of spiritual benefits especially through the apostles is also a characteristic of the kingdom economy.

There seems to be no reference here to the "resurrection from among the dead", but rather to resurrection in general, apart from which the kingdom cannot be set up. At that time will the saints in Israel awake and possess the kingdom promised to them in the prophets.

Eonian judgment characterizes the inception and progress of Messiah's reign. It begins with the severest judgments this earth has known.

These are the six foundation stones cast down by those who fell away among the Hebrews. They should have left them for maturity. Instead, they forsake them for apostasy. Instead of going back to Judaism, they would crucify again for themselves the Son of God.

<sup>4</sup> This description applies only to those who participated in the Pente-

costal blessings. They were enlightened, they tasted the celestial gratuity, they became partakers of holy spirit, and God's declaration, and they only experienced the powers of the kingdom eon, and many of them fell aside. These blessings were based on their repentance, or change of mind, which was induced largely by the miracles which they saw. When the kingdom failed to appear, and its powers vanished, their repentance went also. Hence the impossibility of renewing it, for the means which produced it were no longer in evidence. Such a course is not possible in a day of grace, such as we live in. In place of repentance and pardon, we have faith and justification, which know no falling away, being entirely of grace, from first to last.

<sup>11</sup> Brotherly kindness manifested in the service of the saints is several times commended in this epistle (10<sup>34,131</sup>), and will be rewarded in accord with the promise of Mt.10<sup>40-42</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> "Through faith and patience" the promises may be enjoyed even by those who are actually strangers and expatriates on the earth.

<sup>13</sup> That all are not to apostatize is evident from God's oath to Abraham. This truth is offered as an incentive to those who still remain faithful, to persevere to the consummation. It is only thus that the salvation of the Pentecostal saint was assured. The general fulfilment of God's oath to Abraham was beyond question, for God swore by the highest possible power to fulfil it, yet the special blessing of each one of his physical descendants depends, in some degree, not merely on their faith, but their faithfulness. This is the great distinguishing feature, which sinks it far below the grace which is lavished on us, sinners of the nations. We do not need this anchor of the soul, hence it is extended only to those who belong to Abraham by ties of flesh.

<sup>1</sup> Melchizedek is notable chiefly for what is not recorded of him. There is no reason to believe that he was, personally, the mystical and miraculous character which is his as a picture of the priesthood of Christ. He doubtless was a man like other men, for God had some among the nations who

had been brought to a close acquaintance with their Creator.

The Melchizedek priesthood should be studied in its contrasts with the Aaronic priesthood. Its greatest difference lies in the fact that it combines the office of king with that of priest. This is the ideal way. It was only because of the failure of Moses that Aaron was given a share in his mediatorial office. It is God's purpose that the nation of Israel shall be a kingdom of priests (Ex.19<sup>6</sup>), a royal priesthood (1 Pet.2<sup>8</sup>). They will rule the nations for God and bring the nations' offerings to God. So it behooves their Head to be both Priest and King.

The other great point of dissimilarity lies in the matter of succession. The continuance of the Aaronic priesthood was made a matter of descent, and nothing was so vital to a priest as his genealogy. He must be able to tell his father and his mother and trace his lineage clear back to Aaron or he could not even be a priest. And he must provide for this succession by marrying within the priestly caste. In notable contrast to this we have no recorded genealogy of Melchizedek whatever, no mention of father or mother, and no succession, for his death is carefully excluded from the fleeting glimpse we get of him on the pages of inspiration. These omissions are intentional, for only thus can his priesthood picture the priesthood of Christ, Who does not require a genealogy or a successor.

<sup>2</sup> The writer fixes our attention on the significance and sequence of these titles. Righteousness must underlie peace in Christ's priestly work as elsewhere (Psa.72<sup>3</sup> 85<sup>10</sup> Isa.32<sup>17</sup> 9<sup>4</sup>). So also justification is the ground of the infinitely greater favor of peace (Ro.5<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> The Aaronic priesthood was a treadmill which never accomplished its object. The Melchizedek priesthood of Christ lasts during the millennium, and accomplishes its purpose, for no priest is found necessary in the new creation (Un.22<sup>22</sup>), when God dwells with mankind (Un.21<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>4</sup> As further evidence of the superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood, our attention is directed to the tithe,



which, in Israel, was the special portion of the Levites. Abraham, himself, the progenitor of the nation, actually paid tithes to this priest, and in him, the whole Levitical priesthood paid tithes to another and higher order. Nor is this all, for Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and so bestowed his benediction on the Levitic succession. This alone shows that his order is distinctly superior to that of Aaron.

<sup>11</sup> It would be very difficult for the Hebrews to acknowledge the failure of the Aaronic priesthood. Yet this is distinctly involved in the announcement of a priest after a different order. Had our Lord come of the family of Aaron, He would have been associated with an order which began in failure and which will never effect the reconciliation between God and His creatures which priesthood is intended to bring about: Hence His genealogy proclaims Him Israel's King, but He ignores all genealogies in His priestly place. Instead, He has the much higher honor of being qualified for office by the divine oath, including an assurance that, unlike the Aaronic priesthood, there will be no regrets for the failure and insufficiency of His ministry.

<sup>23</sup> If the Melchizedek priesthood should last forever (instead of for the eon) then it too, would come under the condemnation of never bringing anything to perfection or finality. Then there would be a temple and priesthood on the new earth; indeed, it would continue beyond the consummation, and form an insurmountable barrier between God and some of His creatures. Priesthood is a sign of estrangement; it vanishes when God is at peace with His people. Hence, though the Lord's life is indissoluble (7<sup>16</sup>) and the priesthood inviolate (7<sup>24</sup>), unbroken by death, it is always limited to one eon, beyond which there can be no priesthood, because there is no estrangement.

<sup>26</sup> The glories of this Chief Priest refer to His relation to God, to men, to the law. He is knit to God by loving devotion. He is innocent of any tinge of malice toward men, and He is undefiled by a spot of moral defilement. He is separate from sinners because of His exaltation to His office.

<sup>27</sup> The fact that the sacrificial system under the law demanded sacrifices for the sins of the priests as well as for the people, shows that it was a weak and imperfect and temporary expedient. Add to this the fact that these sacrifices continued to be offered daily, and never brought any permanent relief, and we see clearly that it was never intended to do more than suggest the true Sacrifice, which the Son offered once, which needs no repetition. It is evident, therefore, that He could not have associated Himself with the Aaronic order without degrading His great sacrifice. They served among the shadows of the heavenly tabernacle. He entered the true.

<sup>1</sup> The tabernacle and temple furniture did not include a seat. The high priest's work was never completed, hence, he never sat down in the holy places. In striking contrast, the Chief Priest of the new order has finished His work, and sits at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

The "sum" is that the sanctuary is heaven itself: the Chief Priest is the Son of God. His priestly work began after His ascension (v. 4). Aaronic priesthood was instituted at Sinai (Ex.24) after Israel had been redeemed, for the purpose of maintaining the people in the blessedness of redemption.

<sup>5</sup> The tabernacle and its service were patterned after a heavenly original. It was not an exact copy, however, but an adumbration or shadow, merely giving the main outlines. The heavenly offerings seem to be mainly oblations or gifts, and probably had no sacrificial victims other than the great sacrifice of Christ. The earthly copy was given to teach the great lessons of God's righteousness and holiness, and man's unfitness and distance from Him, as well as the way of approach which is acceptable to Him until the true Sacrifice pours out His soul and makes an end of sins.

<sup>6</sup> The heavenly tabernacle is not associated with the covenant and promises which came from Sinai along with the earthly model. Everything connected with the new Mediator is better. This is especially true of the new covenant which He will make when the kingdom commences.

<sup>8</sup> Few phrases are so unfortunately confusing as "the New Testament". The Greek word for "testament" and its Hebrew equivalent never carry the ordinary meaning of a will, or legal instrument for the disposal of property after death. They are close equivalents of our "covenant" or "contract". To speak of the Greek Scriptures as "the New Testament", and the Hebrew as "the Old Testament" is most misleading, because, as a matter of fact the new covenant is found in the "Old Testament". Jeremiah gives it in full (Jer.31<sup>31-34</sup>). It has never been in force yet, and "New Testament times" will not come until after the time of great affliction when Jehovah calls Israel and Judah back to Himself. In truth, the new covenant is not for the nations at all, though, of course, a large section of the "New Testament" is especially for the nations.

The "old covenant" is not the Hebrew scriptures, but the compact made with Israel at Mount Sinai. It was two-sided. The people proposed to do their part and Jehovah engaged to do His. They promised to obey Him, but dismally failed to do so, consequently He could not fulfill His promises to bless them.

The new covenant which He will make with them after they have been restored to their land, and have received their Messiah, is radically different from the old. The people have no active part in it whatever. All depends on Jehovah. Hence it will not be a failure. The law that was written on stones will be written on their hearts. Instead of demanding a penalty for every infraction, He will be propitious. Instead of recalling their sins and lawlessnesses, He will blot them out. Instead of an "atonement" or shelter for sin made by the blood of he-goats and calves, the blood of Christ will put them completely away. At present we have the infinitely higher privilege of confidence in God Himself, not His promises or His covenants. The law is not inscribed on our hearts, but we were caused to die to the law through the body of Christ. We are not a regeneration but a new creation.

<sup>2</sup> In the holy place of the tabernacle, just before the curtain which separated it from the holy of holies, were two pieces of furniture, the table with the bread on the north, the lampstand on the south (Ex.26<sup>35</sup>; 40<sup>22-25</sup>). These typified the great truths of communion and testimony. No sunlight could enter the holy places. All light was supplied by the holy oil, which typified the holy Spirit, thus indicating that all real knowledge of God must come, not through the light of nature, but through divine revelation. The bread is typical of Christ, the Bread which is God's delight and man's sustenance. Communion with God is possible only through Him.

The holy place speaks of man's need in approaching God. The holy of holies exhibits the higher truth of God's desire for worship. Sweet incense floated up to Him from the golden altar. His Presence abode above the ark of the covenant between the cherubim. The stone tablets of the covenant were securely hid from sight beneath the lid of the ark, which was the propitiatory or mercy seat. Here it is that Jehovah met the mediator of His people.

The word rendered "censer" is sometimes translated "golden altar". But it is used twice in the LXX of a "censer in his hand" (2 Chron.26<sup>19</sup>; Ezek.8<sup>11</sup>), and never of the golden altar. This was before the curtain, not in the holy of holies. Worship is not in view, so the altar is not mentioned.

<sup>6</sup> The chief lesson of the tabernacle structure (as well as that of the temple) never seems to have entered the minds and hearts in Israel. A God Who hid Himself behind thick curtains, and Who forbade access into His presence except on rare occasions, Who divided the holy places into two compartments and dwelt alone in the furthest one, out of reach of all except the high priest once a year, makes it evident that the way to Him is far from open. And, as a consequence, the services based on these barriers must be impotent to clear the way, and were temporary measures, lasting only until Christ would crush all barriers by His surpassing sacrifices, and open the way of access to His presence.

<sup>13</sup> This refers to the two great sin-offerings of Lev. 16 and Num. 19. The victim was burned, the ashes preserved, and water that flowed over them availed to purify. This ordinance fills an important place in Israel's future as well as its past (Ezek. 36<sup>25</sup>).

<sup>15</sup> This new covenant is for Israel and Judah only. The nations have no part in it at all. They never had the law and never will have it. They never had a divine service or a tabernacle, neither were the promises made to them. All of this is for the Hebrews only.

<sup>16</sup> Covenants, in ancient times, were ratified by means of sacrifices. When Jehovah wished to confirm His covenant with Abram, five different animals were divided into halves, which were laid over against one another so that the contracting parties could pass in between them, thus indicating that they ratified the covenant (Gen. 15<sup>8-21</sup>). As this covenant was one of pure grace on God's part, Abram was not allowed to pass between the pieces. The symbols of Jehovah's presence passed through alone, thus confirming the covenant without conditions on the part of Abram. Until the victims have been slain no covenant was considered binding.

<sup>16</sup> The rendering "testament" and "testator" has no concord whatever with the context. It is true that a testament is of no force while the testator is living, but that has no possible application here. If the covenant with Abram were a testament made by God, then, according to the reasoning, it has no force so long as God lives! The old covenant was confirmed by death—not the death of either party to the covenant, but by the sacrifices which the young men offered (Ex. 24<sup>5-8</sup>). The blood of these victims was sprinkled on the scroll of the covenant and on the people.

<sup>18</sup> The old covenant, under which the people rashly contracted to do all that the law demanded, was dedicated with the blood of calves and he-goats. The new is inaugurated with the blood of Christ, which has power to fend off failure, and refuses all human help.

<sup>26</sup> It is evident that Christ did not appear at "the end of the world", nor, indeed, at the conclusion of the eons. Neither has sin been completely eliminated. Such, however, is the efficacy of His sacrifice, that we know that sin must eventually be banished from the universe. And we know also that this will be at the conclusion of the eons. Hence this somewhat complicated sentence has been rendered to this effect.

<sup>27</sup> This is not a general statement concerning all men, but the men who have been in view continually, that is, the Levitical priests. The word judgment has no reference to the judgment of mankind for sin, but the setting to rights of those cases in Israel which continued until the death of the high priest. The innocent man-slayer lived in the city of refuge until the death of the great priest (Nu. 35<sup>22-29</sup>). Then he might return to his patrimony. This was his "judgment". The parallel demands that this judgment correspond with the salvation which will come to those who are awaiting Christ. He, the great Chief Priest, has died, and in due time Israel, the man-slayer, shall return to the land of his possession.

<sup>28</sup> This appearance of Christ refers to His return to Israel. He will bring salvation to all, whether they watch or are drowsy (1 Thess. 5<sup>10</sup>) when He comes for us. But to Israel He brings salvation to those awaiting Him. Just as the high priest entered the holy of holies on the great day of atonement and came out to bless the waiting throng, so Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary and will bring a benediction when He comes.

<sup>1</sup> The sacrifices under the law were but dim figures of the great Sacrifice. They made atonement, that is, a shelter for sin. The offering up of Christ made a real propitiation, for it put away the sins which had been covered by the blood of bulls and goats. Atonement covered sin, pardon put it away, but justification, which we enjoy, goes far beyond both. The Hebrews were not justified.

<sup>5</sup> The unbeliever's objection that the God of Israel was a terrible God Who delighted in the blood of slain beasts, is here directly denied. The whole sacrificial system, not only as an

atonement for sin, but also as a means of worship by whole burnt offerings, gave Him no pleasure in itself, but only as it was typical of the true. The physical perfection of an animal was nothing to Him except as a reminder of the moral and spiritual perfection of the One Who came to do His will. The blood of beasts could cover sins, but had no power to put them away, yet it foretold the true Sacrifice, and the sufferings which suffice to offset all sins—covered or uncovered—and eventually to justify all who have committed them as well as to vindicate God for the presence of sin in the world. These grander results are not, of course, in view in this epistle.

7 So Christ "offers Himself flawless to God", not at the cross, but on coming into the world, as the Israelite presented his sacrifice at the door of the tabernacle (Heb. 9:14; Lev. 1:5).

11 The great difference between the Levitical sacrifices and that of their Antitype is graphically brought before us in the action of the chief priests and the inaction of Christ. Indeed, had the sacrifices of the law been really efficacious, like that of Christ, there never would have been a priesthood and a sacrificial system. Moses would have offered one sacrifice, such as that at the inauguration of the covenant (Ex.24:5), and, there being no further necessity for sacrifice, there would have been no need for a priesthood. The Aaronic priesthood is built on its own inadequacy. Its continuous round of unavailing ritual knew no goal, brooked no cessation, and gave no rest. No priest was allowed to sit in the holy places, for his work was never final. In these things the type is in contrast with the antitype, for Christ is seated in the holy of holies so far as His priesthood is concerned.

15 Under the new covenant, when Judah and Israel are restored to their land, the sin offering will be offered again (Eze.43:22), but it is evident that it will not be for those who have been pardoned.

19 The "recently slain way" is a reference to the path into the temple. On either side were the bodies of the sacrifices which had just been slain, and offered to Jehovah. It, however, was a dead way, and no one but a priest

dared enter upon it. The way now lies through the death and resurrection of Christ, hence is a living way, though recently slain. In the past even priests dared not venture through the curtain, behind which the Shekinah glory dwelt. Now, however, the Hebrews of every tribe have access, not only into the outer court of the priests, but into the holy place and into the holy of holies, where the high priest went but once a year. He went with fear and trembling, but they are invited to enter with assurance, because of the efficacy of this sprinkled blood and the cleanliness which comes through His word (Jn.15:3). It is as worshippers they are to approach. This epistle speaks of Christ's priesthood, and not of that of His people.

27 Under the law, one who sinned "presumptuously" (Nu.15:30), or, as the Hebrew has it, "with a high hand", was to be cut off from among his people, because he had despised the word of Jehovah and broken His commandment. The man who gathered sticks on the sabbath day was stoned to death (Nu.15:32-36). The voluntary sin here referred to is doubtless the repudiation of the truth and apostasy from the faith. The faith of the Hebrews, having been founded on the powers and signs which were given as a token of the near approach of the kingdom, was sorely tried when these signs ceased and the kingdom did not come. But those who drew back could not do so without reproaching God and trampling on the Son of God and inviting the fiery jealousy of Jehovah. For such there is no sin offering, since they refuse the only Sacrifice that is of any avail. They are calling down the vengeance of God.

How great is the contrast between these Hebrews and those who came under the ministry of Paul! Their faith did not fail for lack of evidence, because it was never founded on it (2 Co.5:7). They come so completely under the dominion of grace, that persistence in sin would only increase the outflowing of favor (Ro.6:1). We are beyond the sphere of condemnation (Ro.8:1). The Hebrews were never introduced into such grace as this, for their destiny is the kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Faith is neither "substance" nor "evidence", as is the usual rendering of this passage. The word "substance" is changed to "confidence" in most later translations, as this word seems to agree with its context in 2 Co.9<sup>4</sup>;11<sup>17</sup>. But "confidence" is not at all suitable in He.1<sup>3</sup>, where the A. V. has "person". The Revisers change this to "substance"—the very rendering they refuse in this passage! But faith is intangible, the very opposite of substance. It assumes that to be truth which it expects to become fact in the future. The word "assumption" fits every passage in which this word occurs and opens up a marvelous vista of truth, as when we are told that the Son is the Emblem of the divine assumptions. God assumes various characters during His administration of the eons. He is Creator, Saviour, Judge, and Reconciler. In every assumption He is represented by His Son, Who, as His Emblem, is also the Creator, Saviour, Judge, and Reconciler. In his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul assumes the attitude of boasting. Faith cannot become "substance" without being transmuted into sight.

<sup>3</sup> That the worlds were framed is not pertinent to this passage. It deals with the change in God's administration of the eons as a result of the refusal of the kingdom proclamation. God has come in afresh, and, through the revelations made to the apostle Paul, has readjusted the eons to suit the conditions brought about by the apostasy of Israel. Those associated with this new grace find that, in spirit, not the kingdom, but the new creation has come (2 Co.5<sup>17</sup>), and not only so, but the very consummation has arrived (1 Co.10<sup>11</sup>). This does not preclude the actual kingdom in the future for which the Hebrews hope. They died in faith, like the elders, not having received the promises. The faith of the Pentecostal Hebrews was largely founded on miracles and signs. Our sheer faith has no foundation but God's declaration. Therefore, in spirit, we soar far ahead of the Hebrews, beyond the Regeneration, into the New Creation.

<sup>4</sup> Cain is a type of natural religion, which offers a bloodless sacrifice,

which it has "acquired" from the cursed ground. Abel, "vanity", recognizing sin, was the first man whose blood was shed. Cain would not shed the blood of an animal, but does not shrink from shedding his brother's.

<sup>5</sup> Enoch, in order to believe God, had a special revelation. Jude quotes from this early prophecy (Ju.14<sup>15</sup>). Though he walked with God, he evidently walked in the midst of a most ungodly generation, which, indeed, prepared the earth for the deluge. He registered his faith in the approaching judgment by naming his firstborn son Methuselah, which has been interpreted as "when he is dead it shall be sent". The deluge came in the year of his death. His longevity speaks of God's longsuffering.

<sup>7</sup> As Enoch's faith kept him out of the impending judgment to which he testified, so Noah's faith led him safely through it. One was called upon to warn, the other to work. The building of the ark must have been a tremendous task to undertake in the face of the derision and opposition of the whole world. It was a continual reminder of the threatened doom, and condemned them by its very presence.

<sup>8</sup> In this account God takes no notice of the failures of faith. Abraham, indeed, obeyed, when called out of Ur. Yet it was a partial obedience, and tardy, for he did not leave his father's house, but tarried in Haran until his father's death. Neither is there any hint here of his sojourn in Egypt (Gen. 12<sup>10</sup>), of his effort to fulfil God's promise by taking Hagar, or, at the very height of his faith, requiring a covenant to confirm Jehovah's promise (Gen.15<sup>8</sup>). Such lapses as these are not in line with this catalogue of the faithful, but, in Abraham's case especially, it helps us to see that even he failed in his highest excellence.

<sup>13</sup> Here we have the key to this notable chapter. The Hebrews did not desire faith; they wanted fulfilment. They wanted no more promises, but performances. They wanted the kingdom to come. But the time had not yet arrived. The nation is apostate. God had begun a work among the nations, through the apostle Paul, which must be finished first. What then, is left for the Hebrews? They are ex-

horted to take the same ground as the faithful of old, who died in faith, not having received the promised blessings. Only in resurrection would they find the fulfilment which they longed for. Abraham never really enjoyed the land which was given to him. In the resurrection he and his seed will not only possess the land, during the day of the Lord, but they will have the still higher and better portion of the holy city, new Jerusalem, in the new creation.

17 That all this is in resurrection is further enforced by the offering of Isaac. Abraham had such confidence in God, that he was ready to slay his son, believing that God would rouse him from the dead in order to fulfil His promise. This is the faith that pleases God and which will count in the kingdom. Though Isaac was not killed on this occasion, his very birth had been like life from the dead, and his sacrifice was practically accomplished, so far as Abraham's faith was concerned.

20 Isaac was the depository of the promises, and it was his faith that led him to pass on the blessing. Nothing is said here of his failure to perceive that Jacob, not Esau, the firstborn of the flesh, was in the line of promise. See Gen. 27.

21 Jacob had learned one lesson of faith, doubtless from his own case. The firstborn of the flesh are not necessarily the first in the purpose of God. So Jacob had received the blessing Isaac intended for Esau. And now, when blessing Joseph's sons, he guided his hands deliberately so as to give the greater blessing to the younger son, even though Joseph had purposely placed them so that the firstborn should be at his right hand (Gen. 48:20). And so Ephraim was preferred to Manasseh, though Joseph would have desired to have it otherwise.

22 Joseph believed the word that God had spoken to Abraham, saying that his people should sojourn in Egypt and be afflicted, and afterward should come out (Gen. 15:13, 14). Therefore he told them before his death, "God will notably note you, and you shall bring up my bones from this place" (Gen. 50:25).

23 Moses' fathers also believed what God had spoken to Abram, and looked for Him to judge Egypt and deliver His people. No mandate of Pharaoh could thwart God's purpose or hinder the fulfilment of the promise. They were confident that the mandate would not be carried out. It is quite evident that it was not, or there would not have been a man in Israel, at the exodus, younger than Moses himself. On the contrary, this astute method of curbing Israel's power was used by God to place Moses in the family of Pharaoh, so that the brilliant king himself might provide the very instrument to defeat his own purpose.

24 Moses is a marvelous example of the power of faith to wean from the world and its allurements. With the brightest prospects possible, he deliberately turns his back on the treasures of Egypt, and possibly the throne itself, in order to share in the eonian reward of the faithful. Had he enjoyed the temporary pleasures of Egypt, his name would probably have been forgotten long ago, yet now his fame and memory are enshrined in the heart of the human race. What will be his reward in the resurrection!

27 Moses feared when he found that his attempt to help his brethren became known (Ex. 2:14). And we would naturally suppose that it was fear that drove him to the back side of the desert, but we are assured that he did not fear, though he fled. Far greater still must have been the faith that stood firm before Pharaoh, that prepared the passover, that led the people out of the land in defiance of the forces of Egypt, and brought the people into the wilderness through the Red Sea.

30 The wilderness seems to be almost devoid of faith, for the enumeration of faith's victories passes from Egypt to the land. Indeed, with faith there would not have been the wanderings in the wilderness. And this is the inspired type of which the Pentecostal era is the antitype! Had the nation believed, the kingdom would have come. Now the few faithful who are left are pointed to the worthies who, like themselves, have nothing but God's bare word, yet believed it, and anticipated its fulfilment, seldom receiving the benefits which it promised.

<sup>1</sup> This cloud of "witnesses" consists of those just enumerated, who witness to the life of faith. It has no reference to any who are watching the Hebrews. A witness is one who testifies, and it is the testimony of all the faithful, from Abel down, which constituted the moral atmosphere in which the Hebrews lived. Nevertheless, their popular sin was unbelief. Even as their fathers had witnessed the faith of Moses and saw the signs, yet were strewn along the wilderness for their lack of faith in God, so the Hebrews were prone to question the promises and to turn from the trials that lay along the path of faith.

<sup>2</sup> All the other examples of faith pale before the supreme Example. Even Abraham, the father of the faithful, failed once and again in the very virtue for which he is distinguished. But the Saviour, as a man, never faltered in His implicit confidence in God. He did always those things which pleased God without regard to the consequences to Himself. When His message was rejected, He acquiesced. Even though His God forsook Him in the hour of deepest need and sorest suffering, it did not shake His faith, for, at the very last, He committed His spirit into the Father's hands. And He alone, of all the faithful, has risen and received some reward for His faithfulness, for He has ascended to the right hand of God's throne. Such an example as this should be the most powerful of all incentives for the Hebrews to endure the trials of the way, and persevere to the end.

<sup>7</sup> God's discipline is too often mistaken for His indignation. The presence of trials and distresses are not a proof of sin and God's anger, but may be the tokens of His love. Job's friends tried to convince him that his calamities came as the penalty of his own misdeeds. Job himself thought that God was his enemy and had conspired against him. All were wrong, for the blessed result of a closer knowledge of his Maker fully vindicated God for all the afflictions He had brought upon him. Job had heard of Him, but after his trial he could say that he had seen Him—a more intimate acquaintance.

<sup>10</sup> Human discipline is too often without a definite object, or lacks entirely the corrective element which should always be present. Punishment as a mere deterrent, or as a penalty, is of little use in forming character. The ideal chastening is that which fits the offense in such a way that it forms and strengthens those elements in character which are weak and which led to the evil doing. God is the only Father Who has the requisite wisdom to choose such chastening for His children. However heavy His hand may seem we may be sure that it is held by a heart that sympathizes with our passing distress, and helps us to bear fruit for our own profit and His glory.

<sup>12</sup> Flaccid hands and paralyzed knees are a realistic picture of utter discouragement on the part of those who fail to see the presence of God's hand in their disheartening circumstances, or that these are but part of the process by which He is bringing them into the larger and nearer place He has prepared for them.

<sup>16</sup> The example of Esau should have made a powerful appeal to the Hebrews, in their perplexity and distress. They, too, could ease their souls and enjoy the pleasures of the world by rejecting their birthright, for they were the firstborn of the kingdom. If they should barter their birthright for a brief respite then they, too, would be rejected, however much they might regret it later on.

<sup>17</sup> Esau was not seeking forgiveness nor salvation, but to undo the effect of a former state of mind with regard to the birthright. But his bargain was irrevocable. These Hebrews were in danger of forfeiting their birthright.

<sup>18</sup> The nation in the wilderness, at Mount Sinai, came to the terrible spectacle which inaugurated the law (Ex. 19:12-20). The whole scene was prophetic of the relation they would sustain to Jehovah under the legal covenant. He forbade a near approach under pain of death. It brought no peace or assurance, but fear and terror. This is the function of the law. It came, not to bring them near to God, but to convict them of their inability and unworthiness.

<sup>22</sup> There is a studied contrast here between the scene presented to the physical eye at Mount Sinai and the prospect of faith in connection with the new covenant. Mount Sinai itself is suggestive of another mountain which is the ultimate home of Israel in the new earth. The Lord is present, as He was in the wilderness, but here He is the Light, rather than the Lightning. Instead of being warned away for fear of death, the saints dwell near Him and enjoy the fruits of the tree of life and the draught of the river of life (Un.21, 22).

The law was given by the mandate of messengers (Ac.7<sup>53</sup>). Now they are ministering spirits commissioned for service because of those who are about to be enjoying the allotment of salvation (Heb. 1<sup>14</sup>).

The universal convocation here referred to is probably that which is convoked at the opening of the day of the Lord when the representatives of the whole creation are summoned together before the judgments which usher in the kingdom are visited on the earth (Un.4, 5).

<sup>23</sup> The ecclesia of the firstborn recalls the passover, when the firstborn in Egypt were saved by the blood (Ex. 12<sup>15</sup>). As a consequence Jehovah claimed all the firstborn for Himself (Ex.13<sup>2</sup>;34<sup>19</sup>). Later the Lord took the Levites in exchange for the firstborn (Nu.3<sup>12-13</sup>). Thus those ransomed by blood were the "ecclesia of the firstborn" in the wilderness. These Jehovah claimed for His own and these He brought near to Him in the Levites. So that the "church of the firstborn" comprises those under the shelter of the blood before the kingdom is set up. In the wilderness they were numbered on earth (Nu.3<sup>42</sup>), here they are registered in heaven.

God as Judge is especially appropriate to those who were waiting for Him to arise and judge His own people and the whole earth, as a preparation for the establishment of the kingdom. Not so do we know God.

<sup>24</sup> Under the law the spirits of the just never reached perfection, for its rites brought nothing to a finality. Perfection comes only through the Antitype of the ritual of the law.

<sup>24</sup> Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, but now One Who is more than Moses inaugurates a fresh covenant which cannot fail as the former, because it is founded on God's faithfulness alone.

<sup>25</sup> The judgments which will usher in the kingdom will be far more terrible and widespread than those at Mount Sinai. Under the sixth seal, the great cataclysm includes the sun, moon, and stars (Un.6<sup>12,13</sup>).

<sup>7</sup> The leaders were not official rulers, but men who were guides in ministry of the word and exemplary conduct.

<sup>8</sup> It should be remembered that "the Same" is a pronoun, and has reference to His personality, not to His administrations or assumptions. The same One pours out grace upon us and indignation on the nations in the Lord's day. The same One Who was weary at Sychar's well is now all-powerful. He Who was once lowly is now exalted, Who healed hundreds when on earth, refused to remove Paul's thorn in the flesh, Who hung on Calvary's cross and lay lifeless in the tomb is now alive and has ascended to God's right hand. His person, service, and dispensations change to accord with God's purpose, but He Himself remains the Same.

<sup>9</sup> It is evident that the strange teachings here referred to do not tend toward grace but physical gratification.

<sup>9</sup> Foods and drinks, which were a part of the ritual of the first tabernacle, (9<sup>9-10</sup>) cannot confirm the heart in grace. In connection with Christ's sacrifice there is no sacrificial meal. The carcass of the sin offering was not eaten either by priests or people, but was burned.

<sup>11</sup> The camp can refer to nothing else than the established ritual of Judaism. The great Sin Offering suffered outside the city of Jerusalem. So it behooved His followers to forsake the city and the system of religion which cast Him out, and follow Him outside of it all. Jerusalem was not the permanent abode of God's saints. It was to be utterly destroyed. This was done not long after this epistle was written. The eye of faith looked forward to the heavenly Jerusalem on the earth.



<sup>13</sup> This is the climax of the epistle. The choice is between faith and apostasy. The reference is to the ritual of the golden calf (Ex.33). It would have been apostasy to go outside the camp had there not been apostasy in the camp. Israel had again ceased to be "the congregation of the Lord", and they must either take sides with Messiah who suffered outside the gate or apostatize. An apostate recognizes truth and refuses to obey it.

<sup>20</sup> The God of peace—what an anchor for the turbulent souls of the Hebrews in the tumult of the times in which they lived! Josephus could write a whole book on the subject of the Jewish War which kept Palestine in continual turmoil up to the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus. How fit-

ting to close the epistle with this title! In the coming kingdom Christ will be King of Salem (peace, welfare) as well as King of righteousness. In perfect keeping with this is the pastoral picture of the great Shepherd. As the good Shepherd He gave His soul for the sheep. Now, as the great Shepherd, in resurrection, He still cares for and protects His own. Beautiful as this picture is, it finds its place on earth, and may be applied only to Israel, the nation of His choice. The church is not a sheepfold. Israel is not "one fold", as in A. V., but "one flock" (Jn.10<sup>16</sup>). Within the fold sheep do not need the Shepherd's care, but when they are led out to pasture he guides and defends them. These Hebrews were far from the fold.

## JAMES TO THE TWELVE TRIBES

NONE of the Circumcision epistles so clearly indicates the class to whom it is written as the letter of James to the twelve tribes in the dispersion. Its conflict with Paul's epistles is so pronounced that Luther rejected its authority, and endless attempts have been made to find a means of reconciliation, without coming to any satisfactory solution. Once it is apprehended that this epistle is for a different people and a distinct administration, all need of reconciliation vanishes and we are not tempted to tone down Paul or drag up James to a common level.

The contrast between the ministry of James and that of Paul is graphically illustrated in their lives: Paul was born at a distance from the land of Israel, and had no relations with the Lord until after His ascension into heaven. James, on the contrary, was born of the same mother as the Lord, and lived in the land all his life. In Paul the spiritual comes to the fore, in James, the physical.

The very name of James is suggestive. It is practically the same as Jacob, or Supplanter, who, in his career, exemplified the energy of the flesh, and whose name was changed to Israel when the flesh was subdued. The name was also applied to the nation when their crooked ways called for it rather than for the name Israel. Hence it may be taken to indicate the spiritual state of those to whom this epistle is addressed.

In the early part of Acts Peter has his rightful place at the head of the apostles, but, even as early as Paul's first visit to Jerusalem, James had a prominent place, though he was not an apostle (Gal.1<sup>19</sup>). Fourteen years later he had risen to be one of the pillars in Jerusalem and was named before Peter and John (Gal.2<sup>9</sup>). Peter

was afraid of some who came from James (Gal.2<sup>12</sup>).

At the council in Jerusalem to consider the question of circumcising the nations and putting them under the law, James had the decisive word and formulated the decrees, which were hostile to the nations (Col.2<sup>14</sup>), and which were nullified when the present secret administration was inaugurated (Eph.2<sup>15</sup>).

At Paul's last visit to Jerusalem James was apparently the only one worth mentioning in authority in the city. The Lord's chosen apostles have disappeared and in their position the people have placed one whose chief claim was his physical relation to our Lord. James rises in proportion to the depth of the nation's apostasy.

So that, at the close of Acts we have two men who embody the two divergent lines, the downward trend of Israel and the upward trend of the nations. Paul repudiates all physical relationship to Messiah and enters the realm of spiritual blessedness among the celestials (2Co.5<sup>16</sup>). James writes to adulterers and adulteresses (4<sup>4</sup>), to those going from city to city trafficking and getting gain (4<sup>13</sup>), to the rich who are hoarding in the last days (5<sup>3</sup>).

In this light we are able to understand the unusual approach to truth in this epistle. It begins with physical limitations and closes with physical healing. It teaches justification by works and law keeping. All these had their place in that failing economy, but let us beware that we do not adulterate the precious truth for the present with doctrines that primarily concern Israel in the last days.

There are three Jameses mentioned in the Greek Scriptures, James, the son of Zebedee, the first martyr among the Twelve (Acts 12<sup>2</sup>); James the Less, the son of Alphaeus (Mat.10<sup>3</sup>); and the writer of this epistle.

<sup>1</sup> James is never called an apostle and does not write this epistle in that character. Rather, he puts himself in the place of a slave. Hence the epistle is not concerned with authoritative teaching so much as with service.

<sup>1</sup> Nothing can be plainer than the fact that this letter is addressed to a special class. It is not for the tribes in the land. It is absolutely impossible to apply it indiscriminately to the nations without causing the utmost confusion. It is solely and exclusively for the sons of Israel outside the land, in the dispersion.

<sup>2</sup> The tumultuous times, the provocation and persecution of the Romans, the fanatical commotions of the Jews, the repeated insurrections and revolts in the land, all contributed to bring many trials upon those of the dispersion who espoused the cause of Christ. At one time Claudius commanded all Jews to depart from Rome (Ac.18<sup>2</sup>), and those of the Circumcision who believed never ceased considering themselves Jews. The "Christians" were understood to be a Jewish sect.

<sup>3</sup> It has been pointed out that the papyri sometimes use the word "testing" as an adjective, the equivalent of "tested" or "genuine", as it is in this passage and especially in 1 Pe.17, the only other occurrence. But it was not their faith which was producing endurance, but the testing of their faith. Hence the word has its usual grammatical force here. In Peter also, the Greek idiom, which we have tried to carry over into English, accounts for the difficulty, and allows us to translate the word uniformly. The papyri were mostly written in upper Egypt, far from the land of Israel and the countries to which the Scriptures were first sent. Not only are they tinged with local idiom, but were written loosely, as we write English in our every day transactions, with little regard for the correctness and accuracy which characterize a divine revelation. They are no criteria as to the meaning of words which occur several times in the Scriptures, or are found in the Septuagint.

<sup>5</sup> This letter records more of our Lord's teaching as recorded in the gospels than any other epistle.

<sup>5</sup> Even faith is different in quality in James from that found in Paul's writings. There faith is the necessary channel of grace, because it has no merit in itself. Here faith is more in the nature of a meritorious act, apart from which no blessing can be expected.

<sup>9</sup> James doubtless has a very special application to Israel in the time of the end. At that time (we seem to be on the verge of it even now) there will be many wealthy men among the Jews, so that their combined riches will enable them to have "a kingdom over the kings of the earth". They will form a plutocracy such as the earth has never seen. Yet they will be destroyed in the fall of Babylon (Un.18). Some of God's people will be in the city (Un.18<sup>4</sup>). James' warning seems to be most apt in the case of these. Should they lose their wealth in the destruction of the city, they would have nothing but their own allotment in the land. Even if not involved in Babylon's overthrow, it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom with his riches (Mk.10<sup>23</sup>), for the readjustments of that day will take his wealth from him.

<sup>12</sup> Life, in James, is the result of endurance to the consummation. Hence it is figured by the victor's wreath. We cannot boast of our life in Christ, but, in the kingdom, life comes to those who overcome.

<sup>17</sup> It is a fact that all physical blessing may be traced to the sun as its source. All life that teems on the earth is directly or indirectly dependent on it. Hence God is compared to the sun in His beneficence. All spiritual good comes down from Him just as all natural good descends from the sun. The moon, however, is not a source of light, but a mere reflection. It is inconstant, now full orb'd and now a faint streak in the sky. The earth, too, in its turning, changes from light to darkness.

<sup>21</sup> The salvation of the soul has to do with the feelings and experience, not, as is usually supposed, with ultimate destiny. The soul is the seat of sensations. If these are pleasant and agreeable, if there is comfort and joy, the soul is saved. To lose the soul is to part with the power of enjoyment.

<sup>26</sup> The outward form of divine service, the rites and ceremonies of the sacerdotal system of Moses, was but the exterior shell of truth. It was the letter: truth was the spirit. The ritual was full of precious meaning. But most ritualists feed on the husks and throw away the kernel. It should have its counterpart in a righteous and beneficent life. With us, who serve God in spirit, and have no confidence in flesh, ritual is a relapse into the shadows, when we have the substance in Christ. We are warned against it in the epistle to the Colossians. "Now let no one be arbitrating against you who wants, in humility and the ritual of the messengers, to parade what he has seen, feignedly, puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head . . ." (Col.2:18).

<sup>2</sup> The word "synagogue" is translated "assembly" in the A. V. As it occurs over fifty times and is always (except once "congregation", Acts 13:43) rendered "synagogue" elsewhere, there is no real reason for rendering it otherwise here. It is significant of the fact that we have here, not an ecclesia, or called-out company, but a gathering based on physical relationship. For the synagogue was the gathering center of Jews, and Paul invariably separated his converts from it.

<sup>2</sup> The scene here depicted could hardly be imagined outside the traditional synagogue of that early day, for the ecclesias or "churches" had not yet become as like the synagogues as those we know today. One of the signs of present apostasy is this spirit of toadying to the rich and despising the poor. It can have no place where our position in Christ is appreciated. A rich man who enjoys God's grace is pained by such partiality.

<sup>8</sup> James writes to those under the law. Showing partiality to the rich and offending the poor is an infraction of the precept to be loving your associate as yourself. But the law is not only intersocial. It has a divine side. A single transgression, no matter what it is, brings in a breach between the One Who gave the law and the culprit. The breaker of one commandment is not "guilty" of all, but enters into the same condemnation as those who commit all the other crimes in its category.

<sup>14</sup> James looks at faith entirely from the human side, Paul from the divine. What a man says he has, if he has it not, cannot, of course, save him. But James is not speaking of a pretended faith. He insists that faith apart from works is dead. He boldly says, "*That* faith cannot save him." Yet Paul is affirming that righteousness is through faith, that it may accord with grace (Ro.4:16). And he insists that if it is grace, it is no longer out of works, else grace comes to be no longer grace (Ro.11:6). The salvation to which James refers does not include justification, hence there is not the necessity for grace. Paul speaks of grace continually, and refers to it over a hundred times in his epistles. James only mentions it twice in one passage (4<sup>6</sup>). James is dealing with a nation in covenant relationship with God, and an administration in which faith and works are mingled, whereas Paul is connected with the dispensation of unadulterated grace to those who have no claim on God whatever.

Such a combination as James insists on would do away entirely with all the blessings which have come to the nations on the ground of grace, for it is impossible for grace to operate except through sheer, unaided faith. It will not do to say that such faith is vital and must manifest itself in works. This is true, yet such works are in no sense the root of righteousness. They are the fruit. To add works to a dead faith would not vivify it.

Briefly, the differences between Paul and James are not to be explained away. They are irreconcilable contradictions if we take them to refer to the same divine administration and the same people. Left to their own time and place, there is no reason why they should agree. God is continually changing His methods, to conform to the various objects He has in view.

<sup>18</sup> The solid foundation stands with this seal: "The Lord knew those who are His" (2 Ti. 2:19). Suppose we do not know? That does not affect their salvation. God knows the heart and does not need any demonstration. Not so with men. Before we accept a man's faith we demand that he depart

from iniquity. This is the ground of James. It is not what appears to the Lord, but to men.

<sup>20</sup> The case of Abraham is most helpful in further defining the distinct viewpoints of Paul and James. The former refers us to the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, the latter to the twenty-second. In the fifteenth chapter Abram's spiritual seed alone is in view, for Abram is taken outside his tent and shown the stars of heaven. And the Lord said to him, "So shall your seed be." And he believed the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness. This was followed by the unconditional covenant.

The twenty-second chapter is a trial of the faith which he had, in that the seed through whom his promised posterity should come was to be sacrificed and slain. Here we have the perfecting of his faith and the fulfillment of the previous passage.

The fifteenth chapter deals with Abram before circumcision, and his spiritual seed, and their justification. The twenty-second chapter deals with Abraham after his circumcision, and his physical seed (some of whom would be spiritual also), and their blessing, as well as their becoming a channel of blessing to the other nations. Paul cannot take the latter passage because he speaks of faith righteousness to the uncircumcised in an era when no blessing flows through Abraham's physical seed. James naturally and rightly takes it because it is the one which refers especially to the twelve tribes to whom he is writing. It was Abraham's faith combined with his obedience which was the basis of their blessing, and it is their faith combined with works which saves them. The works of Abraham were meritorious only as an *evidence* of faith.

Let us leave this to those who belong to the Circumcision, who are Abraham's seed according to the flesh, and who live under the kingdom administration. We have an immeasurably better and higher place than can be accorded those who mix their own efforts with God's beneficence. His undiluted grace brings blessings which are possible only when God is left to carry out the dictates of His heart unhindered by human help.

It seems almost incredible to find such a low moral standard in this epistle, especially as works are demanded for salvation. The untamable tongue, cursing, jealousy, strife, battles and fighting are all spoken of as common amongst the twelve tribes. They are charged as being friends of the world, sinners, impure of heart and double souled. What a contrast is this with such epistles as Philipians and Thessalonians, even though these are written to those who, but a short time before, were steeped in heathenism and idolatry! The pure grace of God, unaided by legal precepts or other inducements, is far more potent in producing conduct which is pleasing to God than all the efforts prompted by the desire for salvation or controlled by the terrors of the law.

<sup>9</sup> Our conduct should accord with God's attitude. Now that grace reigns, we are told to bless and not to curse (Ro.12<sup>14</sup>). But James seems to have no such precept in his royal law. The law curses all who break its commandments, and did not forbid cursing, so we should not be surprised when James includes the saints, "*we* are cursing men."

<sup>12</sup> The fig, the olive, and the vine, are all symbols of Israel. The fig speaks of national righteousness. When our Lord saw a fig tree on the road He sought some figs, but finding none, He cursed the tree and it withered away. So He came seeking national righteousness. As there was none the nation has withered away. The olive, being the source of the illuminating oil in the holy places, is a symbol of the light of God's revelation, which comes through Israel. The olive tree is Israel, the nations are simply temporary grafts, while Israel is apostate. God's word is confided to our keeping only until Israel is restored. Israel was an empty vine. They did not cheer the heart of God or man. Christ came as the real Vine. In the kingdom, as in Cana of Galilee, there will be spiritual joy and gladness from the vine Jehovah planted.

<sup>4</sup> There can be little doubt that the adultery here referred to is defined in the next statement. In the Hebrew Scriptures, an alliance with the world

was often spoken of in this way. Its fullest and most fitting application will be in the time of the end. Israel, as a nation, was to be separate and holy to the Lord. Now that they are scattered among the nations they are not only in the world but of it. Their chief object is to get as much of this world's goods as possible, and they are ready to make any alliance to accomplish this end. There will be a strong temptation for the believers among them in that day to fall in with this prevailing apostasy. Some of them will be found in great Babylon when it is destroyed.

<sup>5</sup> This passage has puzzled the commentators, and there are many and various explanations offered to solve what seems to be one of the most difficult passages in the Scriptures. A simple explanation, which allows a literal translation, is that the natural spirit of the Jew is to be envious. They are jealous of others' possessions or welfare. God uses this trait of their character in bringing them back to Himself. He provokes them to jealousy by dealing out grace to the nations. It is this envying of others' good which tempts them to make friends with the world, so that they may possess themselves of what seems so desirable in others. The attainment of this longing produces pride.

<sup>6</sup> The preceding verses contain one of the strongest possible indictments. In this there breathes a different spirit from that usually found in the epistle. Grace follows severity. Though God's love is outraged he does not readily spurn the faithless. He offers a grace conditioned on obedience and humility.

<sup>8</sup> When we are still sinners, Christ died for us (Ro.5<sup>a</sup>). The whole tenor of Paul's epistles is against the application of this term to the believer in Christ Jesus. The exhortation to cleanse their hands cannot but suggest that they have been employed in defiling pursuits.

<sup>15</sup> The abbreviation D. V., from the Latin *Deo volente*, God being willing, probably had its origin in this passage. It is one of the most characteristically Jewish pictures in the whole epistle. Who are like them in going from city to city, trafficking and getting gain?

<sup>1</sup> This is a most unpopular passage, for the church, in its spiritual poverty, caters to the rich, and does not desire to offend them by pressing this denunciation. And, indeed, it is evident that it cannot be applied universally without great injustice to some. But if we apply it to the last days, and to the sons of Israel in the coming era of Jacob's affliction, its full force is readily seen, and its just condemnation can be easily conceded. The immense accumulations of the Jews are being continually augmented by pandering to the lowest passions of the gentile peoples. Almost all forms of diversion and amusement are in their hands. No wonder such riches are rotted! Their income from interest alone equals the world's production of gold, so that they receive, without any effort on their part, all the gold that is mined. Their grasping for gain has become a proverb. No other people, as a class, is as shrewd and unscrupulous in making money. This condition of affairs is continually growing, so that, at the time of the end, it will be the most prominent feature of Judaism. Hence, if James' epistle is especially designed for that day, as we believe, it is a striking confirmation to find this strong denunciation of the rich Israelites as a part of its message.

<sup>7</sup> The "presence" of the Lord is specially applied to that period of time, at the opening of the day of the Lord, when He begins His work of judgment up to His open manifestation. Then will be the judgment of the rich men, and its close will witness the reward of those who patiently plod on for the prize. In that era He will act as Judge (<sup>9</sup>), for it is in this character that He purges His people. How much better is our expectation! We are awaiting a Saviour (Phil.3<sup>20</sup>), not a Judge. Rich or poor, for us there is no condemnation.

<sup>11</sup> The supreme exhortation to the Circumcision is *endure*. Salvation itself depends on enduring until the consummation. This is the natural accomplishment of the gospel of the kingdom in which faith and works are both essential. In fact faith and works combine to produce endurance. Without faith there would be no in-

centive to continue, and those who are striving would lose heart. With us the emphasis is on *believe*. Faith in God is the ground of grace which allows of no admixture of works, so far as salvation is concerned.

<sup>12</sup> This prohibition is essentially the same as that given by our Lord (Mt. 5<sup>34</sup>).

<sup>15</sup> "The prayer of faith will save the sick" is a very loose rendering of this passage. The word which they translate "prayer" thirty-seven times is not here. In its place is one of its elements, which the A. V. itself renders "vow" on the only other occasions on which it occurs (Ac. 18<sup>18</sup>, 21<sup>23</sup>). In neither context can it possibly mean prayer. So we are sure that a vow, not a prayer, is intended here.

So, also, with the word "falter". In Heb12<sup>8</sup>, the only other occurrence, they rendered it "wearied", because it is evidently a synonym of "faint". But they were not willing to say "shall save the wearied". It may be that the confession of sins to one another here inculcated, as a condition for healing, is the text which originally led to the confessional. It has no appeal for

those who realize their completeness in Christ and the exclusively spiritual character of God's transcendent grace in this economy.

<sup>17</sup> Elijah *prayed* in his prayer. He did not apportion praise and blame to men, or seek to flatter men and dictate to God.

<sup>18</sup> This epistle, in a vague way, seems to be a literary reversal, that is, each subject is considered once in the first half, and referred to again in the second half, but in reverse order. We have the request for wisdom in the beginning (<sup>15</sup>) and the prayer for healing near the end (<sup>18-19</sup>). But the correspondences are not sufficiently close or consecutive to create a real skeleton of the epistle.

<sup>19-20</sup> The peril of straying will be specially great in the last days (Un. 2<sup>20</sup>; 12<sup>9</sup>; 13<sup>14</sup>). The ministry of restoration will be necessary. A deceived is in a worse plight than a sick man. The elders may help the latter, anyone may help the former. The ministry is its own reward. It does not mean that one can cover his own sins by trying to correct other people—a too common practice, we fear.

## PETER TO THE DISPERSION

PETER'S EPISTLES correspond with Peter's personal experiences. In contrast with Paul, he was a devout Israelite who accepted the Messiah at the beginning of His ministry, not a fierce persecutor after His ascension. His name was changed from Simon (Hearing), the son of John, to Peter (Rock), the son of Jonah (Dove). As such he becomes the foundation on which the Circumcision ecclesia is founded. He was the chief of the twelve apostles, yet was superseded by the Lord's brother, James, who was no apostle, when the Pentecostal ecclesia became sectarian. He was given the keys to the kingdom—repentance and baptism—and he used them in opening its proclamation. He was chosen to open it to proselytes, as Cornelius, but obeyed only after receiving a special vision. His course was much criticised by the Jerusalem ecclesia.

If it were not for his epistles we would be much puzzled as to "what had become of Peter", for he (as well as the rest of the twelve apostles) vanishes from the history in the book of Acts soon after Paul becomes prominent.

The character of Peter's epistles is indicated by the personal commission given him by the Lord after His resurrection (Jn.20<sup>15-19</sup>). They are based on his special fondness for his Lord. In these he carries out the command to graze the lambs and tend the sheep of His flock. And in these he reflects the sufferings with which he himself was about to glorify His Lord. These epistles are especially suited to the believing remnant in Israel who suffer and die in the terrible persecutions which precede the inauguration of the kingdom. They are in contrast with John's epistles, in that he and his writings are especially in point for those who (like himself, in spirit) live through the time of trial and enter the kingdom without dying.

The special occasion of Peter's writing seems to have been the great persecution of the Christians under Nero, because of the false charge that they had burned Rome. Not only were they

put to terrible torture in the imperial city but the persecution spread to the provinces throughout the sphere of Roman rule.

Peter wrote to the expatriates of the dispersion in the upper provinces of what is now called Asia Minor. This conclusively confines it to the Circumcision, for the gentiles were never scattered there from their own land. This cannot, however, refer to the general dispersion of the Jews, for few of them were of the faith. It doubtless refers to the fact that, from the dispersion at the stoning of Stephen, continuous persecutions in the land had driven many Jewish Christians into exile. After seeking an asylum from their fierce fellow countrymen among the idolators, they now find that these, too, turn persecutors because of Nero's edict.

While these epistles can have no present interpretation, they doubtless will find their fullest application to the sons of Israel after the present economy of God's grace has passed by, and God deals once more with the Circumcision at the opening of the day of the Lord. Then judgment will begin at the house of God, and they will be beset with trials, such as these epistles foretell and provide for. Only in such an atmosphere and at such a time will the message Peter brings be fully appreciated and really understood. Just as it was difficult for him to apprehend the epistles of Paul (2 Pt.3<sup>16</sup>), so it is only by an earnest effort to place ourselves in the position of those to whom these epistles are sent, that we shall be able to partially apprehend their message.

Peter received his commission to write these epistles from the Lord, after His ascension. On the shores of the sea of Tiberius, after the miraculous draught of fishes, he is charged to graze His lambskins and to tend His sheep (Jn.21<sup>15,16,17</sup>). This is the ministry which he fulfills in these two pastoral epistles.

The people addressed, unlike "the church which is his body", are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation".



<sup>1</sup> Note the contrast between Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, and Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus. Peter proceeds on the ground of His present rejection on earth, Paul on His exaltation in heaven.

<sup>1</sup> The expatriates were those Jews who had left their homes in the land of their fathers, probably as a result of persecution. Since then the Jews have been scattered all over the earth. Peter's epistles will have a special appeal for those of them who, at the time of the end, after the Lord once more begins to deal with His people Israel, are chosen among the nations, and suffer for their faith.

<sup>4</sup> The allotment of the Circumcision is heavenly in character and source, but will be enjoyed on earth. A concrete example is the heavenly Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven, all prepared for their dwelling on the new earth. The kingdom is called the kingdom of the heavens, not that it will be in heaven, but because the heavens will rule.

<sup>5</sup> There are two distinct salvations brought before us in this passage, neither of which refers to what is usually intended by the term. The first one is the salvation which the faithful of Israel have long desired, that deliverance which comes to them at the advent of their Messiah. It is not salvation from sin, but from the nations and from Satan, and from the judgments of the time of the end. It ushers in the millennium. It was not a present possession, but is to be revealed at the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

<sup>9</sup> The other salvation was a present experience. We seldom read of the salvation of the soul in Scripture. The soul is the sentient part of man, that which feels, that which suffers and enjoys. Ultimately all salvation will result in satisfying and delicious sensations. In the time of trial to which Peter refers, there seems to be little place for such a salvation, yet it is found in the joy and exultation of faith.

<sup>10</sup> The prophets foretold the salvation proclaimed by Peter; the grace which has come to us was hid from them (Eph.3<sup>8,9</sup>).

<sup>11</sup> The sufferings pertaining to Christ were clearly foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures, especially in such types as Joseph and Moses, David and Hezekiah. His earthly glories were also revealed, including His exaltation as the Son of Man and the Son of David. He receives the place supreme on earth, but there is no hint of heavenly headship. These are the traceable riches of Christ. The prophets knew nothing of "the untraceable riches". These consist in His heavenly exaltation, and were revealed to Peter and Paul. Peter tells us that He has "gone into the heavens, messengers and authorities and powers being made subject to Him" (3<sup>22</sup>). Paul gives Him the place of universal supremacy, and tells of a time when all in the heavens as well as on the earth will be headed up in Him (Eph.1<sup>10</sup>). Of this the prophets are silent. It was a secret or "mystery" unrevealed until the heavenly destiny of the ecclesia which is Christ's body was made known.

<sup>13</sup> The grace which is for us comes before the unveiling of Jesus Christ, at His presence in the air, previous to the apocalyptic judgments which accompany His manifestation. Not so with those to whom Peter writes. It is only after His unveiling that the blessings which they expect will become theirs. The unveiling itself is God's means of bringing in the kingdom and all its accompanying benefits.

<sup>20</sup> The fact that Christ's sacrifice was foreknown even before the disruption throws a marvelous light upon God's plan and purpose. It shows that sacrifice is not an afterthought intended to repair an unforeseen disaster, but that it precedes sin, and that sin was introduced to give it occasion. Speaking as a man, there never would have been sin unless God had previously prepared a Sacrifice, and neither should be considered by itself, but as one of the necessary factors in God's great purpose to reveal the deep recesses of His love and the boundless expanse of His affection.

<sup>23</sup> Regeneration is a requisite for entrance into the kingdom (Jn.3<sup>3</sup>). In spirit, we skip the kingdom and enter the new creation (2 Co.5<sup>17</sup>), which

will not become a physical reality until after the thousand years. There is a vast difference between the two. Paul does not proclaim the new birth. That is not nearly sufficient to describe the great change necessary for fitting us for our celestial destiny. In the resurrection we shall not only be renewed but changed (1 Co.15<sup>52</sup>). As at present constituted we could not enter into our celestial allotment. Hence we are the subjects of a radical re-creation. The Circumcision in the kingdom on the earth will need no such great change to adapt them to conditions as they will be in that day, so the figure used of them is that of regeneration. The Lord spoke of the kingdom as "the renascence" (Mt. 19<sup>28</sup>), during which the *old* creation will be renewed, the curse removed, the law observed, by a people who have a "change of heart" (Jer.31<sup>36</sup>), and the old earth will enjoy its sabbath. So renascence is not the creation of a new man but the regeneration of the old.

24 Isa.40<sup>6-8</sup>.

4 Our Lord, speaking to the chief priests and elders, told them that the kingdom of God would be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth its fruits, in proof of which He also quotes Ps.118<sup>22-23</sup>. The parable of the vineyard was spoken to them on this occasion (Mt.21<sup>33-46</sup>). They fulfilled this parable in rejecting Him, and He takes the kingdom from them and gives it to those who receive Him, and who form the nucleus of the believing nation of that day.

6 Isa.28<sup>16</sup>.

7 Peter himself, soon after the day of Pentecost, before the chief priests, charged them with rejecting the Stone which was to be the head of the corner (Ac.4<sup>11</sup>).

9 When Jehovah brought His people to Himself on eagles' wings, He purposed that they should be His peculiar treasure above all peoples, and that they should be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex.19<sup>4-6</sup>). Hitherto, through unbelief, they have not realized this ideal, but those who receive Christ shall fulfill it in the coming kingdom. As kings they will then rule the nations for God and as priests bring the nations to God.

10 The phrases "not a people" and who "have not been shown mercy" are usually referred to the gentile nations, in contrast with Israel. This passage is then adduced in favor of applying Peter's epistles indiscriminately to all men at all times, especially to the present ecclesia which is Christ's body. But a closer consideration will show that this passage proves the very opposite, for it quotes from the prophecy of Hosea, who speaks of the sons of Israel, and cannot possibly be interpreted of any other people. One passage reads as follows (Hos.1<sup>9-11</sup>):

And He is saying:  
 "Call his name 'Lo Ammi' [Not My people],  
 For you are not my people  
 And I will not be yours.  
 And the number of the sons of Israel  
 Shall be as the sand of the sea  
 Which shall not be measured  
 And shall not be numbered.  
 And it shall occur, in the place  
 where it is being said to them  
 'You are not My people,'  
 It shall be said to them  
 'Sons of the living Deity.'  
 And the sons of Judah and the  
 sons of Israel  
 Shall be gathered together as  
 one,  
 And shall place over them one  
 head,  
 And ascend from the land,  
 For great is the day of Jezreel."

The companion passage is equally plain (Hos.2<sup>23</sup>):

And I compassionate the uncompassioned,  
 And I say to Lo Ammi [Not My People],  
 'You are My people!'  
 And he shall say, 'My God!'"

By no means may these quotations refer to any people but the chosen nation.

12 "Your behavior among the nations," or gentiles, confirms our conclusion that Peter is addressing those of his own nation outside the land.

13 The word "creation" here is the same word which is always so rendered in every other occurrence. Possibly the idea that creation is a prerogative of God led our translators to alter to "ordinance" here. Yet such contexts as this are the very ones which the English reader needs to correct his conception of this word, for according to this passage, man can create, and the word does not mean to bring into being that which heretofore had no existence.

<sup>21</sup> Following in the footprints left by our Lord while He was on earth is often taken as the ideal of human deportment for believers in Christ. And so it is—for the Circumcision, to whom Peter writes. His path may be copied by them, for they find themselves in similar circumstances and under identical conditions. Not so with the nations in this economy of God's grace. In preparing Paul for his part as the channel through which the truth for today was to be revealed, God kept him from contact with Christ during our Lord's life on earth, both before and after His resurrection. It was only after His ascension into glory that He called Saul, and changed his name to Paul, and made him the medium for the special truth which is in force during the apostasy of Israel. Saul's call might have occurred long before, but it was deliberately deferred so as to conform to the truth with which he was entrusted. He, and we, know Christ only as ascended and glorified. If we were connected with His earthly life, then we, like the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk. 7<sup>26</sup>) could get nothing more than a few crumbs from Israel's board. He does not act in glory as He acted on earth. Now He makes no distinction between Jew and gentile, but lavishes unutterably greater grace on both than was possible when He was the Servant of the Circumcision (Ro.15<sup>8</sup>). The key to conduct which pleases God is to copy His present attitude toward us in our relations with our fellow men. It is not reasonable to follow in His steps when He came only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and kept Himself from contact with the outside nations. His walk in the land is no model for our conduct outside the land. Hence we are exhorted to be imitators of Paul, as he is of Christ (1 Co.11<sup>1</sup>), for he knew Christ ascended and glorified. And we are exhorted to be imitators of God, as beloved children (Eph.5<sup>1</sup>). Such a place we, sinners of the gentiles, did not have when Christ confined Himself to the favored nation.

<sup>1</sup> The duties of the marital relationship are treated by Peter and Paul with characteristic difference. Paul (Eph.5<sup>21</sup>) enjoins submission and love in the light of the relation between

Christ and the church; Peter points back to Sarah and Abraham.

<sup>9</sup> Like our Lord in His sermon on the mount, the apostle sets a much higher mark than the law for the conduct of those who are candidates for the kingdom. Compare Mt.5<sup>39</sup>, etc., and Lu.6<sup>27</sup>, etc. An eye for an eye, or strict justice, gives place to a forgiving spirit. This is carried even further in connection with the present grace. We are to vanquish evil with good (Ro.12<sup>21</sup>), and to heap embers of fire on the heads of our enemies and to bless those who persecute us (Ro.12<sup>14</sup>). In a word, we are to be walking in love (Eph.5<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>10</sup> This quotation from Ps.34<sup>12-16</sup>, without any introductory phrase to show its relation to the subject in hand, clearly indicates that the Psalms as a whole are perfectly in accord with the administration to which Peter and the twelve belonged. Our experience should harmonize with them to a certain point, but should rise far above their highest conceptions of conduct. To "love life and see good days" is a much lower motive than is presented to us.

<sup>14-15</sup> In view of the coming storm of persecution Peter quotes and varies a word from Isa.8<sup>12-13</sup> spoken in similar circumstances, but with the significant substitution of "the Lord Christ" for "Jehovah of Hosts". Remembering Jewish reverence for the letter of Scripture and the intense dread of having any God but one, we see how firmly Peter is convinced that Christ is the Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures.

<sup>18</sup> A grasp of the apostle's argument here will help us through this difficult passage. The subject is suffering for doing good. The Example is Christ and those sufferings which came to Him as they come to His disciples, because of the sin which surrounded Him. The argument is that He, though put to death, has now been exalted, even over the messengers and authorities and powers of the spirit realm (<sup>22</sup>), therefore those who suffer for doing good will also be exalted in due time.

With this in mind, it is evident that it is not the evangel which is proclaimed to the spirits in prison, for that would be entirely out of line with

the argument. It would imply that, as a result of their sufferings, their enemies will be evangelized. Such grace is foreign to Peter's epistles. The word here used is not evangelize, but herald or proclaim. It tells us, not that they were blessed, but that He was exalted. And what is more likely than that, after His ascension, He should be proclaimed the universal Suzerain to all creation, obedient or rebellious?

<sup>19</sup> Who are these imprisoned spirits? Are they not the same that Peter mentions in his second epistle (24) who were thrust down to the gloomy caverns of Tartarus, and the messengers of Jude's epistle (6), who kept not their own sovereignty and left their own habitation?

The fact that they are called spirits, assures us that they are not human. The proclamation was not made to them during our Lord's death, but after He had been made alive. It was a token of His exaltation. In due time all will be subjected to Him, not only Israel on the earth in the kingdom, and all the rest of humanity in the resurrection, but all sovereignty and authority and power in the spirit realm, so that, at the consummation God may become All in all.

<sup>21</sup> Baptism, with repentance, are the two essentials for entrance into the kingdom (Ac.2<sup>38</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> This difficult passage depends, for its interpretation, on the force of the interjected "indeed", which is usually omitted in translation. Even when present in the English, its force is not readily perceived. It must be evident to all that there is a turn in the argument, for the evangel is not the precursor of judgment from God, nor is it according to men. This judgment, then, is not God's but man's. Men judged them according to their own standards. They are judged, "indeed", but not in the judgment of the living and the dead just mentioned (6). The next statement, that they should be living according to God, makes it evident that the evangel was not preached to them after they had died. Men could not judge them, in flesh, nor could they live according to God, in spirit, after they had died. They are dead now, but the preaching and judging and living were all a part of their experience before they fell asleep.

<sup>8</sup> The human love that covers over the sins of those on whom it is placed is but an intimation of the divine love which is the source of all affection. But human love is limited, both in its ideals and its performances. There is a striking similarity, however, between the expression of divine love under the law, before the sacrifice of Christ, and the love here spoken of. In both cases sin was covered, not put away or pardoned, much less justified. As we hide the misdeeds of our loved ones, so the blood of slain animals served to cover over the sins of Israel. Propitiation is not for us. Paul refers to it but once, and then in reference to the sins of the past (Ro.3<sup>25</sup>). It is for the Circumcision and the nations in the day of the Lord (1Jn.2<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>9</sup> All other graces flourish where love is found. It not only stimulates their growth but enhances their quality. To do what is loving is well: to do it in a loving way is better. The manner of hospitality means more than mere hospitality itself. Gracious giving glorifies the gift.

<sup>12</sup> Peter is the representative of the suffering saints of the Circumcision, and his ministry is especially intended for such. The persecutions of the first century were foretastes of the terrible time which precedes the coming of the kingdom. Hence these exhortations fit both occasions equally well. Then judgment will begin from the house of God, as detailed in the second and third chapters of the Unveiling.

<sup>15</sup> Paradoxical as it may seem, only Jews are Christians in the Scriptures. The term is never applied to the nations, but only to Jews or proselytes. Paul never uses the name in his epistles. It occurs only in Acts, which is concerned with the past rejection of the kingdom, and in Peter, which looked forward to its future realization. It is a notable example of the manner in which Scriptural terms have been utterly perverted from their original use.

<sup>2</sup> The beautiful picture of a shepherd with his flock is peculiarly appropriate to God's earthly people. Even in ancient times they alone were the flock of His pasture. In the wilder-

ness He guided them like a flock (Ps. 78<sup>52</sup>). When the Lord came Israel was as a flock having no shepherd (Mt. 9<sup>36</sup>). He is the Great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb. 13<sup>20</sup>; 1 Pt. 2<sup>25</sup>). As the Good Shepherd He laid down His soul for the sheep (Jn. 10<sup>11</sup>). As the Chief Shepherd He will reward the under-shepherds for their work when He comes again in the day of His manifestation (5<sup>4</sup>). It must be remembered that, in the East, a shepherd does not drive his flock, but leads them. He does not send a dog after them, but calls them each by name. His care and protection is symbolized by his crook and his club, the former for the sheep and the latter for their enemies. The nearest that Paul ever comes to including the nations in this figure is the single occurrence of the word "shepherd" or pastor (Eph. 4<sup>11</sup>), but its context shows that it is there a faded metaphor and has lost its figurative meaning, just as its Latin equivalent "pastor", which once also meant a shepherd. A pastor is not now a literal shepherd.

<sup>5</sup> The apron was a part of a slave's uniform which distinguished him as a slave and which he put on when he went to work. Humility serves (Jn. 13<sup>1-16</sup>), and service tests humility.

<sup>7</sup> The writer was loath to lose this precious promise when he began to

see his place in Paul's epistles. How restful to toss all his worries on Him, and confide all to His care! But he soon found that he forfeited nothing by "losing" this passage, for the truth found in Paul's epistles eclipsed it and made it inoperative. Paul takes higher ground, and says, "Let nothing be worrying you, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, that is superior to every frame of mind, shall be garrisoning your hearts and your apprehensions in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4<sup>6-7</sup>). If, then, I allow nothing to worry me, how can I toss all my worries on Him? This is a specimen of the constant differences between the ministries of Peter and Paul.

<sup>10</sup> The grace of God is indicated by the short seasons of suffering and the long eons of glory to which they are the preparation and the prelude.

<sup>13</sup> Peter in Babylon is exceedingly suggestive of the apostasy of Israel. He should have been ruling in Jerusalem. Instead, we find him in the great world capital which has always been the enemy of God's people, yet which, at the time of the end, will be the center and stronghold of Israel in their final and most fearful stand against Jehovah.

<sup>1</sup> The introduction of the name Simeon, before Peter, and slave in addition to apostle, gives us a clue to the character of this second epistle. The emphasis is laid on practice rather than precept. It is concerned with living rather than learning.

<sup>2</sup> The recognition of God and of Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the source of grace and peace, as well as all that tends to life and devoutness. This is indicated by beginning the epistle proper by "So . . ." and by the repetition of the thought: "through the recognition of Him Who calls us to His own glory and virtue." The word "recognition" probably includes the wider range of realization and appreciation. It is a favorite word in this epistle, for it occurs again in verse 8, and again in 2<sup>20</sup>. Standing, as it does, at the threshold of an epistle devoted to conduct, it teaches the important lesson that knowledge is essential to good deportment. Those who refuse to recognize God are given over to a disqualified mind to commit the whole catalogue of crime (Ro.12<sup>8</sup>). The only salvation from these things is a vision of His glory and virtue, in this manner becoming a participant of the divine nature which flees from corruption. Consequently, the most powerfully practical course to pursue is to gain a grasp of God's glories and virtues, so that they may operate in us to produce their like.

<sup>5</sup> The path of the saint is one of progress or apostasy. If he is not adding, he will probably be subtracting. Hence Simeon Peter exhorts his readers to advance, making each spiritual grace the container of another and a better, until they all unfold for the display of love, the highest and best of all.

<sup>5</sup> Faith is the radical virtue. By it all others are possible. In the repeated groupings of graces found in the epistles, faith is invariably assigned the first place, being made to stand nearest the Source of every virtue.

<sup>10</sup> Peter, like James, is apt to present the human side of redemption. Calling and choice are purely divine, yet their confirmation in the eyes of men depends on the evidence of ideal acts. The divine side is hidden to all but the one who is called. His conduct should

confirm his confession before the world.

<sup>14</sup> In that marvelous resurrection scene in John's evangel, where our Lord commissions Peter for the ministry which he fulfills in writing these epistles, He also intimates the character of his death. Peter was to follow Him to the very end, and die like his Master, Who said, "Verily, verily, I am saying to you, When you were younger you girded yourself and walked where you would; yet whenever you may be growing decrepit, you will stretch out your hands, and another shall be girding you and carrying you where you would not" (Jn.21<sup>18</sup>). And it is immediately added, "Now this He said, signifying by what death he will be glorifying God."

<sup>16</sup> Peter and James and John were especially chosen to accompany the Lord to the Mount of Transfiguration (commonly called the Transfiguration) to witness a foreglimpse of the coming kingdom and its power and magnificence. Thus they perceived undeniable evidence of its reality and glory. They heard the voice from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I delight. Be hearing Him!" They saw the lowly Nazarene transformed so that His face shone as the sun, and His garments became white as light. They recognized Moses and Elijah talking with Him concerning His impending exodus (Mt.17<sup>1-8</sup>, Mk.9<sup>2-7</sup>, Lu.9<sup>28-35</sup>). Here were all the elements of the kingdom. Moses might well represent the dead in Israel awakened from their sleep. Elijah may typify those who are living at His advent. His own face and form assume the glory which belongs to them. The power and glory of the kingdom are anticipated in this scene. It is at once a sample and an assurance of the magnificence and splendor of His millennial reign. There were seven persons present. Peter, James, and John are types of those believers on earth who shall witness the coming of the Lord and enter the kingdom. This reference to Christ's Transfiguration by one of the eyewitnesses is one of the internal proofs of the Petrine authorship of this epistle.

<sup>19</sup> The day star is the coming of the Lord. The lamp is prophecy. No one

can find his way in this world without the illumination of the prophetic word. All is dark without it. But prophecies often seem obscure. The prophets themselves did not always know the import of their predictions. Now, however, that the word of God is complete, and some has been fulfilled, and each intimation may be sorted and compared with all of like tenor, the whole outline of prophecy may be readily perceived. Prophecy is not an attempt by the prophet to explain the purposes of God in current or future events. It is not the result of his observation and experience, or his interpretation of God's ways. Not the human will but God's Spirit produced the words of the writers of prophecy.

The program of prophecy has gradually become clearer with added revelation. The pre-exile prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah know only one advent. In the post-exile prophets the second advent is distinguished from the first, and Israel's dispersion comes in between. Ezekiel, however, sees still further, and predicts an end to the Messianic kingdom. This is also the farthest range of Peter in his epistles and John in the Unveiling. But Paul goes far beyond, and sees a conclusion to the post-Messianic eon, when kingly government is brought to an end and the Son abdicates because all need for rule has disappeared. Then God becomes All in all. This is the climax of prophecy. It explains its purpose and solves its enigmas.

4 The "gloomy caverns" of Tartarus are distinct from the unseen, from gehenna, and from the lake of fire. They are the temporary dungeon of spirits (*cf* note on page 392<sup>14</sup>).

4 Peter recounts the ancient judgments of God with a view to establishing the certainty of the impending judgments of the end time. That, also, will be a judgment on spirit beings, for Satan will be bound. It will be visited on a world which has reverted to the wickedness which drew down the deluge, and which is guilty of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. Then, too, the righteous shall be delivered, as Lot out of Sodom, and as Noah through the flood.

10 No one acquainted with the world as it is, and especially the tendency of the times, but will conclude that Peter's epistles will have a very special fulfillment in the dreadful days that are to come. Even now, the revolt against authority has overthrown vast empires, and undermines all established government. Millions "despise dominion", and are drifting toward a worse despotism than any the world has ever seen. But this is most evident in the sphere of religion. The sovereignty of God is unknown and unrecognized. Whole nations defy the Deity and seek to deny His existence. And this leads to the second great sin of the end time. Loosed from the restraints of even formal religion, the world is plunging into the defilements of the flesh. The marriage bond is slack or slighted altogether. Divorces are becoming more and more frequent. The world is rapidly ripening for the time when these sins will have the sanction of religion and the worship of the wild beast will be encouraged by the gratification of the lowest lusts of the flesh.

15 The story of Balaam (Num.22-25) shows the fearful lengths to which men will go for reward, even in the face of divine displeasure. They are lower than the brute beasts in their rejection of God's revealed will, if it leads to preferment or pecuniary advantage.

17 This paragraph brings before us some of the same characters which are found in the sixth and tenth chapters of Hebrews. There were and will be apostates among the Circumcision who will go great lengths in following the Messiah, even as Judas did, yet finally they fall away and repudiate their profession. Our Lord had many such followers who left Him.

Recognition of the truth concerning Christ may prevail with men for a time so as to compel separation from defilements that still allure. The apostle is not contemplating such as have become participants of the divine nature, and so flee the corruption that is in the world by lust; but those whose inner malady is not healed, who have *reformed* under the influence of truth, and who are still curs and swine.

<sup>1</sup> It is the special function of the Circumcision epistles to reaffirm and enforce the ancient prophetic Scriptures and the words of our Lord before His death and ascension. This is notably lacking in Paul's epistles. Seldom is the life of our Lord referred to, or His teaching recalled. There is little of prophetic reference. When the prophets are quoted it is usually to show their harmony or agreement, rather than direct fulfillment. The quotations are introduced by such connectives as "as" or "according to". This is because Paul is detailing an administration outside of the range of the prophets and beyond the scope of our Lord's ministry. Not so Peter and the Circumcision. They are concerned with the fulfillment of the prophetic predictions and are engaged in the same ministry as our Lord when on earth, for He proclaimed the kingdom as well as they.

<sup>3</sup> Not only scoffers, but many who believe the Bible, have fallen into the error of supposing that all things have continued without change from the beginning. The great disruption chronicled in the second verse of the first of Genesis—"the earth *becomes* waste and sterile" (for it was not created so, Isa.45<sup>18</sup>)—has been well nigh forgotten. What system of biblical cosmogony accounts for an earth "cohering out of water and through water"? This is more in accord with some of the theories of science than theology. It seems evident from this passage, as well as the accounts in Genesis and Job, that the earth has gone through much the same processes which we observe in the present condition of other planets. It probably was swathed in vapors like Venus or Jupiter, and once had rings like Saturn. The Hebrew "heavens" is dual, meaning a pair of heavens. We know that, in the new earth, there will be no seas, as on the moon or Mars. It has been and is subject to vast geologic changes, effected, in the past, by water. It is stored with fire, which will be one of the means of its next great cataclysmic renovation. Fire in the heavens (perhaps a nebula) and in the earth will form the crucible for the new creation.

<sup>8</sup> Time, with God, has none of the limitations which it has with us. The events of a day are vivid in our minds for a brief period, then they vanish and are forgotten. We know nothing of the future. But past and future are alike to God. As the psalmist says, "A thousand years in Thy sight are as yesterday when it is past" (Ps.90<sup>4</sup>). We can readily recall the record of the previous day. It seems but a brief space of time. So a thousand years seems to Him. Since Peter penned these words nearly two thousand years have passed and His promise to Israel is not yet fulfilled, but there are indications that the time is near.

<sup>10</sup> The day of the Lord, though it lasts for more than a thousand years, is treated as though its arrival is to be immediately followed by its end, in harmony with the preceding paragraph. It will come as a thief (1 Thes. 5<sup>2</sup>). It will close with the great cataclysm (Un.20<sup>11</sup>; 21<sup>1</sup>) which ushers in the day of God, in the new creation. Two great convulsions divide the history of the heavens and the earth into three grand divisions. One is found at the forefront of revelation, this one is near its finish. The heavens and earth were destroyed by water (Gen. 1<sup>2</sup>). In the future this will be effected by fire. The past was a physical regeneration. The future will be a chemical re-creation. Water, in the form of seas, is found only on the present earth. It was not on, but about, the previous one. It will be absent in the third earth (Un.21<sup>1</sup>). The changing character of the earth on which we live is due largely to the presence of water. It disintegrates the solid rocks. As glaciers, it grinds down the mountains. In streams, it washes the soil into the sea. This is undoubtedly a parable of the impermanent moral processes through which mankind is passing. The new earth will be unchanging, permanent. Having passed through the great crucible of the divine Alchemist, its stones will be precious gems, hard as flint, and indestructible. And this will also be a parable of the moral purity which has been purged by fire and abides. This chapter reveals the fact that the new creation will be the third earth and third heaven (2 Co. 12<sup>2</sup>).



<sup>15</sup> It is evident that Peter, great apostle though he was, could not apprehend fully the ministry of Paul. He did see, however, that the seeming delay in the setting up of the kingdom was being used by God, through Paul, and

that salvation was by no means dependent upon Israel's attitude. This subject, which is merely alluded to by Peter, is fully set forth by Paul in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans.

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

JOHN, just as truly as Peter and James, ministered to the Circumcision, and referred to the nations as outside the sphere of fellowship (*cf* 3 Jn. 7). Even when he widens the scope of blessing to include the whole world, he lays the heaviest stress on its relation to the favored nation. "He is the Propitiatory Shelter concerned with our sins (Israel's) yet not concerned with *ours* only, but concerned with the whole world also" (1 Jn. 2<sup>2</sup>).

Furthermore, while our present grace is based on the repudiation of all privilege which comes through the flesh (2 Co. 5<sup>16</sup>), since the nations have no physical connection with Christ, John commences his epistle by enforcing the physical evidence on which his ministry is founded. He knew Christ after the flesh for many years, and had rested in His bosom. This is the sphere into which he introduces us in his writings. In contrast to this, Paul never met Christ until He was glorified, and thus became the divine illustration of our relationship with Him.

The clue to the character and application of John's ministry, both personal and written, lies in the Lord's question to Peter (Jn. 21<sup>22</sup>) "If I should be wanting him to be remaining till I am coming, what is it to you?" The Lord did not say that he actually would remain alive until His return, but we have little room to doubt that, *in spirit*, this is true. His writings have special application to those who enter the kingdom without dying, and provide the doctrinal basis of the kingdom itself. This is further confirmed by the fact that, in his apocalyptic visions, John enters the kingdom, in spirit.

And this is the reason why his writings have made such an appeal to the saints of today. During the kingdom eon blessing will flow through Israel to the nations. So in John we have God's love for the world (Jn. 3<sup>16</sup>). Christ's propitiation is world-wide in its scope. But never is there any hint anywhere of blessing for the nations

during Israel's apostasy, as is the case in the Pauline epistles.

It is a fact but little realized that John's writings were not penned until after the death of Paul and Peter and most of the saints who come before us in the Scriptures. They all preached and taught without having ever seen the gospel or the epistles of John. Paul's marvelous ministries were not only carried out without these writings, but he followed lines of truth decidedly distinct from that of John's record. They are ours to read and interpret in their true setting, but not to apply to a time for which they are neither fitted nor intended. John's gospel and epistles were written too late to be used by most of the Circumcision in the past, hence have their special sphere and application in the future. John has not yet come to his own, and will have to tarry for his fullest ministry till the Lord comes.

The subject of these epistles is life in the saints rather than life in Christ. This life manifests itself in conduct which must satisfy the severe tests applied for the exposure of a spurious spirituality. The professor is tested as to *where* he walks (1<sup>6</sup>), his profession of sinlessness (1<sup>8</sup>) and perfection (1<sup>10</sup>), his knowledge of God (2<sup>4</sup>), his remaining in Christ (2<sup>6</sup>), his love of the brethren (2<sup>9</sup>) and his love of God (4<sup>20</sup>). John's "if we should say," is like James' test "If anyone should be saying." John sets God before the believer as Light, Love and Spirit, while Paul sets the believer before God in Christ.

John's teaching approximates that of Hebrews in many respects. It puts Jesus Christ as an Entreater between the Father and His children as Hebrews puts the Son of God as Priest between God and believing Israelites.

John says very little about himself. In his gospel there is only one John—the Baptist. He speaks of himself as one whom Jesus loved (Jn. 13<sup>23</sup>; 21<sup>20</sup>). A single page of Paul is more self-revealing than all John has written, and this picture of our pattern (1 Ti. 1<sup>16</sup>) is given for our imitation.

<sup>1</sup> The ministry of John is based upon his personal acquaintance with the Lord in the flesh. Indeed, this was the prime qualification of all the twelve apostles (Ac.1<sup>21</sup>). They were to bear witness to the evidence of their senses, both before and after His resurrection. They saw and handled Him, and heard His words of life. Paul, the one to whom the present secret administration of God's grace was revealed (Eph.3<sup>0</sup>), had no personal contact, and did not know Christ until after His ascension and glorification.

<sup>1</sup> The first few verses are a condensed summary of John's account of our Lord's life. In it, as here, the Lord is presented under the figure of the divine Expression, or Word. In Paul's epistles He is set forth as the Image of God (2 Co.4<sup>4</sup>; Col.1<sup>15</sup>). John appeals to our ears, Paul to our eyes. Job contrasts the two, when he says to God: "I heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, yet now my eye sees Thee" (Job 42<sup>5</sup>). As in nature sight is a much higher sensation than sound, so we have a much loftier revelation of God through Christ as His Image than as His Expression. The Expression, or Word, became flesh (Jn.1<sup>14</sup>) in order to declare God.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus Christ is the title of our Lord's humiliation, the time to which John refers. Christ Jesus is the title of His exaltation, which, as viewed in John's writings, is still future, but which, for us, is His present place. So that our fellowship is not with Jesus Christ but with Christ Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> God is Spirit. God is light. God is love. The first is a fact. The last two are figures, but they reveal His heart to our hearts.

<sup>6</sup> The Circumcision evangel demands repentance, baptism (Ac.2<sup>38</sup>) and works (Ja.2<sup>14</sup>), and good conduct, and conferred a probational pardon, calling for continual cleansing. They knew nothing of the justification by faith which is ours in Christ Jesus (Ro.8<sup>1</sup>), in which all possibility of condemnation vanishes and leads to an experience altogether above that here set forth by the apostle. We have sinned, but are justified or vindicated, without reference to our own conduct, which is based upon this favor.

<sup>8</sup> Fellowship with God as the Light leads to the discovery of all that is of the darkness. Sin in the saint is made manifest by the light. Away from the light sin may not be detected; it may be unknown. The Circumcision have constant recourse to the pardoning and cleansing virtues of the blood. Under the present reign of grace sin is always submerged by God's favor, so that no pardon is required or possible. Some will say that this puts a premium on sin. This is the very objection which is discussed and refuted in the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. But it works out the very opposite in practice. Man is a contradiction. When the law says "Thou shalt not" it awakens in him a desire to do the very thing that God prohibits. And it is a blessed fact that, when the sluice gates of grace are opened wide so that there is no condemnation no matter what he does, he loses the desire to sin and finds in the very grace which guarantees immunity a latent power which enables him to rise above it.

<sup>1</sup> The rendering "Advocate", in the sense of an attorney before a judge, is not at all in keeping with the character God assumes here. An advocate does not practice before a Father. The Revisers recognized this, and put "Comforter", "Helper", and "Paraclete" in their margin as alternatives. It is rendered "Comforter" four times in John's evangel. The verb covers the territory which we assign to the two words "entreat" and "console". A paraclete is either an entreater or a consoler. The latter hardly seems possible in connection with sin. We have made it an Entreater in this passage and a Consoler in John's evangel.

<sup>2</sup> The strong contrast indicated by the emphatic "ours" should be noted. It is between Israel, the favored nation, and the whole world. Under the law propitiation was confined to them, but in the great antitype it embraces all mankind.

<sup>15</sup> John speaks of the world oftener than all other writers of the Greek Scriptures put together. It means to him the prevailing system lying in the wicked one (5<sup>19</sup>) which knows not God, hates His children, and is filled with lust and vanity. Fellowship with

God is forfeited by attachment to it, and the proof of evil is that it comes into competition with the love of God. In spirit on Patmos he has seen this world pass away and give place to one which will be in harmony with God.

<sup>18</sup> The term "antichrist" occurs only in John's epistles. The prefix "anti" now has the meaning of "against" and antichrist signifies one who is against Christ. But "anti" originally meant "instead of", and this is its significance in "antichrist". An antichrist is one who takes Christ's place, a substitute or counterfeit christ. John speaks of them as coming out from amongst the circle of the saints.

The indiscriminate use of this term for the coming prince of Daniel (Dan. 9<sup>26</sup>), the lawless one of Paul (2 Thes. 2<sup>8</sup>), and the first wild beast of the Unveiling (Un.13<sup>1</sup>) is to be deplored. No clear conceptions can come of confusing these titles. Antichrist, as a substitute for Christ, is probably to be identified with the second wild beast which had horns like a lambkin (Un. 13<sup>11</sup>). This one only has a likeness to Christ and deceives those dwelling on the earth.

The antichrists are probably identical with the false christs which were foretold by our Lord (Mt.24<sup>24</sup>; Mk.13<sup>22</sup>) who would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. The spirit of antichrist is already in the world and may be known by certain definite characteristics. One is the denial that Jesus is the Christ. The second is the disowning of the Father as well as the Son. The third is the disavowal of the flesh of Christ, that He has come in flesh in the past (1 Jn.4<sup>3</sup>) and that He is coming in flesh in the future (2 Jn. 7). Only those who definitely deny these things are in reality possessed of the spirit of antichrist. It should not be applied to all who oppose Christ, or who teach false doctrine, but rather to those who deceive by pretending to take the place of Christ. The term is never associated with open opposition but rather with secret deception. Whoever, and whatever, displaces Christ is imbued with the spirit of antichrist. It will culminate in the future manifestation of one who will be received by Israel as their long desired Messiah.

<sup>25</sup> The life eonian is life for the course of the eons. It will last during the millennial kingdom and the following eon, up to the consummation, when death is abolished. It would be of little import to promise "eternal" life, for this will become the portion of all when there is no death. The special portion of the saints is life up to the consummation, during the eons, for it is only during the times of the eons that death has any place in God's universe. Moreover, this eonian life is not for this eon, but for the last two eons. It does not commence now, or God's saints would never die. It is impossible to speak of being in present possession of "eternal" or "everlasting" life without claiming immunity from death. None of the saints who have died had "everlasting" life, or they would not now be dead. All had eonian life, which will be enjoyed by them in the resurrection at the presence of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Relationship to God is expressed by various figures of speech. The Father has children by regeneration and sons by the new creation. Entrance into the kingdom on earth for the Circumcision is aptly figured by a new vegetal. They will go through a process corresponding to a birth to fit them for the millennial kingdom (Jn.3<sup>3</sup>). Such a change would not be radical enough to fit us for the heavenly realms, so Paul speaks of a secret connected with the resurrection, by which we are to be changed from terrestrial to celestial creatures (1 Co. 15<sup>51</sup>). Hence we are not in the regeneration, but in a new creation in Christ (2Co.5<sup>17</sup>). As in John three sixteen, John stresses the *manner* of God's love. It is not *sons* here, but *children*. It is the affection of the family circle. God is known as *Father*.

<sup>2</sup> Christ in resurrection, before His ascension, is an index of what glory awaits the Circumcision in the kingdom. They shall see Him and be like Him. Christ in glory, after His ascension, as Paul beheld Him on the Damascus road, shows what surpassing glory awaits us when we are transfigured into the body of His glory (Phil.3<sup>21</sup>).

<sup>8</sup> The title "Adversary" has far more aptness than is at first apparent. Satan is known to us only through his work. He never appears otherwise than as the evil creature indicated by his titles. From his very beginning his work has been to oppose and destroy. In Eden's garden he is seen as the Adversary of God. He imputed a false motive to the commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He aimed directly at the character of God and brought in the estrangement. On the other hand, he is also the Adversary of the saints (1 Pt. 5<sup>8</sup>). As such, he accused Job falsely (Job 2<sup>5</sup>).

Sin was introduced and is being perpetuated by his slanders. Wrong thoughts and mistaken notions concerning God are at the root of all lawlessness, and lawlessness is sin. God is misunderstood, misjudged and hated because of the Adversary's lies. Hence the Son of God has come to annul his acts by making God known.

The work of the Adversary is really one of the essential factors for a true knowledge of God. Sin is a necessary prelude to salvation, and estrangement precedes reconciliation, and it is only through these that God's heart could be bared and His affections shared by mankind. But the office of sin and estrangement is not effected until they are annulled and replaced by righteousness and peace.

The purpose for which the Son of God was manifested was to undo what the Adversary had done. We do not see this purpose accomplished yet. It will have a partial fulfillment in the next eon, when the Adversary will be bound. Its complete culmination will not be seen until the consummation when death, the Adversary's crowning success, is abolished, and he himself, together with all creation, will be reconciled to God (Col. 1<sup>20</sup>). Thus it is that the Son of God will completely annul the acts of the Adversary.

<sup>10</sup> Two spiritual paternities are indicated by conduct, righteousness and love on the one side and unrighteousness and hate on the other. The latter tendency reaches its goal in murder (<sup>12</sup>) and the former in self-sacrifice (<sup>16</sup>).

<sup>18</sup> This is a warning against a danger of the so-called "social gospel". It makes mere philanthropic talk and social theory a substitute for personal deeds of compassion. True beneficence is the product of a regenerate and instructed heart, and not of ostentatious and superfluous organization that seeks to raise the masses while it neglects the heart needs of the individual.

<sup>23</sup> This precept seems almost an anticlimax, for believing is usually put down as entirely outside the category of practical virtues. Yet believing is the most practical exercise in the world. All action is dependent on belief; all effort is qualified by it. Eve believed the serpent and opened the sluice gates of sin. Christ believed God and secured salvation. The fall resulted from lack of faith in God and every phase of the return to Him is founded on faith.

Take the practical precepts of the preceding paragraphs. One who heartily believes God has the most powerful incentive possible to please Him by relieving the distress of his needy brother, for his faith would find an impelling motive in the love which belief has engendered. True faith is not idle: it acts. But the important point is the fact that the quality of its acts meets the approval of God.

Furthermore, as is implied in the second part of the precept, true faith is the most fertile field of love. It is only as the love of God is realized that it is possible to display it to others. It is intensely practical to recognize this, for every effort to cultivate love apart from faith will be fruitless. If, then, more and greater love is needed, it is to be found in the fuller appreciation of God's love, not in the contemplation of our own.

<sup>1</sup> The only true standard for testing spirits is the written revelation of God and its testimony to the living revelation, which became flesh and remains flesh. In this passage the reference is to His coming in the past. In John's second epistle he warns against the deceivers who are not avowing Jesus Christ coming in flesh—that is, in the future. In both cases those who make Him a spirit are associated with the spirit of antichrist (2 Jn. 7).

<sup>3</sup> The spirit of antichrist is the spirit of the world. It does not want the Christ of the Scriptures, but prefers some substitute more suited to its taste. This spirit has come to pervade, not only the world, but the nominal church, which has become largely a religious world. In its rites and ceremonies are substituted for the salvation of Christ, the energy of the flesh takes the place of the power of the Spirit, and the wisdom of men displaces the wisdom of God. The world is to be saved by social service and sanitation and reconciled by reform. Everywhere are signs that the majority of the churches have lost faith in God's Christ and are attempting to find some better means of carrying on God's work than through the power of His Son.

<sup>8</sup> We are never told that God is justice, or God is power, or God is wisdom. These are His attributes, not His essence. The distinction is of vital import, in the conflicting maze of reasoning concerning God's ways and words. Justice and power and wisdom are relative, but love is absolute. He is never so just as when He justifies the unjust, for that is in line with love. He is never so strong as when His weakness overpowers human strength, for that links it to love. He is never so wise as when His foolishness confounds the wisdom of men, for that glorifies love. All His attributes appear and withdraw at the beck of love. All serve it, and never go counter to its commands. We cannot reason that God will do thus and so because He is just, or strong or wise. Love may not give leave. But we can safely lay our heads on the bosom of His love and there learn the great lesson that He IS love, and has both the power and wisdom to carry out the dictates of His affection. What clearer proof can be given that all that He has done and is doing is leading up to that grand ultimate when He will be All in all, and love will rest in being loved?

<sup>9-10</sup> In accordance with the era for which John writes he does not mention grace. The design of the incarnation is the manifestation of God's love, which proves to be no idle display but a transforming energy.

<sup>17</sup> The day of judgment here spoken of is not the so-called "general judgment", of which the Scriptures know nothing, but one of the many judgments which it makes known. It is difficult to imagine this judgment in some far-off future day. It is spoken of as a time when love will give boldness and cast out fear. As the believer of this present economy cannot by any means come into condemnation, and shall not enter any judgment, we shall do well to leave this experience with the Circumcision, to whom John wrote. They will enter the day of judgment which precedes the day of the Lord. They will pass through the terrible tribulations portrayed in the Unveiling. Heaven above will conspire with the earth beneath to pour out God's hoarded indignation upon the earth. The earth will reel, the stars will fall, the elements will be charged with death. In such a time there will be much meaning to the passage we are considering. Nothing but perfect love, that is, love in the maturity of its powers, will be able to stand unshakable in that day.

<sup>19</sup> The inculcation of love to God is of little avail, unless first of all His love has been expounded and finds a place in our hearts. It should be the aim of the evangelist and teacher to elaborate God's love in the gift of His Son, in the salvation which He has provided, in the mercy or grace which attends it, and in the future bliss which it will provide, and the nearness to Himself which it involves. The power of such a presentation will produce a responsive love in all who believe, such as could by no means be provoked by exhortations or commands.

<sup>1</sup> The new birth is confined to the Circumcision, nevertheless, as we also are members of God's family, it should be natural for us to love all who know Him as their Father. This should break through all barriers of church or creed, race or nationality, for spiritual kinship is stronger than any physical tie. Children of God are one by a permanent and indissoluble tie, and the renewed life is put under the stimulus and inspiration of the greatest of all relationships.

<sup>6</sup> It is a remarkable fact that the word *testify* is used concerning the Lord's baptism in water (Jn. 1<sup>34</sup>), and concerning His crucifixion (Jn. 19<sup>35</sup>), and here again of the spirit (<sup>6</sup>). This is confirmed by the statement of the seventh verse. Three are testifying, the spirit, and the water and the blood. First there was His baptism in water accompanied by the testimony of John the Baptist as well as the descending dove and the voice from heaven, saying, "This is My Son, the Beloved in Whom I delight" (Mt. 3<sup>17</sup>). At His crucifixion one of the soldiers slashes His side with a lance head, and immediately blood and water came out (Jn. 19<sup>34</sup>). After His glorification, the spirit which He poured forth testified to His exaltation. So that we have testimony to His anointing, to His death, and to His exaltation. These three unite to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. This threefold testimony concerning God's Son is stronger than any mere human evidence. It was given at the very commencement of His ministry, and again at its close. Nothing in between these two points contradicts this testimony, but much that He did and said confirmed it. Only the Son of God could deal with the demons and eject them. He alone could command the elements. The quaking earth at His crucifixion convinced the centurion, who exclaimed "Truly this was God's Son!" (Mt. 27<sup>54</sup>).

<sup>11</sup> John, the beloved disciple, is dead. How then could he insist so strongly that he had "everlasting" life, and that all who are not believing this have made God a liar? It is evident that he did not have what we would understand by "everlasting" life or he

would still be living. The rendering "eonian" avoids this difficulty. This life does not commence until the resurrection and lasts until death is no longer in action, at the consummation at the close of the eonian times. It will be, in effect, without end, but it would be foolish to predicate life when there is no death.

<sup>13</sup> As in his gospel (20<sup>31</sup>) so here John states his purpose in writing. The epistle aims to confirm the faith of believers, to deepen in their hearts a knowledge of security, and to establish that peace and confidence in God which is essential to unselfish service.

Such assurance belongs of right to all "who are believing in the name of the Son of God." Knowledge of God's gift translates itself into confidence toward God, which asks great things of God, so releasing His power and becoming the agent of His purposes.

<sup>16</sup> The sin to death is probably the same as that of the sixth and tenth of Hebrews—apostasy from the faith of Christ, or, in view of the times for which this is written, the reception of the emblem of the wild beast (Un. 14<sup>10</sup>). That this is the setting in which this passage is to be interpreted is further suggested by the phrase in the nineteenth verse, "the whole world is lying in the wicked one." This will be especially true in the time of the end. Furthermore, we have the striking conclusion of the epistle, which can hardly be understood in any other light. "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." What idols? Does it not seem clear that the apostle, with prophetic eye, is anticipating that marvelous image, which all will be compelled to worship under pain of death? (Un. 13<sup>15</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> It is a striking fact that John never appeals to his apostleship in his epistles. In this short note, as well as in the next one, he is simply an elder. This accords with the private character of this missive, yet it undoubtedly reflects the waning authority of the twelve apostles as the apostasy of the chosen nation developed. They are not given any place in Jerusalem in the latter part of the book of Acts.

<sup>4</sup> The main characteristics of the Circumcision epistles reappear in this brief letter. There is the emphasis on conduct and the physical aspect of truth. The very brevity of the letter tells us that the elder much preferred to convey his message in person. Even if we should take the lady as a type of Israel, the tie which is recognized is a physical one. In all this there is a great contrast with the latest ministry of Paul.

<sup>6</sup> The difference in viewpoint between John and Paul is seen in their attitude toward the law. In one case "he who is loving another has fulfilled law" (Ro.13<sup>8</sup>). In the other love is the motive that they may be walking according to His precepts. In one case there is emancipation from law. In the other there is ability to fulfill law. God will write the law on their

hearts, under the new covenant (Heb. 8<sup>10</sup>). We are not under law, but under grace (Ro.6<sup>15</sup>). We were exempted from the law . . . so that it is for us to be slaving in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter (Ro.7<sup>6</sup>).

<sup>7</sup> The principal object of this letter seems to be a warning against those who spiritualize the coming of Christ, and deny His physical appearance in the future. In the first epistle it is "having come" (4<sup>2</sup>). Here the present participle is used—"coming"—and can refer only to His manifestation in the day of the Lord. (See Mt.16<sup>28</sup>, 24<sup>30</sup>, 26<sup>64</sup>, Mk.13<sup>26</sup>, 14<sup>62</sup>, Lu.21<sup>27</sup>.) This involves the great truth of His physical resurrection and ascension, and confirms the literal understanding of the prophecy that "And His feet stand in that day on the mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem from the east" (Zech. 14<sup>4</sup>).

Truth is emphasized in this as love is emphasized in the third epistle. The many deceivers cause grave concern. Truth is imperiled and is now to be made a test of fellowship and a condition of offering hospitality (<sup>10</sup>). It will not be a time of recovery of truth but of its perversion. The test of fellowship in the present is conduct and not doctrine.



<sup>2</sup> The prosperity of the soul must not be confounded with spiritual prosperity. Like the salvation of the soul (1 Pt.1<sup>9</sup>), it refers to that physical enjoyment and satisfaction which will be fully known in the coming kingdom. The Circumcision are promised all physical blessing on the earth; we are blessed with every spiritual blessing among the celestials (Eph.1<sup>3</sup>). Such a salvation as this is not at all suited to our calling above in Christ Jesus.

<sup>7</sup> "Getting nothing from those of the nations" is proof of the Jewish character of this note. If this were literally obeyed by those who proclaim the truth today, they would have no support whatever. This statement is like a flash of light in a dark place. It shows us that, in early days, there were two entirely distinct churches, one connected with the kingdom proclamation and the hope of Israel, which has since passed away, and the other connected with the preaching of Paul to the nations.

Much of the confusion today is the result of mingling truth intended for one church into that which belongs to the other. The truth found in the Circumcision epistles will come into play again after the present administration of grace has come to an end.

<sup>9</sup> It is significant that any man would dare to oppose an apostle. Diotrophes evidently did it in order to secure for himself the highest place in the ecclesia. There is no suggestion of any difference in doctrine. This spirit, which was severely condemned by our Lord, has been the cause of much harm to the saints. True servants of the Lord are taught by His example, and do not desire to exalt themselves, knowing well that He will abase such, and will Himself exalt all who truly deserve it in that day. Diotrophes exalted himself and, as a result, his name has been a by-word down the centuries since. Demetrius does not seem to have thought of himself yet his name is honored and his place a permanent one in the annals of the good.

Three typical characters, Gaius, Diotrophes, and Demetrius supply the topics of the letter. "The elder, Gaius", showed fidelity and hospitality. Pride of place seems to be the sin of Diotrophes. He rails against John and refuses his message, excommunicating from the church those who receive the brethren. Demetrius receives a triple commendation. He is testified to by all, by the truth, and by John.

# THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

JUDE, the last of the epistles to the Circumcision, is the prelude to the apocalyptic judgments. Its framework reveals the fact that the central theme is the coming of the Lord in judgment upon the irreverent (<sup>14,15</sup>). Indeed, it seems to suggest that Enoch himself will prophesy, as one of the two witnesses (Un.11<sup>3-12</sup>), to (not of) these, in the Lord's day. As Peter's second epistle is especially concerned with this same judgment period, it contains many parallel passages. Compare Jude <sup>3</sup> with 2 Pe.1<sup>5</sup>, <sup>4</sup> with 2<sup>1</sup>, <sup>6</sup> with 24, <sup>7</sup> with 24-10, <sup>8</sup> with 2<sup>10</sup>, <sup>9</sup> with 2<sup>11</sup>, and <sup>10</sup> with 2<sup>12</sup>, <sup>11</sup> with 2<sup>15</sup>, <sup>12-13</sup> with 2<sup>13-17</sup>, <sup>16</sup> with 2<sup>18</sup>, <sup>17-18</sup> with 3<sup>1-3</sup>.

As Jude speaks of the apostles (<sup>17</sup>), he is not the apostle of this name (Jn. 14<sup>22</sup>). Neither was James, his brother, an apostle, for James and John were the *two* sons of Zebedee (Mt.26<sup>37</sup>). The other James was not prominent enough to be referred to in this way. So Jude was evidently the brother of James, the Lord's brother, who occupied by far the most prominent place among the saints of the Circumcision, although he was not an apostle. This makes Jude himself a brother of the Lord.

This fact throws much light on the character of its teaching, its harmony with the other Circumcision epistles, and its strong contrast with the later teaching of the apostle Paul. Paul repudiates even the distant physical bond existing between him and the Lord, and bases all on a spiritual relationship in grace. Jude deals with the judgment of those who are closely united to Him in the flesh.

While the apostasy here set forth is not to be applied to the Uncircumcision during the present period of grace, its beginnings can be clearly seen among the Jews, as God is gathering them from the nations and restoring them to their own land. As in the exodus from Egypt, He will deal with the nation of Israel as a whole, yet destroy the apostates among them

during the era of His indignation. With this in view, Jude addresses this epistle to the faithful, lest they, too, become involved in the apostasy.

Unlike those to whom Paul writes these will not have justification, but only a pardon of sins, which can be revoked. Hence even believers among the Circumcision may fall away, especially during the fearful afflictions of the time of the end.

The framework shows that the main theme, the judgment of apostasy, is presented, as usual, from the divine side first and then reviewed, in inverse order, from the human aspect.

From verse fifteen, as shown by the framework, we return over the same ground as we came, but from a different viewpoint. In the former division all was viewed in its Godward aspect: then we look on the manward side. First we have the mercy from God (<sup>2</sup>), lastly the mercy shown to man (<sup>21-23</sup>). And so with each subject.

The closing ascription is in close harmony with the epistle. Glory, majesty, might and authority belong to God when He is executing His strange work of judging the earth and inaugurating the reign of His Christ, as is set forth in detail in the book of His unvailing.

## FRAMEWORK OF JUDE

Called and kept <sup>1</sup>

Mercy from God <sup>2</sup>

Contend for the faith <sup>3</sup>

Barter, disown, before <sup>4</sup>

Reminder—prophets <sup>5-7</sup>

Dreamers <sup>8-13</sup>

The Lord's Coming in  
Judgment <sup>14,15</sup>

Murmurers <sup>16</sup>

Reminder—apostles <sup>17</sup>

Scoffers of the last time <sup>18,19</sup>

Build selves in faith <sup>20</sup>

Mercy on others <sup>21-23</sup>

Guarded and established <sup>24,25</sup>

GODWARD

MANWARD

**THE UNVEILING OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
COMMONLY CALLED  
THE REVELATION**

## THE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE UNVEILING

THE title of this scroll, "THE UNVEILING OF JESUS CHRIST," is an epitome of this whole prophecy. Hitherto Christ has hid Himself. Here He is about to throw off the covering and take His public place in the affairs of mankind. He must be unveiled. His name and title are the clue to the character of this unveiling.

Our Lord's personal name, JESUS, means Jehovah the Saviour. Jehovah is the God of Israel. Hence Christ is presented in this prophecy as the Saviour of the people of the covenant. The name Jehovah is emphasized by its translation into "Him Who is, and Who was, and Who is coming" (14).

Our Lord's official title, CHRIST (the Anointed), is the key to His unveiling, for it contains within itself the three characters in which He appears. Just as our realization of the beauties and blessings of light is greatly enhanced when we see it refracted into its three primary colors, yellow, red and blue, so the three-fold elements of the title CHRIST are presented to us separately, yet mingled now and then, that we may get a clear and cordial appreciation of the blessings and beauties which will be seen when He rises as the Sun of Righteousness upon this dark and dismal world. Of old three classes were anointed: prophets, potentates and priests. Each of these received the holy anointing oil upon entering his office. Samuel the prophet, David the king, and Aaron the priest, were all "christs" by virtue of their anointing. JESUS CHRIST combines these three offices in Himself. In this prophecy He is first unveiled as *Prophet* to His people (14-32), then as *King* (41-118) and as *Priest* (119-2015). After the climax is reached at the new creation (21) these titles are rehearsed in reverse order in the concluding division. The *Temple* (21-27) and the *Throne* (22-5) occupy us first and then the *Prophet* reappears with His closing message (226-17).

The literary structure divides this book into two grand divisions, one staged on this present earth and the other on the next. The first deals with the day of Jehovah, the second with the day of God.

The time occupied by this prophecy is called the eons of the eons—the two final

eons or ages. The first division covers the first of these eons, the second is in the last, which is called the eon of the eons. The second division may last a long time but is very briefly told; while the first division, if we except the thousand years of which little is said, occupies the bulk of the book, though it is a very short period. This is the great judgment era which prepares the earth for the advent of Messiah.

The judgments of this book are for the purpose of enforcing the right of Christ to be its Potentate and Priest. Judgment must begin at God's house, hence He first presents His claims as Prophet among the synagogues of His own people Israel in the messages to the seven ecclesias.

Then heaven's throne is set and His regal rights are established. The world He ransomed as the Lamb will be reckoned by the Lion. The Throne Judgments are divided into three closely related yet distinct sections; the Seals, the Trumpets and the Thunders. The opening of the Seals gives us a general record of the whole period right up to the establishment of the kingdom. The judgments, especially the first four, are providential in character and affect saint and sinner alike. The fifth seal calls for vengeance on Israel's foes. The Trumpets are the answer to this cry. The intervening section makes provision for the protection of the saints during the sounding of the trumpets, the 144,000 being sealed and shielded from them. These judgments result in the kingdoms of this world coming under the sovereignty of our Lord Anointed.

The Temple Judgments are twofold. First God's covenant with Israel is in view and Jerusalem is shielded from the wild beast. Then the law is exposed and its curses are poured out, especially upon those of the apostate nation who enjoy false sovereignty over the earth in Babylon. This is followed by the marriage of the Lambkin, and the millennium. This section ends with the Great White Throne judgment, which winds up the affairs of this present earth.

In the last grand division God is reconciled to all mankind. Priesthood vanishes but rule continues to the consummation

# THE LITERARY FRAMEWORK OF THE UNVEILING OF JESUS CHRIST

*Fourfold Reversion*

INTRODUCTION (1<sup>1-3</sup>) The Swift Unveiling of Jesus Christ.

*Blessing on the Reader, Hearer and Keeper.*

MESSAGES TO THE ECCLESIAS (1<sup>4-32</sup>)

Reward according to *acts* (2<sup>23</sup>, etc.)

THE THRONE (4<sup>1-11</sup>) The *Political* Redemption of the Earth.

*Preparatory Vision:* The Throne, the Scroll and the Lambkin (4<sup>1-5</sup>)

THE SEVEN SEALS restore Earth's Sovereignty to God.

The Four Horses (Providential):

Distant Conquest, War, Famine, Pestilence (6<sup>1-8</sup>).

The Saints Slain. The Great Convulsion. (6<sup>9-17</sup>)

*Preparatory Vision:* The 144,000 and the Vast Crowd (7<sup>1-17</sup>).

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS (an expansion of the Seventh Seal).

The First Four (Providential):

The Land, the Sea, the Waters, the Sun (8<sup>7-12</sup>).

The Three Woe Trumpets, the Abyss, the Euphrates.

*Preparatory Vision:* The Messenger and the Open Scroll (10<sup>1-3</sup>).

THE SEVEN THUNDERS (sealed up) (10<sup>4</sup>).

The Little Scroll Eaten (10<sup>5-11</sup>).

The Temple Measured. The Two Witnesses (11<sup>1-14</sup>).

The Seventh Trumpet (11<sup>15-18</sup>).

THE TEMPLE (11<sup>19-20</sup>) The *Religious* Redemption of the Earth.

*The Ark of of the Covenant in View* (Faithful Israel Redeemed 11<sup>19</sup>).

The Star-Crowned Woman and her Male Son (12<sup>1-2, 5-8, 14-16</sup>).

The Dragon and his Messengers (12<sup>3-4, 7-12, 17</sup>).

The Wild Beast and his Prophet (13).

The 144,000 and the Blessed Dead (14<sup>1-13</sup>).

The Harvest, blessing (14<sup>14-16</sup>)

The Vintage, judgment (14<sup>17-20</sup>)

*The Tabernacle of the Testimony in View* (Apostate Israel Destroyed).

THE SEVEN BOWLS (15<sup>1-16</sup>)

The Unfaithful Woman (17<sup>1-6</sup>).

The Scarlet Wild Beast (17<sup>7-11</sup>).

The Ten Horns (17<sup>12-18</sup>).

Great Babylon (18-19<sup>5</sup>).

The Marriage of the Lambkin, blessing (19<sup>6-10</sup>).

God's Great Dinner, judgment (19<sup>11-21</sup>).

Satan Bound: The Millennium (20<sup>1-4</sup>).

The Former Resurrection: Judgment of Saints (20<sup>5-8</sup>).

Satan Loosed: The Brief Era of War (20<sup>7-10</sup>).

The Latter Resurrection: Judgment of Sinners (20<sup>11-15</sup>).

THE TEMPLE (21<sup>1-37</sup>) The Lord God Almighty and the Lambkin (21<sup>22</sup>).

The Holy Jerusalem Descends from Heaven.

THE THRONE (22<sup>1-5</sup>)

The River of Life (not lightning and thunder) Issues out of the Throne  
bringing Blessing (not wrath).

MESSAGES TO THE ECCLESIAS (22<sup>6-17</sup>)

Pay according to *work* (22<sup>12</sup>).

CONCLUSION (22<sup>18-21</sup>)

*Curse* on him who Adds or Subtracts from this Scroll.

The Swift Coming of the Lord Jesus.

THE DAY OF JEHOVAH

AS PROPHET

AS POTENTATE

AS PRIEST

Christ

DAY OF GOD

## THE TIME PERIODS OF THE UNVEILING

The chart is designed to give, at one glance, all the time periods mentioned or referred to, from the grand eons or ages down to the days of Daniel's visions. In order to accomplish this the short era of judgment at the inception of the Lord's Day is expanded, as indicated by the oblique lines. In this era most of the events in this scroll occur.

The Eons or Ages are five in number. This scroll is a prophecy covering the last two, which, as they spring out of the first three, are called "the eons of the eons" (18,1849,10513712106111514111571932010225).

The first of these two eons includes the day of the Lord, the second the Day of God. The present is Man's Day (1 Co.4<sup>3</sup>).

The Seventy Heptads, or "Weeks", are foretold in Daniel (9<sup>24</sup>). From the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (Neh.21,5), to Christ's entry into Jerusalem (Lu.19<sup>37,44</sup>) was a period of exactly 173,880 days, or 69 heptads of years, counting 360 days to

a year. The seventieth heptad is still future (Dan.9<sup>26</sup>). Daniel divides it in half by the breaking of a treaty when the sacrifice and gift offering are stopped (Dan.9<sup>27</sup>). This leaves us the period often referred to in this scroll of 42 months (11<sup>135</sup>), 1260 days (11<sup>13126</sup>), and "season, seasons and half a season" (12<sup>14</sup>). These are principally in the last half of the heptad. The middle of the heptad is the beginning of most of the movements in this scroll and the end closes them.

This prophecy is not given in chronological order, but gives a general view under the Seals, expands the seventh seal under the Trumpets, and probably expands the seventh Trumpet under the Bowls. The end of the seventieth heptad is reached at least five times, and the narrative goes back again to fill in further details.

The days after Christ's epiphany are taken from Daniel's prophecy.

## THE DAY OF JEHOVAH

The day of the Lord, or Jehovah (Isa. 13<sup>9</sup>), is a day of destruction, a cruel day with wrath and anger (Isa.13<sup>13</sup>Zeph.22,3), in which the stars and constellations, and the sun and moon will be darkened (Joel 2<sup>10,30,31</sup>3<sup>15</sup>cf.Un.6<sup>12</sup>), in which He punishes the inhabitants of the world for their evil, in which Babylon will be overthrown (cf.Un.18), and when Jehovah sets His people Israel in their own land and gives them rest (Isa.14<sup>1,3</sup>). It is a day of battle (Eze.13<sup>5</sup>), a day of famine (Joel 1<sup>16</sup>cf.Un.6<sup>6</sup>), and fire (Joel 1<sup>10</sup>cf.Un.8<sup>7</sup>), a day of thick darkness and subterranean horrors (Joel 22,4cf.Un.9<sup>17</sup>), a great and terrible day (Joel 2<sup>11</sup>), when He roars out of Zion (Joel 3<sup>16</sup>), a day of woe (Amos 5<sup>18,20</sup>cf.Un.8<sup>13</sup>). It will judge the nations (Obad. 15,21Eze.30<sup>3</sup>), and in it He will take the kingdom (Un.11<sup>15</sup>). It is a day of wrath (Zeph.1<sup>14,15</sup>cf.Un.6<sup>17</sup>), of trouble and distress (Zeph.1<sup>15</sup>cf.Un.7<sup>14</sup>). In that day Jerusalem will be besieged and taken by an army from all nations (Zech.14<sup>2</sup>cf.Un.16<sup>14</sup>), and His feet shall once more stand upon the Mount of Olives (Zech.14<sup>4</sup>Ac. 110,12). In it

"The eyes of the haughty human are low,  
And prostrate is the highness of mortals,  
And impregnable is Jehovah alone in that day."  
(Isa. 21<sup>1</sup>, 12)

This is in contrast with the present which is "man's day" (1 Co.4<sup>3</sup>), when men are haughty and high and self-sufficient.

The day of Jehovah will come as a thief in the night (1 Thes.5<sup>2</sup> 2 Pt.3<sup>10</sup>). It cannot come until after the apostasy (2 Thes.2<sup>3</sup>). It closes with the dissolution of the heavens and the earth (2 Pet. 3<sup>10,13</sup> cf.Un.20<sup>11</sup>) and the creation of new heavens and a new earth (Isa.65<sup>17</sup> 2 Pt.3<sup>13</sup>cf.Un.21<sup>1-5</sup>).

Those under Paul's preaching were promised deliverance from that day of wrath (1 Thes.1<sup>10</sup>5<sup>1-11</sup> 2 Thes.2<sup>2</sup>Ro.5<sup>9</sup>). Before it comes they will be assembled together to the Lord at His presence (2 Thes.2<sup>1</sup>).

At the end of Jehovah's day the heavens will be dissolved and the elements will melt with heat because of the presence of the day of God (2 Pt.3<sup>12</sup>). Then there will be a new heavens and new earth (2 Pt.3<sup>13</sup>cf.Un.21<sup>1</sup>).

THE EONS    THE DAYS    THE SEVENTY HEPTADS

# A CHART OF THE TIME PERIODS OF THE UNVEILING OF JESUS CHRIST

AND THE PROPHET DANIEL

IN THE SEVERAL  
CHARACTERS OF

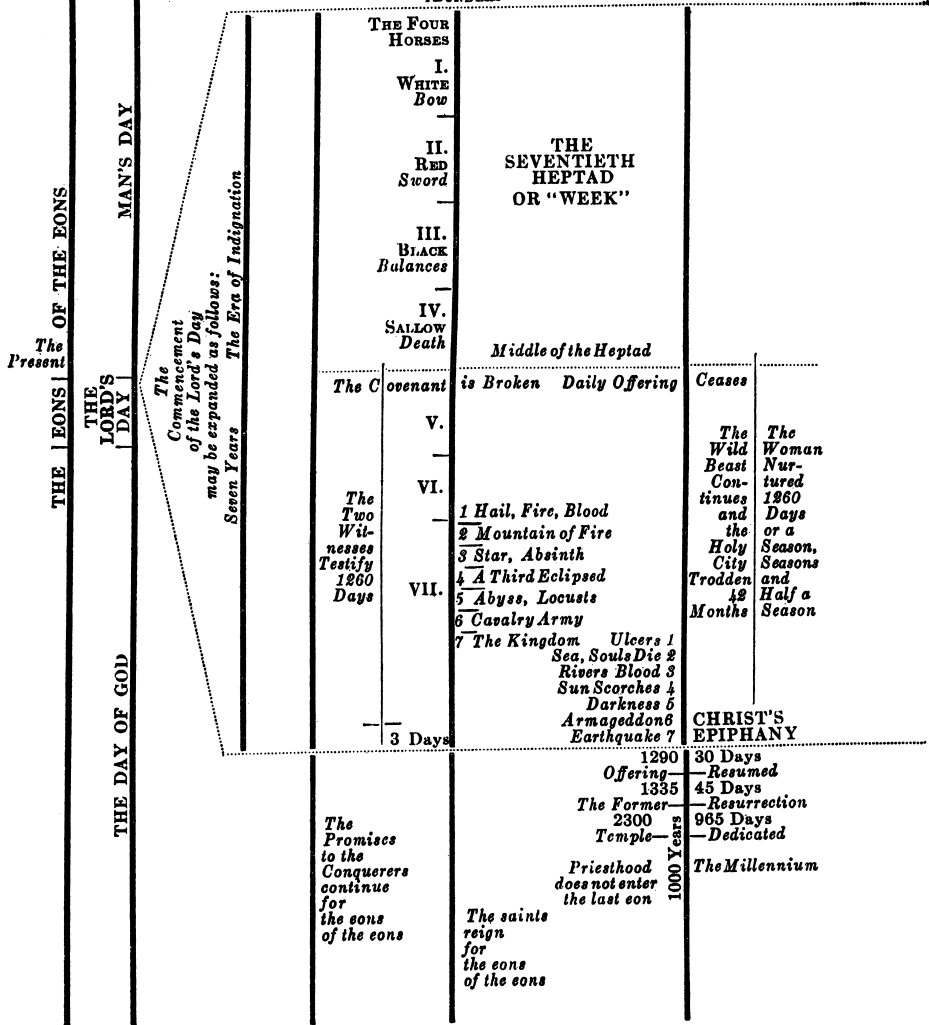
A.D. 33 (?)

PROPHET

KING  
SEALS  
TRUMPETS  
THUNDERS

PRIEST

BOWLS



20 There are three "mysteries" or secrets in this scroll. The seven stars and lampstands are in Christ's hands as Prophet. The secret of God (10<sup>7</sup>) is finished when Christ as King receives the sovereignty of the world. The secret of Babylon is in the Temple section (17<sup>5,7</sup>).



*The Prophetic Section*

<sup>20</sup> The vision is figurative. The explanation is *literal*. It must not be further "explained". The seven stars are *seven messengers*. The seven lampstands are *seven ecclesias*. These will be found at the places indicated at the opening of the Lord's day. They are God's luminaries in the dense darkness of that judgment era.

## THE SEVEN LETTERS

These letters fall into two groups. In the first three the injunction to hear precedes the promise. In the last four this order is reversed. In the former the wilderness experiences of Israel are recalled: their first love in Ephesus, their trials in Smyrna, Balaam in Pergamos. The latter recall their history in the land—two for Israel and two for Judah; Jezebel in Thyatira, Israel's blotting out in Sardis, the temple in Hezekiah's reign in Philadelphia, and the declining days of the Minor Prophets in Laodicea.

## EPHESUS

<sup>4</sup> Their "first love" is an allusion to Israel's espousals in the wilderness (Hos.11<sup>1</sup>Jer.2<sup>2</sup>Eze.16<sup>8</sup>,10Ex.19<sup>4</sup>,8).

<sup>6</sup> The Nicolaitans (Conqueror People) are probably Israelitish votaries of the wild beast. Their name indicates their allegiance to the great world conqueror. First their *acts* are condemned and then their *doctrine* (2<sup>15</sup>). It was the same as Balaam's (Nu.25<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>7</sup> The "tree" of life is, literally, the wood or *log* of life, for the wood is dead, and, in this phrase, always speaks of life out of death, or resurrection.

<sup>7</sup> The promise reminds us of the tree of life in Eden and has its consummation in the new Jerusalem (22<sup>2</sup>). Our destiny is heaven (Eph.1<sup>3</sup>).

## SMYRNA

<sup>8</sup> In each message the Lord alludes to such particulars of the preceding vision as meet the case of the ecclesia. His resurrection life is a pledge of the wreath of life He promises to those who are faithful until death.

<sup>9</sup> What force can there be to the claim to be Jews unless the Smyrna ecclesia was composed of Jews? Their allegiance to Satan's (or the Adversary's) synagogue would have no point if the Smyrnaites did not belong to God's synagogue.

*The Prophetic Section*

<sup>10</sup> The ten days' affliction alludes to Israel's trial in the wilderness. That lasted forty years. This will be brief. Jews often suffer from anti-Semitic riots.

<sup>10</sup> A wreath or garland, often of laurel, was awarded the successful contestant in the ancient games. This was the trophy of victory. It is not the symbol of rule, but the reward of faithful effort. The wreath of life will be worn by all who gain life as a reward of their deeds. It is given to the one who endures trial (Ja.1<sup>12</sup>). The life we have in Christ is a gratuitous gift, in no sense the reward of our efforts, so it cannot be figured by a wreath.

<sup>11</sup> The allusion in this promise is to the entrance of death when Adam sinned. The fulfillment of the promise will wait until the great white throne judgment (20<sup>11</sup>). This promise cannot be applied now, for all in Christ are beyond judgment.

## PERGAMOS

<sup>14</sup> Balaam (Nu.25). The sorry scene at Shittim will be repeated in the day of Jehovah. In ancient times sacrifices to the gods were accompanied by ceremonial prostitution, which will also characterize the worship of the wild beast. Compare 2<sup>20</sup>9<sup>20</sup>,21<sup>14</sup>21<sup>8</sup>22<sup>15</sup>Jude 15,16,23. Balaam was killed with the sword (Nu.31<sup>8</sup>Josh.13<sup>22</sup>). The Nicolaitans are threatened with a similar fate. This is put in execution when the followers of the wild beast are "killed with the blade which is coming out of the mouth of Him Who is sitting on the horse" (19<sup>21</sup>).

<sup>17</sup> Unless they worship the image of the wild beast they will not be able to obtain food, unless God gives it as He gave the manna. So the star-crowned woman will be nourished in the wilderness (12<sup>14</sup>). Then they will pray as He taught them: "Our bread, our dole, be giving us today" (Mt. 6<sup>11</sup>), for every other source is cut off.

The white pebble was used in allotting the land. Each man's name was written on a pebble, and these were put into a bag. As each allotment is called, a pebble is withdrawn. The allotment is given to the man whose name is on it. Thus the white pebble will be an earnest of their allotment in the kingdom. This is for Israel, not for the body of Christ.

## The Prophetic Section

## THYATIRA

<sup>18</sup> Tertullian and Epiphanius say that there was no ecclesia in Thyatira when John wrote these letters. On this ground many rejected this prophecy in early times. There is no difficulty in this if we recognize the fact that, in spirit, John was transported into the day of Jehovah. Then there will be an ecclesia in Thyatira which will correspond perfectly with the epistle addressed to it.

<sup>20</sup> This is an allusion to the period of the Kings (1Ki.16<sup>31</sup>). The error of Balaam (2Pt.2<sup>15</sup> Jude 10,13) becomes the state religion (cf.9<sup>20,21</sup>17,418<sup>3</sup>). The fact that Ephesus (2<sup>6</sup>) and Pergamos (2<sup>14</sup>) and Thyatira are all warned against this evil shows that the worship of the wild beast will revive the seductions of idolatry.

<sup>23</sup> Death, here used for an epidemic disease (plague, cf black death). See 6<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> "Kidneys and hearts" is a Hebrew phrase signifying purity of motive.

<sup>24</sup> The depths of Satan are in contrast to the depths of God (1Co.2<sup>10</sup>). The latter are explored by the spirit and are unknown to the soulish man. Satan's depths are found in consecrating the most debased passions to religion. Every appeal to the senses, whether to the eye, in magnificent buildings and ritual, or to the ear by the mesmeric influence of music, or to the taste in suppers and banquets, or to the lower sensual appetites, is a descent into the depths of Satan. In the beginning he appealed to the woman through her senses (Gen.3<sup>1,6</sup>). His desire for worshipers leads him to offer them the strongest sensual inducements disguised under the sacred sanction of divine worship.

<sup>27</sup> The shepherd's mace was a heavy club with a thong to hold it securely to his wrist, and a large head, bristling with spikes, at the end. He carried a crook for the sheep and a club for their enemies (12<sup>19</sup>15). He will rule with rigor. Israel, not the body of Christ, will rule the millennial earth.

<sup>27</sup> In the East pottery was crushed into bits to make a kind of cement.

<sup>28</sup> The Morning Star is especially appropriated by the Son of David (22<sup>16</sup>). He is the Herald of approaching day. A place in the earliest phase of the kingdom is awarded the conqueror.

## The Prophetic Section

## SARDIS

<sup>1</sup> The seven spirits of God are literal. They are seen under various figures, according to the connection. Before the throne they appear as torches of fire (4<sup>5</sup>). On the Lambkin they are seen as seven horns and seven eyes (5<sup>6</sup>). They are commissioned for the entire earth. The stars are limited to the ecclesias.

<sup>3</sup> Christ's coming is presented under various figures. He comes as a thief in the day of the Lord (1Th.5<sup>2</sup> 2Pt.3<sup>10</sup> cf. 16<sup>15</sup>). The Lord warned His disciples of this aspect (Mt.24<sup>42,44</sup> Lu.12<sup>39</sup>). When they shall say "peace and security" then sudden destruction will come upon the unwatchful (1Th.5<sup>3</sup>). But *we* are not in darkness that it should overtake *us* as a thief (1Th.5<sup>4,11</sup>).

<sup>5</sup> Any man, woman, family or tribe who turned from Jehovah to worship the gods of the nations was to be rubbed out (Deut.29<sup>18,20</sup>). David rubs out the names of some of his mighty men because they did not remain true to him (2Sa.23<sup>8,39</sup>). Joab, once over all the host (2Sa.20<sup>23</sup>), and Ahithophel were also erased. Here too, life and position depend on conduct. *Our* life is hid with Christ in God (Col.3<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>5</sup> The scroll of life is referred to six times in this book. It contains the names of those who do *not* worship the wild beast (13<sup>8</sup>17<sup>8</sup>). It is opened at the great white throne (20<sup>12</sup>) and any whose names were not found written in it were cast into the lake of fire (20<sup>15</sup>). Those enrolled in it may enter the new Jerusalem (21<sup>27</sup>). Those who take from the sayings of this prophecy will have their part taken from the log of life (22<sup>19</sup>).

## PHILADELPHIA

<sup>7</sup> David's key (Isa.22<sup>15-25</sup>) refers to the deposing of Shebna and the raising up of Eliakim to be the treasurer of the temple, or minister of the court (See Isa.36<sup>22</sup>). This letter moves in the temple, where the treasures are, where safety is found, and where worship is carried on.

<sup>9</sup> It is impossible to escape the inference that the Philadelphian ecclesia is composed only of Jews who are members of God's synagogue. As every other consideration points in this direction we may conclude that all of these ecclesias are Jewish. Each will worship in a synagogue, which has a "messenger" who will read to them.

*The Prophetic Section*

<sup>10</sup> *Endurance* will be a cardinal virtue in that day of stress and distress. Seven times are we reminded of it (1<sup>9</sup>2<sup>2,3</sup>,1<sup>9</sup>3<sup>10</sup>13<sup>10</sup>14<sup>12</sup>). He that endures to the end shall be saved (Mt.10<sup>22</sup>24<sup>13</sup> Mk.13<sup>13</sup>). In the present economy salvation depends entirely on faith in Christ.

<sup>10</sup> The English idiom *to keep out*, conveys a false impression to many. Here it does not mean to keep *from*, but to keep those who are in the trial so that they come *out* victoriously.

<sup>12</sup> The conqueror with but little power who hides *in* the temple during the hour of trial will be openly acknowledged in the kingdom by giving him a place of prominence and power like the great pillars, Jachin and Boaz. It may be that they will have a special place of authority over the vast crowd who serve Him day and night in His temple (7<sup>15</sup>).

<sup>12</sup> The 144,000 are sealed on their foreheads (7<sup>3</sup>) which exempts them from the judgment of the locusts (9<sup>4</sup>). This seal is probably the Father's name. In the new earth the slaves of the Lambkin are thus sealed (22<sup>4</sup>). On the other hand, the false prophet causes all to receive the emblem of the wild beast (13<sup>16</sup>), marking them for God's indignation (14<sup>9</sup>). Only those who refuse this symbol live and reign with Christ the thousand years (20<sup>4</sup>).

## LAODICEA

<sup>14</sup> God's creative Original. See Col.1<sup>15</sup> note. He is called the Origin or Beginning three times in this scroll in the phrase "Origin and Consummation" (21<sup>6</sup>22<sup>13</sup>).

<sup>16</sup> To spew as the result of an emetic.  
<sup>17</sup> Naked in the sense of scantily clad, not necessarily nude.

<sup>21</sup> The promises to the conquerors increase in proportion to the apostasy with which they contend. In Ephesus they are promised a place in the paradise of the new earth. This will doubtless be shared by all the other conquerors as well. In Laodicea, the nauseating ecclesia, the conqueror is promised a place with Christ on His millennial throne. This is the highest place to which an Israelite could aspire (Mt. 20<sup>21</sup>). This is fulfilled when the wages are paid (11<sup>18</sup>) and the saints reign with Him the thousand years (20<sup>4</sup>).

*The Prophetic Section*

<sup>22</sup> A low state of spirituality is denoted by the hearing ear. Job said "I heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees Thee" (Job 42<sup>5</sup>).

## THE THRONE SECTION

## CHRIST AS KING

This section deals with the establishment of the kingdom of Christ and His saints (Dan.7<sup>14,18</sup>) over the whole earth, as the Temple Section (11<sup>19</sup>-20<sup>15</sup>) breaks down all opposition to the worship of Jehovah and the priesthood of Israel. There are three distinct divisions in this section: the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Thunders. Each of these is preceded by a preparatory vision, the Seals by the Throne, the Scroll and the Lambkin, the Trumpets by the 144,000 and the Vast Multitude, the Thunders by the Messenger and the Open Scroll.

<sup>1</sup> The "openings" of this prophecy should be given careful consideration. They are like the rising curtain which reveals the next act in this great tragedy. There are four pairs of "openings", each of which should be studied together. They are as follows:

HEAVEN—A Door (41) *Providential Judgments.*

Heaven (1911) *Public Judgments.*

THE EARTH—A Well (92) *The Terrible Cavalry.*

Its Mouth (1216) *Swallows the Flood.*

THE SCROLLS—Seven Seals (523459 613579 1281).

The Scrolls (2012) *Individual Judgment.*

THE TEMPLE—The Temple (1119) *Ark, Covenant.*

Tent of Testimony (155) *Law Exposed.*

<sup>3</sup> The emerald rainbow assures us that God will remember His covenant with every living creature (Gen.9<sup>9,17</sup>). There shall not be another deluge. These days will be like the days of Noah in many other respects (Mt.24<sup>37</sup> Lu.17<sup>26</sup>).

<sup>4</sup> *Elder, or senior or presbyter*, is a title of honor and respect implying authority rather than advanced age, as in our "alderman". These elders follow the living creatures in worshipping the Creator (4<sup>10</sup>). An elder assures John that the Lion will break the seals (5<sup>5</sup>) and when He takes the scroll they celebrate (5<sup>8,11</sup>). They fall and worship in unison with all creation (5<sup>14</sup>). They echo the worship of the vast crowd (7<sup>11</sup>) and one of them tells John who they are (7<sup>14</sup>).

*Throne Section—The Scroll*

At the seventh trumpet they fall and worship, the tenor of their words showing that they are not included among His slaves the prophets or the saints (11<sup>16</sup>). They hear the song of the 144,000 (14<sup>3</sup>) and join the hallelujahs at the destruction of Babylon (19<sup>4</sup>). David patterned the twenty-four courses of the priesthood after them (1 Chr.24<sup>3</sup>, 5 Heb.8<sup>5</sup>9<sup>23</sup>). They lead heaven's worship and combine the offices of prophet, priest and king, for they sit on thrones, present the worship of others, and speak for God. Their "crowns", however, are not regal, but wreaths of victory.

<sup>6</sup> The throne attendants of the Divine Majesty vary according to the character and title which He assumes. Jehovah is attended by the Living Ones, or Cherubim. These are intensely animate and are incorporated into the very throne itself. All creation is represented in this august session. The heads of the heavenly hosts sit on thrones. The messengers attend. All of these are heavenly spirit beings.

The realm of earth is represented by the heads of the animal kingdom, including man. These are the divisions of creation (Gen.1) except fish and creeping things. With these only God established His covenant after the flood (Gen.9<sup>9,10</sup>). They are living *souls*, rather than spirits. They conform to the scene about them. When we first see the cherubim, guarding the way to the tree of life (for this tree was a source of the life they represented) *no* wings are mentioned (Gen.3<sup>24</sup>). When they form part of the mercy seat, they seem to have had *two* wings (Ex.25<sup>20</sup>). When Ezekiel sees them they have *four* wings (Eze.1<sup>6</sup>). Here they have *six* wings each. Ezekiel tells us they looked like living coals of fire. Here they are full of eyes. Ezekiel calls them by the same name they are given here when he says: "It is the animal which I saw under the God of Israel at the stream Chebar: and I know that they are cherubim" (Eze.10<sup>20</sup>). According to these passages they do not seem to be confined to a set physical manifestation, but conform to their spiritual activity and environment. Isaiah calls them Seraphim or Burning Ones in connection with the title Adonai.

<sup>11</sup> The elders worship the *Creator* rather than a Redeemer.

*Throne Section—The Lambkin*

<sup>1</sup> The scroll is not a "book". It was applied to a legal document (Mt.19<sup>7</sup> Mk.10<sup>4</sup>). This is its probable meaning here, for it is endorsed on the back and sealed like a mortgage "according to the law and custom" which obtained in Israel in ancient times (Jer.32<sup>8-14</sup>). What the breaking of the seals involves is clear from the new song of the animals and elders (5<sup>9</sup>) when the Lambkin gets the scroll. The sovereignty of the earth, which is Israel's, has passed from them. It is held by alien powers which must be dispossessed. It is Jehovah's purpose that Israel shall reign over the whole earth. The redemption of their lost heritage is the subject of this section. Nothing could more aptly portray the process of this redemption than the gradual breaking of the seals of the scroll. When all are broken the incumbrance is removed—the sovereignty of the earth becomes our Lord's and His Messiah's for the eons of the eons (11<sup>15</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> *Lambkin*, the diminutive form, is used to distinguish it from the usual word lamb (Jn.1<sup>29</sup>, 36 Ac.8<sup>32</sup> 1 Pt.1<sup>19</sup>). It is used only once elsewhere (Jn.21<sup>15</sup>), in contrast to a full grown sheep. This tender and delicate form adds much to the loving pathos of this prophecy. The utter weakness of a very young Lamb is in striking antithesis to His character as the Lion and to the mighty acts which He performs as a result of His suffering and death. It is in beautiful accord with the new name of His wife, who is now called the *bride*. Youth is renewed in resurrection.

<sup>8</sup> The ancient "harp" was shaped like the lyre and was used in prophecy (1 Sa.10<sup>5</sup> 1 Chr.25<sup>1</sup>) and thanks and praise (1 Chr.25<sup>3</sup> Ps.92<sup>3-4</sup> 149<sup>3</sup>), which are seen in this new song which they sing.

<sup>9</sup> The prayers of the saints may be summed up in one word: "Thy kingdom come!" (Mt.6<sup>10</sup>). How fit that these should find remembrance when He is about to fulfill their request!

<sup>9</sup> The elders and animals are *bought*, not redeemed. They celebrate Israel's deliverance. The failure to note this distinction and the consequent attempt to reconcile the two parts of this song, has led to much confusion in the manuscripts.

## Throne Section—The Seals

<sup>13</sup> It has been suggested that the Syriac version preserves the true reading here. After "blessing" it goes right on and gives every creature to the Lambkin, rather than getting praise from them, thus (combined with Vaticanus 'b'):

*And honor and glory and blessing  
And every creature which is in heaven  
And on the earth and underneath the earth  
And on the sea and all [those] in them!"*

And I hear all [messengers] saying,  
"To Him Who is sitting on the throne—  
To the Lambkin—  
Be blessing and honor and glory and might  
For the eons of the eons!"

<sup>1</sup> The seals fall into two groups. The first are "the beginning of travail" (Mt.24<sup>8</sup>). Then follows "the time of Jacob's trouble" such as has not been from the beginning of creation and never shall be again (Mt.24<sup>21</sup>Mk.13<sup>19</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> The first four seals correspond with the opening words of our Lord's address on the Mount of Olives (Mt.24-25 Mk.13 Lu.21<sup>33</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> Compare Mt.24<sup>5</sup>. The false messiah comes forth on a white horse after the manner of the real Messiah.

<sup>2</sup> The horse is prepared against the "day of battle" (Prov.21<sup>31</sup> cf. Job 39<sup>19-25</sup>). Its absence denotes peace (Zech. 9<sup>10</sup>10<sup>3</sup>). They were not in common use in the land of Israel. The king was forbidden to multiply horses (Deut.17<sup>16</sup>). They were used chiefly as cavalry and for drawing chariots.

<sup>2</sup> The bow is a symbol of distant warfare. It is probable that these four seals describe the time when the great western nondescript monster (Dan.7<sup>7</sup>) tramples upon and devours the three eastern beasts (cf.13<sup>1</sup>). This will provoke wars all over the earth.

<sup>3</sup> Compare Mt.24<sup>7</sup>. Whole nations will rise against other nations. Universal conscription of man-power and all industries will make war a much more terrible experience than in the past.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Mt.24<sup>7</sup>, "There shall be famines."

The Greek word *zugon* was used of two different Hebrew words: *ol*, a yoke, and *maznim*, balances, scales (Lev.19<sup>36</sup> Job 31<sup>6</sup> Dan.5<sup>27</sup> Chaldees). It may mean either a yoke or a pair of balances, according to the context. Here it seems to stand for the weighing of food in time of famine. Thus Ezekiel was given ten ounces of food and a pint of water each day (Eze.4<sup>9-12</sup>).

## Throne Section—The Seals

<sup>6</sup> A chenix is supposed to be the daily ration for one person. A denarius was the daily wage of a laborer (Mt.20<sup>2-13</sup>). Hence a day's labor will barely suffice to buy enough food to exist.

<sup>8</sup> The fourth horse is the ghastly greenish tinge of young or sickly vegetation.

<sup>8</sup> The Unseen is, literally, the *Unperceived*, or Imperceptible. It corresponds with the Hebrew *sheol* (*shaul*), from *shal*, to ask. The unseen powers of evil which come before us in this scroll, the dragon and its messengers (12<sup>3,4</sup>), are called "the gates of the unseen" (Mt.16<sup>18</sup>) because the rulers of an eastern city sat in its gate.

<sup>8</sup> To kill...with death (*thanatos*). This Greek word stands for two Hebrew words, one of which is *dbar*, plague. In the LXX famine and plague are joined nine times (1 Ki.8<sup>37</sup> 2 Chr.20<sup>9</sup> Jer.21<sup>7,9</sup>24<sup>10</sup>44<sup>13</sup>Eze.6<sup>11</sup>7<sup>15,16</sup>), in all of which they translate "plague" by "death". We also speak of the "black death".

<sup>9</sup> The soul is the seat of sensation. As the spirit is associated with the breath and the body with the soil, so the soul (not the life) is in the blood (Gen.9<sup>4</sup>, Lev.17<sup>11,14,14</sup>). Christ poured out His soul unto death. It represents the suffering and anguish which He endured. The blood of the sin offering was poured out at the foundation of the altar (Lev.4<sup>7</sup>). In Solomon's temple there was a vast pit under the altar to receive the blood of the sacrifices. Abel's blood cried from the ground, where it had been poured. So these martyrs are accounted by God as sacrifices on the altar. Their sensations of suffering called for vengeance on those who had sacrificed them because of their testimony. This event marks the middle of Daniel's seventieth heptad.

Compare Mt.24<sup>9</sup>. These martyrs are mentioned often (2<sup>10</sup>12<sup>10,11</sup>20<sup>4</sup>).

<sup>10</sup> We bless those who persecute us (Ro.12<sup>14</sup>). In the days of the seals the "acceptable year" will have given place to "the day of vengeance" (Isa.61<sup>2</sup>Lu. 4<sup>18,19</sup>). The parable of the importunate widow (Lu.18<sup>1-8</sup>) is applicable at this time.

"For He will avenge the blood of His servants,  
And will return vengeance to His foes"  
(Deut.32<sup>43</sup>).

*Throne Section—The 144,000*

12 Compare Mt.24<sup>29</sup>.

12 This cataclysm affects heaven as well as earth. There will be many quakes at the time of the end (8<sup>5</sup>11<sup>13</sup>, 16<sup>18</sup>). Compare Hag.2<sup>6,7</sup> and Heb.12<sup>26</sup>. See also Hag.2<sup>21</sup>Zech.14<sup>4,5</sup>.

13 Figs which form in the winter are shaded so that they fail to mature and are easily shaken off in the spring. This is true also of figs without sufficient moisture or which are not fertilized. They wither and fall at the slightest shock. Figuratively the fig tree stands for government.

12 Before the great and terrible day of Jehovah comes manifestly "The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood" (Joel 2<sup>31</sup>Ac.2<sup>20</sup>). Compare Isa.21<sup>0</sup>, 11<sup>13</sup>6-12 24<sup>20</sup>-23 34<sup>4</sup>.

16 Our Lord quoted Hos.10<sup>8</sup> in referring to this time (Lu.23<sup>30</sup>). Compare Joel 2<sup>10,11,30,31</sup>3<sup>5</sup>.

17 See Mt.24<sup>30</sup>. The Son of Mankind appears immediately after the great convulsion. This seal takes us up to His advent, the same point we will reach under the seventh trumpet (11<sup>15</sup>). The following visions are a review of the period we have already traversed, filling in details and treating it from various viewpoints.

17 Two classes will be able to stand: the 144,000 and the vast multitude.

1 The four winds. Compare Mt.24<sup>31</sup> Dan.7<sup>28</sup>91<sup>14</sup>Jer.49<sup>36</sup>.

3 The wild beast's followers have the symbol of its name on their foreheads (13<sup>16</sup>); so these have His Father's name on their foreheads (14<sup>1</sup>).

4 Twelve is the number of government and the kingdom. There were twelve patriarchs, twelve tribes, etc. The Lord chose twelve commissioners who will rule the twelve tribes. The twelve times twelve thousand sealed will administer the kingdom. Here they are seen as slaves. Later they are seen as worshipers. Just as Jehovah reserved seven thousand for Himself in Ahab's days (1 Ki.19<sup>18</sup>), so He keeps these for Himself during this judgment era. Just as 1000 were taken from each tribe to go against the Midianites and none were lacking at the close (Nu.31<sup>49</sup>), so with this chosen company. The full 144,000 will enter the kingdom unscathed.

*Throne Section—The Vast Multitude*

7-8 Levi and Joseph appear here as tribes in place of Dan and Ephraim, who are "blotted out" because they introduced idolatry into Israel. Jehovah threatened to blot out the name of any tribe that served other gods and worshiped them (Deut.29<sup>18-26</sup>). The accounts of their apostasy will be found in Judg.18, 1 Ki.12<sup>28-30</sup>. Ephraim, later, was joined to his idols (Hos.4<sup>17</sup>). They will, however, be restored to their allotment in the land (Eze.48) when the kingdom comes. But none of these are protected by God's seal during this time of affliction.

9 Palm branches were used in celebrating the feast of tabernacles (Lev. 23<sup>40</sup>). It was a sign that they had come into the land. Here it is the assurance of entrance into the kingdom. The 144,000 are the first fruits (14<sup>4</sup>). These correspond to the feast of ingathering after the full harvest (Lev. 23<sup>39</sup>). The fact that they come out of every nation and all tribes and peoples and languages does not forbid their being Israelites, for Jews are scattered among all the peoples of the earth. The fact that they keep this feast is sufficient evidence that they, like the 144,000, are out of the sons of Israel. These are those of the dispersion who conquer through the blood of the Lambkin (7<sup>14</sup>12<sup>11</sup>) and do not love their souls until death. They are the martyrs needed to complete those slain before the great affliction (6<sup>11</sup>) seen under the altar under the fifth seal.

14 Literal washing under the law was always in water, not in blood (Lev.11<sup>25</sup> Nu.8<sup>21</sup>). The literal sense of this passage is that they cleansed themselves by their behavior, and faith in the sufferings of the One Sacrifice fitted them for God's presence. Such mingling of deeds and faith can have no place in this day of *grace*. Grace refuses to be mixed with deeds without losing its essential character (Ro.4<sup>11</sup>6). God will deal differently in the coming era of vengeance.

14 This great affliction was foretold by our Lord (Mt.24<sup>21</sup>). It will be unexampled in the annals of the race. It will be shortened, or not even the elect would be saved. It is essentially an anti-Semitic outbreak on the part of the nations of the earth, in a last attempt to wipe out the name of Jehovah from the earth.

*Throne Section—The Trumpets*

15 The fact that they perform priestly functions shows that they are of the priest nation. No other nation will have access to the temple (Ex.19<sup>e</sup> 1 Pt. 2<sup>o</sup> Un.1<sup>o</sup>).

16 This description of millennial blessing is in accord with many passages in the prophets, notably the description of Jerusalem by Isaiah (45<sup>e</sup>).

1 The hush is occasioned by the intense expectation which accompanies this, the last seal, just as the crowd who clamored for Paul's death hushed when he was about to speak (Ac.21<sup>40</sup>). Hitherto there have been cries for vengeance and bursts of praise, but now the crisis has come and all hold their breath, as it were, to see the outcome. The delay shows that the inflictions are deliberate, not vindictive.

2 The trumpet was sounded in Israel in case of war (Nu.10<sup>o</sup>). This was done by Ehud (Jud.3<sup>27</sup>) and Gideon (Jud.6<sup>34</sup> 7<sup>8,18</sup>) and Saul (1 Sa.13<sup>8</sup>). Zephaniah (1<sup>14-16</sup>) calls the day of Jehovah a "day of trumpet and shouting". Joel says (2<sup>1</sup>) "Blow a trumpet . . . for the day of Jehovah comes". The trumpet judgments are the divine response to the prayers of the souls under the altar (6<sup>o</sup>).

2 The seven messengers may be identical with the seven who pour out the seven bowls (15<sup>1</sup>), and the seven spirits before the throne (1<sup>4</sup>), one of whom is Gabriel (Lu.1<sup>19</sup>).

3 The golden altar is distinct from the brazen altar of the fifth seal, which was in front of the temple and tabernacle. This altar was in the holy place, before the curtain, behind which was the ark and mercy seat, which was Jehovah's throne (Ex.30<sup>e</sup> 40<sup>5,26</sup>).

5 Compare the action of the messenger with the tenth of Ezekiel (10<sup>5,8</sup>), where fire is taken from between the Cherubim and strewn over Jerusalem in token of its doom.

7 Blood and fire are signs of the day of the Lord (Joel 2<sup>30</sup>). One of the plagues of Egypt was sounds and hail, and fire (Ex.9<sup>23-25</sup>). This will be repeated on a grander scale. Compare Joel 1<sup>19</sup>. We have no more reason to make the effects of the Trumpets figurative than the effect of Moses' rod in Egypt. A greater One than Moses is here.

*Throne Section—The Trumpets*

8 This burning mountain may be a volcano, for this time is characterized by seismic disturbances of unparalleled violence (Ex.7<sup>20,21</sup> Ps.78<sup>44</sup> 105<sup>20</sup> Hos.4<sup>3</sup> Isa.2<sup>16</sup>).

9 If we believe that the river of Egypt was turned into blood and the fish in the river died (Ex.7<sup>20,21</sup>) when Moses smote the waters, what reason is there why we should not look for a similar judgment in Jehovah's day? (Ps.78<sup>44</sup> 105<sup>20</sup>). But under no circumstances may these judgments be found in this day of grace.

10 The "star" seems to be a gaseous comet which will be readily absorbed by water. Absinthin, a yellow, crystalline compound, is the bitter principle of wormwood, which is highly poisonous when taken in large doses.

12 Signs in the sun, moon, and constellations precede the coming of the Son of Mankind (Lu.21<sup>25</sup>), though the usual reference is to the final cataclysm (6<sup>12</sup>). Compare Amos 8<sup>o</sup> Jer.4<sup>23</sup>.

13 The vulture is noted for its swiftness (Deut.28<sup>40</sup> Jer.4<sup>13</sup> Hab.1<sup>8</sup>). Unlike the eagle, it goes in company, seldom alone. Hence the significance of *one* vulture. It feeds on the carcasses of the dead, and is foraging for prey.

## THE WOE TRUMPETS

The last three trumpets, because of the unexampled and terrible nature of their inflictions, are called the three woes.

1 The abyss is a vast waste of waters which were on the surface of the earth after the cataclysm of Gen.1<sup>2</sup>, but which later subsided into its bowels, to emerge once more at the deluge (Gen. 7<sup>1182</sup>) and to recede again afterwards. It is called the abyss (depth) reclining under (Gen.49<sup>25</sup> Deut.33<sup>13</sup>). It is the subterranean source of springs (Deut.8<sup>7</sup> Prov.8<sup>28</sup>). In the beginning there was no abyss (Prov.8<sup>24</sup>). It occurs in Lu.8<sup>31</sup> Ro.10<sup>7</sup> Un.9<sup>1,2,11</sup> 11<sup>7</sup> 17<sup>8</sup> 20<sup>1,3</sup>. It plays a prominent part in this Unveiling, for the wild beast ascends out of the abyss (11<sup>717</sup>) and Satan is imprisoned there during the thousand years.

1 The "well" is not a mere pit but is used of Jacob's well from which water is still drawn. This is in line with the meaning of abyss.

*Throne Section—The Locusts*

<sup>3</sup> The detailed description of these locusts forbids our taking them in any way but as literal creatures just as they are described. Their time limit is the same as natural locusts—five months—but they differ from them in many ways. Common locusts are harmless to mankind. They devour only the vegetation (Ex.10<sup>12</sup>). These are designed to torment mankind without killing them, yet do no damage to the grass or the herbs or the trees.

They are a fourfold combination of the horse, the lion, the scorpion and the human. They are swift as horses, terrible as lions, intelligent as human beings and malignant as scorpions. It will be a far more terrible scourge than anything which has preceded it. There is good reason for calling it a woe!

Locusts have no king over them (Prov.30<sup>27</sup>), but these are the subjects of the messenger of the abyss. His name is given in both Greek and Hebrew. Both Apollyon and Abaddon signify "Destroyer".

Defensively they are armed with iron cuirasses, an armor covering the entire trunk with both breast and back plates. Their offensive power lies in their tails, which are like scorpions. The sting of the scorpion is very painful, much more so than that of the hornet. Men have been known to die of its effects.

Just as Satan was licensed to torment Job, but forbidden to take his life, so these locusts are limited to their work of torment and cannot take life. Their sting is so terrible, however, that the votaries of the wild beast would be glad to die, if they could, to escape it.

All of this is in direct contrast and actual opposition to God's dealings in the present economy of grace. Hence it is worse than futile to seek any fulfillment in the history of the past. Such scenes as this can come only once in the history of the race and must necessarily be of brief duration. Those who have God's seal will escape.

The locusts in the introduction to Joel's prophecy represent the four Assyrian invasions which devastated the land in the four generations referred to. Two of these, involving Judah, are the immediate subjects of Joel's prophecy.

*Throne Section—The Horses*

## THE SECOND WOE

The second woe is even more terrible than the first and, like it, cannot be understood otherwise than literally.

<sup>14</sup> These are probably the messengers who were thrust into the gloomy caverns of Tartarus, to be kept for chastening judging (2 Pet. 2<sup>4</sup>), or, as Jude says, kept in imperceptible [not "everlasting"] bonds under gloom for the judging of the great day (6<sup>1</sup>). Now that the specific hour and day and month and year has come, they are sent about their work of killing a third of mankind. The detailed description of these creatures is necessary because no one has ever seen such monsters. It is difficult to imagine two hundred million cavalry such as these, in which the horses themselves are provided with death-dealing mouths and tails. This is certainly one of the marvels "which are not created in all the earth, nor in all the nations" (Ex.34<sup>10</sup>).

None of men's instruments of destruction seem to compare with these. They combine modern methods of warfare, such as flame projectors and poison gas, with the serpent's sting.

Preceding judgments will have reduced the population of the earth by more than one fourth (6<sup>8</sup> 8<sup>11</sup>). We have no way of knowing how many will be alive at the time when death is fleeing from mankind (9<sup>6</sup>). A third of these will be killed by "the troops of cavalry."

<sup>17</sup> Amethystine, the ancient hyacinth, corresponds to our amethyst, a transparent, violet colored gem, or our sapphire, of purple hue. The context here suggests the amethyst.

<sup>17</sup> Sulphur was much used as a purifier in the religious rites of the nations, hence its name in the Greek is "divine". Fire and sulphur were regarded as the divine lustrations or purifying agents.

<sup>20</sup> That such a judgment should not change the minds of those who are spared seems incredible. Yet such is man. The most terrible trials but harden his heart instead of producing repentance. They continue as before in their idolatry and sin. We may learn from this that men do not change their minds from compulsion or fear, even in the proclamation of the kingdom. This will be accomplished by milder means.



*Throne Section—The Seven Thunders*

1 The symbol of the rainbow suggests the covenant of God with creation.

2 The planting of the messenger's feet on the sea and on the land is a token of possession. "Every place on which the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours" (Deut.11<sup>24</sup>Josh. 13<sup>3</sup>).

The opened scroll shows that the incumbrance has been lifted, just as the sealed scroll was a sign of the bond which burdened it. Were it not for the fact that this opened scroll is, according to the best readings, always called a *little scroll* (*biblaridion*) while the closed scroll was the usual diminutive (*biblion*), we would be tempted to identify these two scrolls. It seems best to take this as a still smaller scroll which deals with the deliverance of Israel as the larger scroll dealt with the whole earth. It is evident from the messenger's acts and his words that the earth and the sea are no longer under bond, and that there will be no further delay in ejecting the usurpers out of the sovereignty which is Christ's.

3 Bellowing—not roaring after its prey (1 Pt.5<sup>8</sup>), but the sound lions use when calling to one another. Applied to cattle this word is used for their lowing.

3 Besides the seven thunders here introduced, thunder is mentioned seven times, three before and four after these special seven. Thrice it describes the voice of one speaking: one of the four animals saying *Come!* (6<sup>1</sup>), the song of the 144,000 (14<sup>2</sup>), and (19<sup>6</sup>) the voices of God's slaves saying "*Hallelujah! for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns!*" Four times it is associated with voices and lightnings. They issue out of the throne (4<sup>5</sup>), follow the casting of the thurible into the earth (8<sup>5</sup>), the opening of the temple (11<sup>19</sup>), and the pouring out of the seventh bowl into the air (16<sup>18</sup>). As thunder is the audible effect of that which we see as lightning, and always follows it, the thunders probably record the effect of the seven final lightning strokes, or bowls. This brings us to the coming of the kingdom. The next vision is retrospective, going back to the middle of Daniel's seventieth heptad.

6 The delay commences under the fifth seal (6<sup>11</sup>).

*Throne Section—The Two Witnesses*

7 Surely Adonai Jehovah will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets (Amos 3<sup>7</sup>).

9 Compare this action with Eze.29<sup>33-14</sup>.

9 The eating of the scroll, corresponding to the digesting of its contents, was very sweet to John, for it assured the ejection of the usurpers and the establishment of the kingdom. But it also involved much more bitter judgment which he had not yet apprehended.

11 Concerning, literally on (Lu12<sup>52-53</sup>).

1 The rod or *mace* is the shepherd's means of defense against the sheep's enemies. The crook is for the sheep. It is the symbol of power and as such may be called a sceptre (Heb.18<sup>8</sup>). To shepherd with an iron club will be the reward of the conqueror in Thyatira (22<sup>7</sup>), the place of the male son (12<sup>5</sup>), and the White Horse Rider (19<sup>15</sup>). To measure with a mace is significant of the fact that Israel's Shepherd will maintain these measurements by force. The sheep will be safe within them.

1 The temple seems to be a sanctuary for the faithful. The period of forty-two months (measured by the moon, a symbol of the powers of darkness, 12<sup>1</sup>) measures the career of the "wild beast" (13<sup>5</sup>). The same length of time expressed in days (measured by the sun, a symbol of God's glory, 12<sup>1</sup>) marks the duration of the ministry of the two witnesses (11<sup>3</sup>) and the period during which the star-crowned woman is nourished in the wilderness (12<sup>6</sup>). The same period is called, after the Hebrew of Dan. 12<sup>7</sup>, "a season, seasons, and half a season" (12<sup>14</sup>). This period is probably the last half of Daniel's seventieth heptad (Dan.9<sup>27</sup>). The prince that shall come makes a treaty with the majority of the Jews, but breaks it after three and a half years, causing the sacrifice and gift offering to cease, leaving the period here spoken of, in which he insists that all worship must be directed to him.

It appears from this that the worship of Jehovah will be stamped out of the earth except in the temple in Jerusalem, which will be preserved with divine power, and in the wilderness, where the woman (the faithful inhabitants of Jerusalem) is sustained by miraculous means.

### Throne Section—The Two Witnesses

4 The two olive trees remind us of Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel (Zech.3-4), who witnessed for Jehovah in a former apostasy.

The ministry of the two witnesses has much in common with the ministry of Elijah. Both cause a great drought for three and a half years (1 Ki.17<sup>1</sup>). Both kill their enemies by miraculous fire. The prophet Malachi predicts this ministry (4<sup>5</sup>): "*Lo! I send you Elijah the prophet before the great and fearful day of Jehovah comes.*" John the baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, but they did not receive him (Mt.17<sup>10-13</sup> 11<sup>14</sup> Lu. 11<sup>7</sup>), hence he is still to come as was foretold. As he did not die, but was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind (2 Ki.2<sup>11</sup>), and as he appeared with Moses on the Mount, speaking of the Lord's exodus which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem (Lu.9<sup>30,31</sup>), he would make an excellent witness to the Lord's life and death. Some think that Moses, because his place of burial is unknown (cf. Jude<sup>9</sup>) and because he, too, appeared on the mount, is the other witness. Others prefer Enoch (Gen.5<sup>24</sup>).

6 These judgments are just and salutary, for men reject the testimony to the blood of Christ and the blessing that it brings. They are taught that their souls depend upon the abiding efficacy of His death.

7 Just as the two witnesses will be invulnerable until their testimony is complete, so it is with every slave who is doing God's will. Nothing in heaven or on earth can hinder the witness which has God back of it. And when it is finished the enemies of God will be confounded even in their death.

11 The short space of time—three and a half days—allowed for the news of the death of the two witnesses to travel over the earth, besides giving time for them to celebrate and send gifts, would seem to be a great difficulty to early students of this prophecy. It would take months and years to do this a century ago. Yet we have come to a time when this would be a matter of course. Everything will move with incredible swiftness when the judgments of God are in the earth. Let us not doubt God or judge His Word by our own ignorance.

### Throne Section—The Kingdom Comes

13 This earthquake, coming so near the end of the judgment period, may be a precursor of the one under the seventh bowl (16<sup>18</sup>). It seems to affect Jerusalem principally—the city in which the two witnesses testify and where they will be killed.

15 The details of the events under the seventh trumpet are not given here, but in connection with the Temple Section. That there is some terrible infiction is certain, for it is the worst of the woes. We suggest that it includes the bowls (15<sup>7</sup>) and the battle of the great day when the armies of the entire earth are arrayed against Jerusalem and are slain by the Rider on the White Horse (19<sup>11-17</sup>). It certainly ends with His coming in glory and taking over the governments of earth.

15 This completes the Throne Section. *Christ is King! He reigns!* This brings us to the era of the resurrection and the thousand years, which is detailed in the early part of the twentieth chapter.

18 The "judgment of the dead" here refers to the former resurrection and the awards given to those who have lost their lives for His sake. It corresponds with the word "judgment is granted them" (20<sup>4</sup>).

## THE TEMPLE SECTION

### CHRIST AS PRIEST

The "opening" of the temple (4<sup>1</sup> note), giving a view of the covenant, is the key to the first division of the Temple Section (11<sup>19-154</sup>). The covenant and the divine ritual are the exclusive prerogatives of one nation, Israel (Ro.9<sup>4</sup>, etc.). Jehovah remembers His covenant with them, to fulfill it. In awful contrast with this is the opening of the second division of the Temple Section (15<sup>5</sup>). There the tabernacle of the testimony is opened and the law is exposed. The first division is filled with blessing for the faithful in Israel, the second with terrible judgments for those of them who apostatize. This division centers around the faithful city Jerusalem; the next division is much concerned with unfaithful Babylon.

This section gives us the religious aspect of judgment, as viewed from the standpoint of the temple. Just as the books of Kings and Chronicles present

*Temple Section—The Male Son*

the same historical events from two sides, Kings from the human, Chronicles from the divine, so this section reviews the period which has already been presented in its relation to the throne. These two sections correspond to the two great missions of the chosen nation (Ex.19<sup>6</sup>). They were to be a royal priesthood (1 Pt.2<sup>9</sup>). The Throne Section gives them the sovereignty of the nations. This section recovers their priestly functions. In that they will rule the nations *for* Jehovah: in this they bring them *to* Jehovah. The theme is no longer the political redemption of the earth. The dragon, the wild beast and the false prophet demand *divine* honors. They want *worship*. This is refused by the faithful in Israel. The apostates, especially those in Babylon, with all the rest of mankind, join the great confederation to blot out the worship of Jehovah from the face of the earth.

<sup>1</sup> This woman is in contrast with the false woman, the city of Babylon (18), hence is a sign of the faithful city of Jerusalem. Clothed with the sun indicates the possession of authority to rule in the day of Jehovah. The law, which reflects God's glory and controls her walk, is under her feet. The twelve stars signify the twelve apostles, who will administer the kingdom. Her condition is like that of the nation in Isa. 26<sup>17</sup>. Unparalleled persecution will be her portion. This is directed especially against a select company out of her, which seems to correspond to the 144,000 who were sealed in the previous section (7<sup>3</sup>). They seem to have a safe asylum in the temple (11<sup>1</sup>) on Mount Zion (14<sup>1</sup>) while the woman flees into the wilderness. They are celibates (14<sup>4</sup>), hence are called *male* sons.

<sup>3</sup> The dragon is explained as Satan. It is a composite figure, like the Lamb-kin (5<sup>6</sup>), the seven heads and ten horns denoting subordinate powers which are a part of its organization. They are the real powers behind the great empire of the end, for, when the beast arises, it, too, has seven heads and ten horns, the counterpart of the dragon.

<sup>6</sup> The times of God's saints are measured by the *sun*—twelve hundred sixty *days*. The same period, when concerned with the wild beast is measured by the *moon*—forty-two *months*.

*Temple Section—The Dragon and its Messengers*

<sup>7</sup> When the dragon attacks Jerusalem it comes into conflict with Michael, one of the chief princes (Dan.10<sup>13</sup>), who is Israel's prince (Dan.10<sup>21</sup>) in God's government. Prince Michael and his messengers eject the dragon and its messengers out of heaven.

<sup>9</sup> Satan is now in heaven (Job 1<sup>6</sup> Eph. 6<sup>12</sup>) and will not be ejected until about the middle of Daniel's seventieth week.

<sup>9</sup> Satan is Hebrew, meaning *adversary*. This is a common term applied to the angels of Jehovah (Nu.22<sup>22,32</sup>), David (1 Sa.29<sup>4</sup>), the sons of Zeruiah (2 Sa.19<sup>22</sup>), etc. Later, when used in its untranslated form in Greek, it always seems to refer to the personality whose appellations are gathered together in this passage.

<sup>10</sup> Michael's victory over the dragon secures the final overthrow of its power, though it continues for a short period, concentrated on the earth. Those still on the earth are warned that the fury of the Adversary will be bitter because brief.

<sup>13</sup> Compare Mt.24<sup>16</sup>. Our Lord counsels them to flee into the mountains of Judea, which are a wilderness, when they see the abomination of desolation (Dan.9<sup>27</sup>) standing in the holy place. This fixes the time as the middle of the last heptad. The season and seasons and half a season (counted by harvests, as their sustenance is in question) corresponds to the last half of the seventieth heptad.

<sup>14</sup> The great griffon vulture of Palestine has enormous strength and swiftness of wing. Unlike the eagle, it is bald (Mic.1<sup>16</sup>), and it congregates in flocks. It was held in highest esteem by the ancients. Assyria and Persia and Rome adopted it for their ensign. This has been followed by some modern nations.

The aptness of this figure lies in the fact that these vultures inhabit the inaccessible cliffs (Jer.49<sup>16</sup>) where no human hand can touch them. Thus the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem will find an asylum in the impenetrable fastnesses which abound in the vast mountainous wilderness not many miles from the city. There they will be sheltered and sustained until their Messiah is manifested in power.

*Temple Section—The Wild Beast*

*Temple Section—The Second Wild Beast*

1 The dragon, not John, was stationed so as to bring up the wild beast.

the saints are warned not to commit any acts of violence during this period. They are exhorted to endure to the end.

1 The beast from the sea (which is the equivalent of the abyss) has hitherto enacted the role of a deceiver and is known as the false christ (Mt.24<sup>5</sup> cf. Un.61,<sup>2</sup>) and the white horse rider. That was in the *political* sphere. This is the *religious* section. Here the figure is a wild beast and corresponds to the antichrist.

11 The second wild beast emphasizes the religious character of the first. It is called a *prophet* (16<sup>13</sup>), and makes every effort to get *worship* for the beast. The calling down of fire from heaven was the test of deity in Elijah's day: "the God Who answers by fire, He is God" (1Ki.18<sup>24</sup>). Hence this will be a "strong delusion" (2 Th.2<sup>11</sup>) like the giving of life to the image.

The wild beast is a composite of the four beasts of the seventh of Daniel:

There is a marked similarity between the career of the first beast and Christ. As the Lord was crucified and raised again, so the wounded head descends into the abyss and is recalled to life by the dragon. Before that he will be a deceiver. The second beast is also patterned after Christ, for it points to the first, even as Christ points to the Father.

1. Lion.....	1 heads	0 horns
2. Bear .....	1 "	0 "
3. Leopard .....	4 "	0 "
4. Nondescript ...	1 "	10 "
<hr/>		
The Wild Beast..	7 "	10 "

Here we have the same wild beasts seen by Daniel after the nondescript has devoured the other three.

The Chaldee *k'd'm*, before, refers to position, not time (Dan.7<sup>7,10</sup>), and may have the sense of east as in Hebrew. In that case the ten-horned beast is a confederacy of western powers and the other three beasts are eastern powers.

15 Spirit is the source of life. "The spirit is that which is vivifying" (Jn. 6<sup>63</sup>). So that, giving spirit to the image results in its manifesting signs of life. This is man's poor imitation of Christ, Who is the Image of God (Col. 1<sup>15</sup>). But God's Anointed was given God's Spirit, not only to speak, as this image, but to give life. This image cannot give life, but causes all who do not bow to it to be killed. After centuries of civilization and culture and religion, mankind will actually descend to the worship of an image because it has miraculous powers!

It will be noted that *worship* rather than rule is the dominant note here. These beasts bring before us kingdoms and confederacies bound together by a common religion. The western beast will be confederate Christendom. The ten horns will be ten Christian military powers. There are, in the East, three great religions, Brahmanism in India, Buddhism in Japan and China, Islamism or Mohammedanism in the Arab world and elsewhere. All these will form three great eastern combinations which will be, in time, conquered by Christendom, and absorbed into the one great world religion which will worship the dragon and the wild beast. Thus a confederacy of the whole world's religious powers will be concentrated against the few Jews who remain faithful to Jehovah.

16 The "mark" of the wild beast will be the emblem or flag or symbol of the world confederation. It must be worn, or be branded, in a most conspicuous place so that any one may be able to tell at a glance if any one is not a worshiper of the beast. Such a mark or badge has often been used to indicate political or religious affiliations, and usually consists of some appropriate and significant design expressive of the character or purpose of the unity which it represents. As all who belong to the body of Christ will be in heaven by this time, all the world will gladly receive this badge as the pledge of their allegiance to the world federation of religion, except the few Jews who will be faithful to Jehovah.

7 This world empire will not be limited to any ancient boundaries but will include every tribe and people and language and nation—all who dwell on the earth—not only the Roman empire.

10 As the beast is to conquer the saints during its period of forty-two months,

*Temple Section—The 144,000*

18 All will be obliged to have one of three marks to indicate their worship of the wild beast: either its symbol, its name, or its number. The number, we are told, is the number of humanity. This has nothing to do with its name. The number seven, which is used throughout this scroll, is significant of sufficiency, completion. This is its meaning in Hebrew. The number six comes one short of this. It is significant of insufficiency. This entire era is marked by man's supreme attempt to attain perfection apart from God. All his achievements fall short of the divine standard. He accomplishes the federation of mankind—except a few Jews. He unites all the world under one religion—except a handful in Judea. He conquers all who oppose—except Christ. In everything humanity falls one step short of its goal. Hence its number is 666. This is the summit of all man's efforts.

1 This is the same company of 144,000 who are sealed in the Throne Section (73-8). There they are *slaves*, here they are *worshippers*, standing on Mount Zion, where the temple is. The seal on their foreheads (78), the names of the Father and the Lambkin, take the place of the name of the wild beast (1317), which the unfaithful receive. This is the time of the harvest and these are the first fruits (Lev.2310) before the full harvest, which is represented by the vast multitude (79). They will be, literally, celibates, whose worship is in marked contrast to the sensuous ritual which will characterize the worship of the wild beast.

2 The eonian evangel is not for this day. It is for the hours of judgment. In the midst of wrath He remembers mercy. But it does not call upon them to *believe*, as the gospel does today, for that is adapted to a time of undiluted grace (Ro.416). It is not even *repent*, for that is the door into the kingdom before the hour of judgment has struck (Ac.238). It is *fear*—fear for God in His most elemental character as the Creator. It is a demand that no one be worshiped but the One Who created the universe. This is His answer to the demands of the false prophet that all worship the wild beast and the dragon (cf. Ac.1724-31).

3 This notation fixes the time of Babylon's overthrow, which is greatly

*The Temple Section—The Emblem of the Wild Beast*

expanded in the next division of this section, where God deals particularly with the apostates of the chosen nation. It falls just before the final judgments which usher in the priestly kingdom. This makes it clear that the Harvest and the Vintage follow Babylon's destruction and that, when we take up the next division of the Temple Section we must go back in time to a period prior to these announcements.

10 This so-called "cup of malediction" (Ps. 758 608 Isa. 5117-23), was wine fortified with myrrh, frankincense or some other bitter drug. In this case it is not tempered with water (186 cf Mt. 2734 Mk. 1523).

11 The torment spoken of in this prophecy is of various lengths and limited to specific classes. All of mankind who have not the seal of God on their foreheads will be tormented *five months* by the locusts, under the fifth trumpet (95). Satan and the wild beast and the false prophet will be tormented (2010). The *fumes* of the torment of those here spoken of last for the eons of the eons. These are the supreme sinners of mankind, hence shall be tormented until they die (162,8,9 183), some of them by the blade (1921).

13 "Happy are the dead who are dying in the Lord *henceforth*" can only be applied to this particular crisis. The reason is clear. No one, unless especially protected by God, can remain true to Him when they cannot buy or sell, or have any intercourse with their fellow men unless they have the emblem of the wild beast. It will mean certain death to accept the eonian evangel and worship the Creator.

## THE HARVEST

14 The One *like* a son of mankind is, most probably, Christ Himself, hence the words "son of mankind" do not refer to Him directly but indirectly, for He is *like* him.

The harvest is the result of the eonian evangel. The darnel has been gathered into bundles; now the wheat is to be gathered into His barn (Mt. 1330). This division of the Temple Section is based on the covenant with Israel, hence ends in the blessing of His people and the destruction of their enemies. These are accomplished in the Harvest and the Vintage.

## Temple Section—Harvest—Vintage

## THE VINTAGE

20 A stadium was 600 Greek feet, 625 Roman feet, or 125 paces, or one-eighth of a Roman mile. This is about 606¾ English feet. The race course at Olympia was this length. From this standard length, it became the usual name for a race course (1 Co.9<sup>24</sup>).

From Harmageddon down through the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3<sup>1,2</sup>, 9-16) to Bozrah (Isa.34<sup>8-8</sup>631-6) is a line about this length. It is likened to an enormous trough for treading grapes such as was found in almost every vineyard in Palestine. The grapes were cast in and trodden with the feet, the juice running into the vat below.

The Vintage is referred to again in the next division, when the Rider on the white horse treads the wine trough of the furious indignation of God the Almighty (19<sup>15</sup>). Joel seems to fill in many details of this scene (Joel 3<sup>9,16</sup>). After a proclamation inviting the nations to battle in the valley of Jehoshaphat, the account proceeds:

"Send forth the sickle, for the harvest is ripe:  
Come, descend, for the wine trough is full,  
The vats run over;  
For their evil is much.  
Throngs, throngs in the vale of decision!  
For the day of Jehovah is near in the vale of decision!"

It is called The Vale of *Decision*, for here the controversy between Jehovah and the nations is finally decided.

Compare also Zeph.3<sup>8</sup>Isa.34<sup>1,8</sup>.

## THE SEVEN BOWLS

Before the seven bowls are poured out we are given a vision which is the counterpart of the souls under the altar (6<sup>9</sup>). They are bidden to rest until their number is completed. Here we have all those who suffer on account of their loyalty to God standing on a glassy sea. This is the laver. Only the altar and the laver stood in the temple court. Instead of cleansing, the *glassy* sea speaks of their permanent purity for resisting the worship of the wild beast and its image, and refusing to wear its emblem.

## Temple Section—The Bowls

3 That these are saints out of Israel is evident, for they sing the song of Moses (Deut.32<sup>1-43</sup>), which rehearses God's dealings with Israel throughout their history, and forms the ground upon which the judgment of the bowls is based. The song testifies against them. It vindicates God in pouring out the judgments upon them. To this they add the song of the Lambkin, which anticipates the results of His just awards.

5 The temple of the tent of the *testimony* must be carefully distinguished from the temple of God with the *covenant* in view. The covenant calls upon God to fulfill His obligations, which He does in the judgments of the Harvest and the Vintage. These are directed against the confederation of the nations who oppose the worship of Jehovah and the priesthood of His people. In this section the *testimony* or *law* is in view. These judgments are specially directed against the apostates of the nation, especially the city of Babylon.

7 The bowls were shallow basins used in the service of the temple. Before they are poured out those who are faithful in Israel have been killed or are in refuge. While they follow the same general course as the trumpets, being poured out upon the land, the sea, the water and the sun, they differ from them in intensity and character, corresponding to the different objects to be attained. The trumpets are usually limited in their effects to a third; the bowls seem to have no such limitation. The trumpets are a political measure and close with the sovereignty of the earth in the hands of Christ. The bowls are distinctly *religious*. They are poured out on the *worshippers* of the wild beast and on those who shed the blood of the *saints* and His *prophets*. The seven messengers who trumpet "stand before God" (8<sup>2</sup>). Another messenger is at the altar (8<sup>3</sup>). The seven messengers who have the bowls *come out of the temple*. A voice out of the temple bids them perform their duty. No worship is possible while these judgments continue.

There is no reason why these inflictions should not be as literal as the plagues of Egypt, which they resemble (Isa.11<sup>16</sup>).

2 Compare Ex.9<sup>8-11</sup>Job 2<sup>7</sup>Deut.28<sup>27</sup>.

*Temple Section—The Bowls*

3 This corresponds very closely with the second trumpet (8<sup>s</sup>). That was limited to a third and affected the ships. The blood here is "as if of a dead man."

4 The third trumpet (8<sup>10</sup>) affects a third of the rivers and springs in the same way as the third bowl. The first plague of Egypt (Ex.7<sup>17-21</sup>) is a limited sample of this very judgment.

5 "The messenger of the waters" gives us a glimpse into the divine economy. The various departments of nature seem to be under the guidance and control of special executives who are responsible for their operation. The messenger of the waters acquiesces in this infliction on the ground that the blood of God's witnesses whom they had slain demanded such a retribution. This is echoed by a voice from out of the altar, where the souls of the martyrs are waiting for this very action (6<sup>s</sup>). They call for vengeance on their enemies. This is right, in its place, but must not be imported into the present economy of God's grace. Our only recourse is to heap coals of fire on the heads of our enemies by returning good for their evil (Ro.12<sup>20</sup>).

8 The fourth bowl, like the fourth trumpet (8<sup>12</sup>) affects the sun, but in an opposite way. Then a third of the sun and the moon and the stars were eclipsed. Now the heat of the sun is greatly intensified. This is one of the signs in the sun foretold by our Lord (Lu.21<sup>25</sup>). This is the day that burns as an oven (Mal.4<sup>1</sup>) and its inhabitants are burned (Isa.24<sup>4,22,25</sup>). Yet they do not obey the evangel and repent (14<sup>7</sup>).

10 This infliction corresponds to the three days' plague of darkness in Egypt (Ex.10<sup>21-23</sup>). Our Lord predicted a total withdrawal of the light of the sun and moon (Mk.13<sup>24</sup>). Joel says that the sun should be turned into darkness (Joel 2<sup>31</sup> Ac.2<sup>20</sup>). Under the fifth trumpet the sun and air are darkened by the fumes out of the well of the abyss (9<sup>2</sup>).

12 In view of the reason given, the drying up of the Euphrates must be a literal event. Only so can it have any effect on the mobilization of the oriental armies. It is always best to interpret literally unless that is impossible. There is nothing contrary to fact here.

*The Temple Section—Harmageddon*

15 The best text reads "I am coming". The reference seems to be to the watchers in the temple at Jerusalem, in view of the great army coming against it. The inspector of the guard was wont to take away the cloak of any one found napping. Christ is *not* coming for us as a thief (1 Th.5<sup>4</sup>). He is coming with a shout (1 Th.4<sup>16</sup>).

16 Har Megiddon, the mountain district of Megiddo, overlooks the great plain of Esdraelon, about forty miles north of Jerusalem. Here Barak defeated the Canaanites (Jud.5<sup>19</sup>), Gideon the Midianites, and the Egyptians Josiah (2 Ki. 23<sup>29</sup>). There will be no battle of Armageddon. It is the place where the armies of the earth will mobilize for the battle with the Rider on the White Horse (19<sup>10</sup>). The battle line will extend from Esdraelon down to Bozrah, a distance of about 184 miles. The battle which follows is described later (19<sup>11-21</sup>) when the Rider on the White Horse mobilizes *His* heavenly army and fights them with the sword which issues out of His mouth. This battle is also referred to in the Vintage (14<sup>17-20</sup>), where the battle line is compared to a long winetrough and the blood to the juice of grapes.

18 Does not this imply that there have been such seismic disturbances before mankind was on the earth, thus confirming the facts of geology? And do not the very strata of the earth's surface prove the possibility of such upheavals? There have been violent local earthquakes during the tenancy of mankind, but this one will be far more destructive and terrible than any in the experience of the race hitherto.

19 This is the climax of all the climaxes in this scroll. It ends the seventh bowl which ends the seventh trumpet which ends the seventh seal. The great earthquake destroys all the cities of the earth except Jerusalem. This is divided into three parts. The destruction of Babylon is detailed in the following chapters.

21 This hail is like one of the plagues of Egypt (Ex.9<sup>18-26</sup>). The stones will weigh over eighty-five pounds each. The effect of the earthquake and the hail will be like the springing of a mine beneath and a bombardment from above. It will be terrific.

## The Temple Section—The Scarlet Woman

1 The following chapters (17-19<sup>s</sup>) are a detailed expansion of the announcement of Babylon's fall in both the first and second divisions of the Temple Section (14<sup>s</sup> 16<sup>19</sup>). We know the fact and the time; now we are told the reason and the circumstances which lead up to it.

3 The false woman is in contrast with faithful Jerusalem (12<sup>1</sup>). The true woman is arrayed with heavenly splendor, ready to take her place in the kingdom of God. The false is decked with earthly ornaments and is supported by the wild beast (13<sup>1</sup>), which is a composite of all the false religious powers of the world, organized and energized by Satan.

The secret consists in the fact that the unfaithful woman—apostate Israel—attains to world supremacy and blessing altogether apart from Jehovah or His Christ. By their own efforts the Jews have amassed untold wealth. When their capital is combined they will be able to dictate to any government on earth. Covetousness is idolatry. They worship wealth, and all the world has bowed down at the same shrine. The love of money leads to every other form of evil. It has been a fruitful source of earth's ills.

5 Babylon is the only city which has been the capital of a world empire in the past. Here Nebuchadnezzar had his capital, Medo-Persia made it theirs, and Alexander of Greece made it his after conquering the world. No other city has ruled the whole earth. The decree of Cæsar Augustus, that the whole inhabited earth should be registered (Lu.2<sup>1</sup>) was a vain pretense. It could not be enforced in Babylon itself, for the Romans could not conquer it.

The present ecclesia is nowhere called the "bride of Christ", so present apostasy is not presented under the figure of marital unfaithfulness.

7 Babylon is supported in her ascendancy by the united religions of the earth. No wonder John marvels that, while God's saints are being slaughtered, the unfaithful should attain to almost millennial bliss!

8 This is a note of time. After the wild beast is recalled from the abyss by the dragon (13<sup>1</sup>) it no longer supports the woman.

## The Temple Section—The Wild Beast

8 When the wild beast emerges from the sea one of its heads was as though it had been slain (13<sup>3</sup>). This, it would seem, is the eighth head, which is also one of the seven. These kings must be taken literally, for they explain to us what the heads represent.

12 In Daniel's vision (7) the western wild beast had ten horns, hence the ten horns probably stand for ten western military powers in Christendom. In a federation of many governments it is easily seen how they could temporarily delegate their powers to the head of the world league. When the call goes forth for an international force to destroy the rebellious Jews in Jerusalem the federation of the West as well as the kings of the East will mobilize at Armageddon. There they will be slain by the Rider on the White Horse (19<sup>19-21</sup>). This is their end. But before this they are used in the destruction of Babylon.

15 The Jews in Babylon will be supported principally by the toil of the great masses in the western nations. The enormous interest on the national debts will make the people comparative slaves of those to whom the interest is paid. When it becomes known that the greater part of this money is used by the Jews in Babylon for their luxurious magnificence, it will arouse the hatred of the peoples and the governments who are under a perpetual tribute, as there is no possibility of paying off the principal. This hatred will lead to the unanimous opinion that Babylon must be destroyed. The wild beast upon which Babylon rests, after being obsessed by the dragon, becomes her implacable enemy. This is God's means of destroying the apostates in Israel.

17 By a bold figure of speech God is said to have an "opinion". The ten horns pride themselves in forming their own opinion and in carrying it out, when, as a matter of fact, they are obliged, by the purpose of God, to think and act as they do. Man is moved by ulterior motives. God provides these and men, conscious only of their own selfish aims, accomplish His end. God wants Babylon destroyed: they gladly do it for their own sakes, not for Him.



*The Temple Section—Babylon's Fall*

18 The basic law which underlies all figures of speech pleads with us to make this city a literal fact. No one presumes to make the woman literal. She *must* be figurative. The city, however, *explains* to us what the woman represents, and must be taken as a literal city. If not, there is no end to the "explanations" which may be offered, each of which may, in turn, be further explained.

18 The city is Babylon, on the Euphrates, which will be rebuilt in due time. But, instead of being a gentile city, as in time past, it will become a Jewish city, composed of the apostates of Judaism. When the Jews return to Palestine, many will find that place unsuited to their genius for trade and commerce, or for the beautiful city which they plan for themselves, so they move over to the plains of Shinar and build Babylon, making it the commercial and financial center of the world. At this time the vision of the Ephah (Zech.5<sup>5-11</sup>) will have its fulfillment. The ephah was a measure used in commerce. This is a symbol of the Jews throughout the earth. They are merchants. A woman was cast into the ephah and swiftly borne to the land of Shinar, as Babylonia was called. There she will be established and take her toll of the traffic of the West with the East.

2 Babylon has never fallen as is predicted in the prophets (Isa.13,47,Jer.50-51). Its final overthrow will be *sudden* (Isa.47<sup>11</sup>) and it will become a desolation without any inhabitants (Jer.51<sup>29</sup>). No Arabian will pitch his tent there. Yet hitherto it has gone into gradual decay until, of recent years, it is being restored. Peter lived there (1 Pt. 5<sup>13</sup>). To this day there has always been a considerable town in the center of its site. Moreover, its destruction is to be in the day of Jehovah (Isa.13<sup>6</sup>), when there are signs in the heavens (Isa.13<sup>10</sup>Un.6<sup>12</sup>), and when the sons of Israel and Judah come and seek the Lord their God (Jer.50<sup>4</sup>).

4 Some of God's true saints will be in the city before her destruction. These are warned to come out of her.

6 These sentiments are quite foreign to the present display of God's grace, for this is *not* a day of vengeance.

*Temple Section—Burning of Babylon*

11 Because of their enormous wealth the Jews in Babylon will import every luxury which their heart desires, so that it becomes the best market for the most valuable commodities of all kinds. This will employ ships and merchants who will make large profits. They will mourn and lament, not out of sympathy with the suffering city, but because their means of gain is gone.

Babylon is not on the sea coast, but the Euphrates can easily be made navigable for large ships as far up as the site of the ancient city. It is notable that most of the great ports of the world have been inland on a river or bay. London, Antwerp, Hamburg, and New York, are all some distance from the open sea. The greatest maritime centers are on sheltered inland waterways to an open roadstead on the coast. Engineers are already at work on vast irrigation enterprises, to control the waters of the rivers. When there is a market, the Euphrates can easily be dredged to Babylon.

12 This is a list of the luxuries and necessities of a large city. Any attempt to "spiritualize" these items cannot fail to impress us with the futility of any but a literal interpretation of this marvelous metropolis of the end time. 12 Citron wood (*callitris quadrivalvis*) is found in the Atlas mountains of North Africa, and belongs to the cypress family. It is like *lignum vitae*, and is still used in Algeria for inlaying. It is dark brown, heavy, close grained and fragrant. It was used, as its Greek name implies, to burn incense.

13 Ginger, or amomum, is a genus of aromatic herbs from which the "grains of paradise" of commerce are obtained.

14 Fruition, literally the "juice hour", is an expressive term denoting the time when fruit is fully ripe. Figs are insipid and the white juice which exudes from them is poisonous only a few hours before it becomes sweet as honey. There is typical teaching in this. Israel is the true fig tree. Babylon seeks to take her place and establish the kingdom and thus realize the blessings promised by the prophets, which is suggested by the delicate sweetness of the fig's syrup. Instead they eat the bitter, unpalatable poison, but a little while before the true kingdom is established.

# Temple Section—Babylon's Destruction

<sup>16</sup> "Gilded" seems to be a figure for all mere outward show, for it is with gold, and precious stones and pearls.

<sup>21</sup> In the East the millstone is used to grind the meal for the daily bread.

<sup>22</sup> The ancient harp was in the form of a lyre. It was used to accompany solo singing. "Entertainers" denoted those devoted to the arts of the muses, history, poetry, tragedy, astronomy, dancing and song. A flageolet is a flute blown from the end, as anciently.

<sup>23</sup> Enchantment comes from the word *drug*, but is used in this sense in the LXX as the equivalent of *k'sh'ph*, usually rendered *sorceries* or *witchcraft* (Ex.7:11-17 Deut.18:10 2 Ki.9:22 Isa.47:9 Jer.27:9 Dan.2:2 Mic.5:12 Nahum 3:4).

<sup>23</sup> The rapid rise of the power and influence of wealth has made it possible for riches to rule. Not only locally does the man of means control the government, but the policies of nations are determined by their financial obligations. In this way will the merchants of Babylon become the great men of the earth. Holding its weal in their hands, being the creditors of many nations, they will be able to dictate to them in any matters which affect their interests. By means of their capital they will conquer all nations. Kings will cringe before them, for they alone will be able to buy their bonds. Nations will slave for them, for they must pay the interest. The world will be theirs in spite of Jehovah's frown. He purposes to bless His people by making them a blessing to the nations. They obtain the desire of their souls by becoming a curse. They are the head of the new despotism—the autocracy of capital. Money rules the world far more really than emperors or kings or the public. The great confederacy which seems certain to arise out of the present world crisis, will have all political power, but will preside over a bankrupt world. Above them will be this woman—faithless, apostate Israel—and she will have dominion over the kings of the earth. No wonder they conspire to slay her rather than pay her the enormous tribute which her bonds demand!

<sup>24</sup> Just as the Jews of our Lord's generation were held guilty of crimes committed long before (Mt.23:35), so Babylon is charged with all previous bloodshed.

# Temple Section—Marriage of the Lambkin

<sup>1</sup> Hallelujah, Greek *alleluia*, is the Hebrew *Hallelu Jah*, "praise ye Jah". This exclamation is used only in the "Hallelujah Psalms" (Ps.104:35 105:45 106:1,48 111:1 112:1 113:1,9 115:18 116:19 117:135 135:1,3,21 146:1,10 147:1,20 148:1,14 149:1,9 150:1,6) and always in response to the execution of judgment. It occurs only in this passage (19:1,3,4,6) in celebrating the destruction of Babylon. It should never be used in rejoicing or worship in the present dispensation of God's grace.

<sup>7</sup> We are first introduced to the bride of the Lamb by John the baptist (Jn. 3:28-30). She was composed of those in Israel who acknowledged Him to be Jehovah's Lamb for their sins. Just as the water blushed into wine at Cana of Galilee (Jn.21:11), so He will transform the law into brimming cheer when this marriage comes. It was the custom for the festivities to last for seven days or a fortnight. The wedding of the Lambkin will last for a whole millennium.

Israel is often presented under the figure of the wife of Jehovah. At Sinai He became her Husband (Jer.31:32). He puts His comeliness upon her (Eze. 16:8-14). But she forsook Him to go after other lovers (Hos.2:8-13). So He gave Israel a bill of divorce (Deut.24:1-4). They were sent into captivity. According to the law they can never be His again. Nevertheless He invites her to return (Jer. 3:1). He promises to wait for her and to keep her for Himself until the latter days. "You shall not have a husband, moreover I also am for you" (Hos.3:3). He will call them back. "Return, sons of returnings," avers Jehovah, "for I own you," says Jeremiah (3:14). When our Lord came He called them a wicked and *adulterous* generation, for they had forsaken Jehovah. But those who received Him became a part, not of the *wife* of Jehovah or the Lamb, but the *bride* of the *Lambkin*. Not a sad reunion in old age, but with youth renewed. The eastern bride was arrayed in the most gorgeous manner possible. Hence the prophet's question:

"Shall a virgin forget her ornaments?  
A bride her ribbons?" (Jer.2:32)

<sup>8</sup> The white apparel is symbolic of the rewards of their just acts.

*Temple Section—The Great Dinner*

<sup>11</sup> Contrast this scene with His entry into Jerusalem (Mt.21:1-9 etc.). There He presented Himself as their *King*, lowly, and mounted as any poor peasant would ride. Now He comes seated on a white horse. In the East it is a mark of dignity to ride on a white animal, especially a horse. This is allowed only to those of high rank. There is another contrast between this Rider and the false messiah under the first seal (<sup>62</sup>), whose conquests were followed by war, famine and pestilence. This battle is followed by a thousand years of peace and plenty and prosperity. The pseudo-messiah will be unfaithful and false, this Rider is Faithful and True.

<sup>11</sup> This opening is in contrast with the open door (<sup>41</sup>) with which the Throne Section begins. Today there is no communication between heaven and earth. When the judgment begins it is still restricted, as is suggested by the figure of a door, but when this Rider comes forth, heaven itself is opened, showing that, at last, the barriers between heaven and earth are removed.

This is the glorious coming for which all His earthly people have longed, and concerning which the prophets have often spoken. Compare the passage in Isaiah (63:1-6), which reminds us of the Vintage (14:17-20), which seems to be another aspect of this same scene, for they are combined in the question:

"Wherefore is Thy clothing red  
And Thy garments as the tread-  
er in the wine trough?"

<sup>14</sup> The armies in heaven have already expelled the dragon out of heaven (12:7-9). Now they are about to finish the judgment of the earth. This was foretold as early as the days of Enoch: "Behold, the Lord is coming with ten thousands of His holy ones to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14,15).

This is the full end of all man's misrule and the prelude to the reign of Christ and His saints. The so-called second psalm finds its fulfillment in this battle. He meets the vast international army which worships the beast and the dragon, and, by vanquishing it, establishes His own rule and the worship of Jehovah. Then He takes His true place at the head of all earthly sovereignty.

*Temple Section—The Thousand Years*

<sup>17</sup> God's great dinner after the battle shows how terrible will be the slaughter. The battle referred to in Ezekiel (39:17-22) is probably after the thousand years (<sup>209</sup>).

<sup>19</sup> The name "wild beast" is given both to the world empire and to its last head. This head and the false prophet are evidently superhuman—the "supermen" for whom the world is already looking. Their fate is in accord with their deeds. The fact that the wild beast was once slain but was recalled to life by the dragon, and the fact that the false prophet imparted life to the image, seem to indicate that they cannot be killed as the rest, hence suffer in the lake of fire during the thousand years. Their fate is unique, and must not be taken as the lot of all who die out of Christ.

<sup>21</sup> This is like the destruction of Sennacherib's army on a grander scale (2 Ki.19:35).

<sup>2</sup> Satan, the Hebrew for *Adversary*, is, as his name implies, the great adversary of Christ. Here he is given all his various appellations. In Eden he was seen under the guise of the serpent (Gen.3:1-5). In this scroll he is seen under the figure of a dragon (12:3). As the Adversary (usually translated "devil" cf. 1 Ti.3:11 2 Ti.3:3 Tit.2:3) he misrepresents God, as witness his attempts to seduce our Lord in the wilderness (Mt.4:1-11 Lu.4:2-13).

<sup>4</sup> Judgment here, as often, refers to *awards* rather than punishment. This "judgment" of the saints consists in granting to each one the place in the kingdom which he deserves. It is to be deplored that there is no good English word for judgment, which calls for the setting of matters *right*, whether the action be favorable or the reverse. God judges His saints as well as sinners—all get their due, whether their title to it is based on their own acts or on His promises.

From the usage of this word it is clear that even the condemnation of the unbeliever is no mere exhibition of aimless rage, but is carefully calculated to right the wrongs of all concerned. The claims of God and Christ, and of the sinner himself are all as conscientiously considered as in the first judgment in Eden (Gen.3:14-19), where the very curse put upon the ground was for man's sake.

*Temple Section—The Former  
Resurrection*

<sup>4</sup> Those who have suffered death for their loyalty during the great persecutions of the end time are especially included in the former resurrection. This is the time spoken of by Daniel (7<sup>22</sup>) when "the saints safeguard the kingdom". This is the resurrection of the just (Lu.14<sup>14</sup>) and the resurrection of life (Jn.5<sup>29</sup>), in contrast to the resurrection of judgment (20<sup>12</sup>). But those who suffer martyrdom or who endure to the end will have the added privilege of reigning with Him and will be His priests for the thousand years. Their trials have wrought an eonian weight of glory for them. They will be happy and holy indeed.

<sup>5</sup> The statement that "the rest of the dead do not live until the thousand years may be finished" was omitted in the best manuscript. As the same codex also omits the tribes of Gad (7<sup>5</sup>) and Simeon (7<sup>7</sup>) from the hundred forty-four thousand, too much stress must not be laid on any such omission. These tribes must go in to make up the required number (144,000) in that manuscript. If we accept the insertion of the tribes we must also accept the insertion of this statement, for it rests on the same evidence. It could easily have been overlooked by a copyist, for the preceding sentence ends with the same words as this one does—"the thousand years" (see the Greek text). It is easy, in copying, to skip from the first "thousand years" to the next, and thus omit the intervening statement.

<sup>6</sup> The thousand years limits their reign as *priests*. As kings they reign for the eons of the eons (22<sup>5</sup>)—a much longer period.

<sup>7</sup> The loosing of Satan finds mankind as a whole unregenerate after the thousand years of peace. They are ready as ever to follow the deceptions of Satan and oppose the Christ of God. But they are given short shrift, for fire descends from heaven and devours them. The fire eonian was prepared for the Adversary and his messengers (cf page 49 <sup>41-46</sup>). Now he receives his doom.

<sup>11</sup> The Great White Throne judgment has no place for those who are Christ's, for they have all been made alive and have been enjoying eonian life for more than a millennium.

*Temple Section—Jerusalem*

<sup>12</sup> This is not a "general" judgment, though it approaches nearer to it than any other. Only the *dead* appear before this throne. Those who are Christ's will have been made alive at His presence more than a thousand years before (1 Co.15<sup>23</sup>). Those who are His will not die during the thousand years, nor can they be hurt by the second death. Hence only those who have not believed in Christ appear in this judgment. They will all receive their just deserts, according to their acts, during the period between their resurrection and second death. Hence they are condemned, for all fall short of God's standard. They are not vivified, or made alive, as the saints are, by a better resurrection, hence they die again.

<sup>13</sup> Thus all evil is segregated in the lake of fire, where Satan and the wild beast and the false prophet already are (20<sup>10</sup>). "This is the second death" defines the lake of fire. Those who have been raised from death return to the same state in the second death. The only immunity from condemnation lies in having a place in the scroll of life.

**SECOND TEMPLE SECTION**

<sup>1</sup> In this section we enter a new eon. Peter, in his second epistle (3<sup>7-10</sup>) tells us that the present heavens and earth are a storehouse of fire, and that they will pass away with a booming noise and the elements be dissolved by combustion. The earth and the works in it shall be burned up by reason of the coming of the day of God. Isaiah (65<sup>17</sup>) has promised a new heaven and a new earth. Righteousness *rules* during the thousand years. It *dwells* in the new creation.

<sup>2</sup> The new Jerusalem is heavenly as to *character*, but will be *located* on the earth. It comes down "*out of heaven*". The present heavens and earth are not the *first*. There was an earth before the present (2 Pt.3<sup>5</sup>). The world that then was perished by water (Gen. 1<sup>2</sup>). The present is the second earth. The one in this vision is the third.

<sup>3</sup> That these are not final scenes is indicated by the temporary nature of God's habitation (Heb.11<sup>9</sup>). Though all are His peoples, and He comforts all, He does not as yet,  *dwell* amongst His creatures.

*Second Temple Section—The Holy City*

<sup>6</sup> This is written from the standpoint of the time when John wrote, at Patmos, hence all is put in the future tense. *This is vital to a true understanding of this section.*

<sup>6</sup> "The Origin and the Consummation" gives Him His true place in creation and redemption. God begins with Him and He brings all God's purposes to fruition.

<sup>10</sup> This is the city for which Abraham looked (Heb.11<sup>10</sup>). Since the capture of Zion by David (2 Sa.5), Jerusalem has been God's choice to rule over the nation and over the whole earth. The city descends out of heaven to the earth and seems to be shaped like an enormous mountain. Jerusalem and Zion are almost always described as a mountain. The contrast with Sinai (Ga.4:24-26; He.12:18-22) implies as much, while Ezekiel's vision of a very high mountain (40:24:32) may refer first of all to the millennial city, yet it is suggestive of the shape of the new Jerusalem.

No other shape could very well have its length and breadth and its height equal and be surrounded by a wall much lower than the city itself. The millennial city, as measured in Ezekiel, will be about twelve times as great as Jerusalem in the past, while the new Jerusalem of this vision will raise it to the seventh power. Ezekiel's city has twelve gates, named after the twelve tribes (48:31-34). There is a river, flowing from Jehovah's house, descending about three and a half feet per mile. If the throne be at the summit of this glorious city, such a river could wind about it with no greater descent than that in the millennial scene.

<sup>11</sup> The word here used for luminosity, or light bearer, is applied to the sun and the moon (Gen.1:14,16). It is used figuratively of believers (Phil.2:15). But the sun and moon are not needed, for the glory of God illuminates the city (21:23:22:5) and its Lamp is the Lambkin (21:23). Natural light was excluded from His habitations.

<sup>11</sup> The jasper is probably the most valuable variety, called *plasma*, a translucent green stone. Like the gold of the city, its luminosity will be crystalline in its translucent radiance. The Enthroned One looks like a jasper gem (4:3).

*Second Temple Section—No Temple*

<sup>18</sup> Gold, if subjected to intense heat, may be made permanently transparent. When the city has passed through the fiery crucible which introduces the new earth (2 Pt.3:10), the gold which now exists in considerable quantities in a diffused state, will be precipitated and refined and emerge with crystalline clarity.

<sup>17</sup> A cubit was the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger.

<sup>18</sup> Josephus applies the term "in-building" to a mole or breakwater.

<sup>19</sup> Lapis lazuli, anciently called sapphire, is a mixture of minerals, ultramarine in color, with specks of iron which look like gold. Pliny (Nat. Hist. xxxii, 9) describes it as sky blue with golden spots.

<sup>19</sup> Chalcedony is probably a waxy, translucent gem, from white to bluish grey in color (Plin. xxxvii, 8).

<sup>20</sup> Sardonyx (a variety of onyx, so-called from its resemblance to the substance of a finger nail or claw) consists of alternate layers of light-colored onyx between reddish layers of carnelian or "sard".

<sup>20</sup> Carnelian, or sardius, is used for the Hebrew *ohdem*, red (Ex.28:17 39:10 Eze. 28:13) and for the onyx (Ex.25:7:35:9).

<sup>20</sup> The gold stone, or chrysolite, of the ancient is our topaz, while their topaz is our peridot.

<sup>20</sup> The best beryl is of a sea green color.

<sup>20</sup> Chrysoprase is the palest of the green beryls of a golden cast.

<sup>20</sup> Amethyst, the ancient hyacinth, resembles the flower of this name. It is a transparent gem of violet color (cf. 9:17). The amethyst of the ancients is now called garnet (9:17).

<sup>22</sup> Six temples "made with hands" are indwelt by Jehovah in the eons. The first was the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex.25:8). The second was erected by Solomon (2 Sa.7:13). It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Ki.25:9). The third was built by Ezra at the command of Cyrus (Ezra 6:3). Herod's temple is the fourth. The fifth is called "the temple of God" (2 Th.2:4) and is measured in this scroll (11:1). The sixth is described by Ezekiel (40:43). It is intensely interesting to note the development of the truth in the first, second and sixth. Here we have the true Temple, God Himself, with the true Sacrifice, the Lambkin.

## SECOND THRONE SECTION

<sup>24</sup> The vision has ended. John now is back again in Patmos and tells what *will be* in the days of the vision. It is not that the common and abominable will be outside the city, unable to enter. Then all will be God's people and misery will be no more (21<sup>3,4</sup>). But those who are false before—these have no hope of entering into the city. In Israel, this is a reward.

<sup>1</sup> The river of living water can be traced from the laver of the tabernacle (Ex.30<sup>18</sup>) through the ten lavers and the molten sea of Solomon's temple (2 Chr.4<sup>2-6</sup>) and the waters which flowed from the threshold of Ezekiel's house (Eze.47) to the crystal stream here described.

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel describes the trees which line the millennial river (47<sup>7,12</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> The square, or common, or plaza, was a wide open space which had corners (Mt.6<sup>5</sup>) and a center. The streets of eastern cities could not be denoted by this word, which means *wide, broad*, for they have always been exceedingly narrow, and were called by a distinct name (Mt.6<sup>2</sup> Lu.14<sup>21</sup> Ac.9<sup>11</sup> 12<sup>10</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> At this point the seer changes his viewpoint back to Patmos. What was present to his gaze is now put in the future. His slaves *will* minister; they *will* reign. Hence their reign is for the eons of the eons. This would present a difficulty if John spoke from the standpoint of the last eon, for only one eon will then remain in which they can reign (1 Co.15<sup>24</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> The "curse" is not yet gone or the leaves of the trees were useless. But there is no more anything devoted to God for destruction. His way with men has changed.

<sup>5</sup> Though the temple and priesthood are gone, they continue to reign for the eons of the eons. This corresponds with the Hebrew scriptures, for the temple with its ritual lasts "for ever" (for the eon) but the kingdom continues "for ever and ever" (for the eons of the eons).

## SECOND PROPHETIC SECTION

<sup>6</sup> This section should not be referred to the far future which John has been describing. He reverts to the time when the prophecy was given to him. Hence the era is impending, the Lord is still to come, the sayings of the prophecy may still be kept.

## Second Prophetic Section

<sup>10</sup> It is God's will that this prophecy should be known by His slaves. Daniel was commanded to seal up his vision because much was to intervene before its fulfillment. As this era is impending—there is nothing between the present and this prophecy—it is time for it to be studied and understood.

Nothing (except a knowledge of the special epistles written for the present) will help us more in estimating the true trend of present day movements than a clear conception of their outcome in the great judgment period just ahead. All of the factors of the end time are rapidly taking on the form which they will have in that day. Israel is going back to the land. The nations are forming the great confederacy. The religions of the earth are uniting. In it all God is given no place.

<sup>12</sup> As in the first chapter (1<sup>8</sup>), the Lord Jesus suddenly intervenes and closes the prophecy with His own august declarations. The three-fold title, the A and the Z, the First and Last, and the Origin and the Consummation, are most appropriate after the revelation of the marvelous jeweled city and the glories of the new earth. At present He has only begun: then He will finish. The A and the Z suggests that He is the whole alphabet of God's revelation, the First and the Last, His place in the times in which it is accomplished, and the Origin and Consummation, His place in the purpose which underlies it.

<sup>16</sup> The night is darkest just before the dawn. His earthly people will long for the Morning Star to herald the approach of day. Then He, from Whom David sprang and Who descended from David, will fulfill all the promises which God made to Him.

<sup>17</sup> *Come!* All who know Him and His will cannot but obey this last request. The hearts of all saints should well up into one grand shout to urge His speedy return. There is no other help, no other hope. *Come! Lord Jesus!*

Come, then, and, added to Thy many crowns, Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth, Thou Who alone art worthy! It was Thine By ancient covenant, ere Nature's birth; And Thou hast made it Thine by purchase since And overpaid its value with Thy blood. Thy saints proclaim Thee King; and in their hearts Thy title is engraven with a pen Dipped in the fountain of eternal love."

COWPER, in *The Task*

*Conclusion—Warning—His Coming*

<sup>18</sup> It is one of the saddest commentaries on the frailty of mankind to find that this warning has about seven variant readings in the three manuscripts we consult. Who would not suppose that these lines would be most anxiously and scrupulously copied by the scribe? Surely no transcriber would dare to add or subtract a single letter! Yet there is not only one transposition,

but four additions and three omissions in a passage fearfully denouncing such a practice. May God forgive if we, unwittingly, have failed to restore or expunge these mutilations!

<sup>20</sup> The desire for the coming and presence of the Lord is the truest test of spiritual condition. The saints long for Him, not merely for their own happiness but for the manifestation of His glories and the blessing of all creation.